



1890-2017  
PRESIDENT – HUW DAVIES



# EASTERN COUNTIES RUGBY UNION

## ANNUAL REPORT TO CLUBS 2016/2017

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017 19.00

The Heath Court Hotel, Moulton Rd, Newmarket, CB8 8DY

AGENDA

1. To consider and approve the minutes of the last AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016.
2. To review and approve a report from the Committee on the affairs of the Constituent Body since 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016
3. To receive a Financial Report.
4. To consider any other motion or business duly proposed in accordance with Rule 8.5  
**Proposal One:** That we amend the date for the EC Financial Year-end to: 30 June (Rule 8.1.2)  
**Proposal Two:** That we should amend the EC Constitution to reflect our preference to submit our Annual Report to Clubs by electronic means (Rule 15.4)
5. To answer specific questions about our activities to Committee Chairmen
6. To receive a short explanation of our PFR process (CB Planning)
7. To elect Officers and Committee for the ensuing year  
The nominations of the Officers and Committee Chairmen are: -

**Officers**

**Committee Chairs**

		Chair of Governance	Richard Watson
Chairman	Alasdair Bovaird	Chair of Finance	Pamela Clarke
	Robert Temple	Chair - Player Dev. Group	TBA
Hon. Secretary	TBA	Chair – Club Player Group	Ross Cowie
		Chair – Club Development	John Winders
		Chair of Marketing & Communications	Russ Clarke

8. To consider any other business of which due notice has been given. **Note: no notice of other such business had been received by the Hon. Secretary by the due date (30.04.17)**
9. To hear any other relevant matter for the consideration of the Committee during the ensuing year, but on which no voting shall be allowed.

**By order of the ECRU Ltd. Committee**

Roger Pierson, Hon. Secretary,

ECRU Ltd.

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017

## PRESIDENT



Another successful year of rugby in general in The Eastern Counties. All those involved, players and volunteers, at all levels, are to be congratulated and I am sure will continue to support the game next season and in the future.

On a personal level, I would like to thank the clubs for their hospitality and all the officers of ECRU for their combined help and support. I know that Ian Forton will be similarly supported during the next two years and wish him all the best.

**Hugh Davies JP - President**

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## CHAIRMAN



You will read in all the reports following my introduction what has happened in Eastern Counties this year, but it's my job here to set the scene and to comment on the strategy. During the season, there will of course have been successes in what has been achieved and there will be things that we could have done better, but we have to consider what the circumstances and influences are in wider society while we try to administer our Sport. I believe it's clear that we are operating in a changing environment, with far more choice for people in how they may use their leisure time, which means we have to look at our offering and take into account the demands that are being made now and predict what might happen in the future. This may mean in future we have to consider some fairly radical changes, such as playing on days other than Saturday afternoons, playing different forms of the game and looking at our own structures concerning how the game is administered.

Each year within Eastern Counties we pick one area of activity to try to give it a boost. The previous season that subject was Coaching and last year it was Women's and Girls Rugby and then we ask each of our Committees to try to consider how we can especially boost that particular area. I really do believe we have taken some good steps forward in the Women's and Girls game and this has been reflected in the success this year of our Representative teams. Next year the focus will be on our friends in the Refereeing community, which I think we all believe are in need of a boost.

Eastern Counties, next year, are again going to experience some change in personnel, with a number of us either moving or stepping down from the 'Golden Roles'. I would especially like to thank Andrew Sarek for everything he has done for Rugby in the Eastern Counties and to Roger Pearson for his years as Secretary to the organisation. I wish Roger all the best in his new role as the Council member for the region. I also will be stepping down as Chair at the end of this season after four years in post, but I do that in the knowledge that we have two very good candidates who wish to be considered for next season. I wish them and the rest of the Volunteers all the best and I thank everyone who has contributed to the smooth running of the CB over these last four years. It's been an extremely enjoyable time.

**John Phoenix - Chairman**

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**HONORARY SECRETARY**



If my sums are correct, this is the eleventh report from me, and probably the final one.

During my time in Office, ECRU has made progress in creating a structure that best serves Rugby in our area, but, as with any progressive organisation, needs to regularly review what it does, and learn from any mistakes that occur. Sometimes I feel that we are the ‘cheese in the sandwich’ between our Clubs, and our parent organisation at Twickenham, and we do try and filter what comes down from ‘on high’. Sometimes we succeed, sometimes not.

I have worked with some extremely passionate and knowledgeable people, who have put their service to the Game above personal status, and, in doing so, have contributed greatly to the manner in which we look at our priorities. If we are all pulling in the same direction, our work is made that much easier, and rewarding.

A few of our successes of this Season are the manner in which our Competitions structure evolves, under the direction of its Chairman, John Mackay; the provision of more Coaching Courses, thanks to Chris Capps-Jenner, the improvement of our Women’s Representative Team, ably supported by Aaron Swanborough and his Team, and the growth of Girls Rugby under Darren Wright and Nicky Goddard; our first-ever Candidate to the RFU ‘Leadership in Union’ programme, Pamela Clarke, completed successfully, so congratulations to her.

The work carried out by our RFU Field Team, led by Chloe McMorran and Sam Carpenter, continues to add value to our Clubs, and the Game at large, and for that, my thanks.

We welcome Ian Forton as our incoming President, and I am confident that he will give us renewed focus in his role. Our thanks to Huw Davies, as he steps away, having been in office for two seasons. John Phoenix, currently Chairman, also steps down this year, so plenty of change awaits us.

The question that I often ask is ‘from where will we discover those people that will drive the Game forward?’ We constantly need to find, develop and encourage those who can look strategically at the Game, and contribute to its’ future success.

The answer must come from you, our Membership – whatever you do, whether for Club, County, or Eastern Counties, will support the future of our Game.

Thank you.

**Roger Pierson - Honorary Secretary**

**HONORARY TREASURER**



The 2015/16 season has resulted in a deficit of £11,857 (2014/15 deficit £11,416), against a budgeted deficit of £11,450. Overall income has increased compared to the previous season; this has been due to increased funding from the RFU in terms of Base Funding and Representative Rugby. The income and spend on Innovation projects was again significantly below the budgeted level and as a result the income has been carried forward into future seasons to ensure that new initiatives are funded going forward. Additional expenditure has been incurred during the season, this has seen more money going into grassroots clubs through initiatives within Facilities Development, Coaching and Coach Development and CCPD.

There is further analysis of how the CB has spent its income later in the report. This also depicts where the CB is spending its funding with regards to Representative Rugby, additional expenditure has been incurred in the season mainly due to additional travel by the EC U17's and EC Senior Men's team, plus increased funding for DPP. With regards to DPP the expenditure in this area has been reduced in the current and future seasons.

At the end of the season, the CB held £193,160 in the bank (2014/15 £214,521) and owed £65,644 to creditors (2014/15 £78,543).

With respect to the current 2016/17 season, the budgeted position is to achieve a breakeven position, the latest review of income and expenditure indicates the CB likely to meet its budget.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Finance Committee members and Executive for their support over the last season.

**Pamela Clarke - Honorary Treasurer**

# EASTERN COUNTIES RUGBY UNION LIMITED

## Eastern Counties Rugby Union Accounts 2015-16

		2015-16		2014-15
<b>Income</b>				
RFU	Base Funding	£71,671		£64,180
	Representative Rugby	£10,613		£8,200
	Long Distance Travel	£5,048		£1,138
	Innovation	£2,943		£3,305
Other	Subscriptions	£4,960		£4,624
	Player Contributions	£6,018		£3,675
	Disciplinary	£2,345		£2,490
	Interest	£703		£1,244
	Sponsorship	£13,500		£12,500
	Other	£0		£12
		<b>£117,801</b>		<b>£101,367</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
	Competitions	(£2,036)		(£2,399)
	Playing & Training	(£752)		(£746)
	DPP	(£12,350)		(£7,500)
	EC U16's Playing	(£3,193)		(£7,401)
	EC U17's, U18's & 7's Playing	(£7,642)		(£4,903)
	EC U20's Playing	(£6,773)		(£9,252)
	EC Senior XV Playing	(£15,692)		(£12,124)
	EC Women's XV Playing	(£3,411)		£0
	EC Girls U18's Playing	(£888)		(£5,287)
	EC Girls U15's Playing	(£3,234)		(£390)
	Coaching & Coach Development	(£3,845)		(£554)
	Referees & Referee Development	(£784)		(£3,389)
	Volunteers	(£1,099)		(£4,028)
	Clubs Development	(£1,147)		(£82)
	Club/Community Player Development	(£15,088)		(£10,769)
	Facilities Development	(£4,965)		(£1,277)
	Community Rugby	(£5,266)		(£3,442)
	Safeguarding	(£719)		(£772)
	Discipline	(£248)		(£607)
	Promotions & Publicity	(£4,009)		(£4,539)
	Governance & Administration	(£33,575)		(£30,018)
	Innovation	(£2,943)		(£3,305)
		<b>(£129,658)</b>		<b>(£112,784)</b>
	<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b><u>(£11,857)</u></b>		<b><u>(£11,416)</u></b>

### Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31 May 2016

#### Accumulated Fund Account

Balance as at 1 June	£143,349		£154,524
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	<b>(£11,857)</b>		<b>(£11,175)</b>
	<b><u>£131,492</u></b>		<b><u>£143,349</u></b>

#### Represented By:

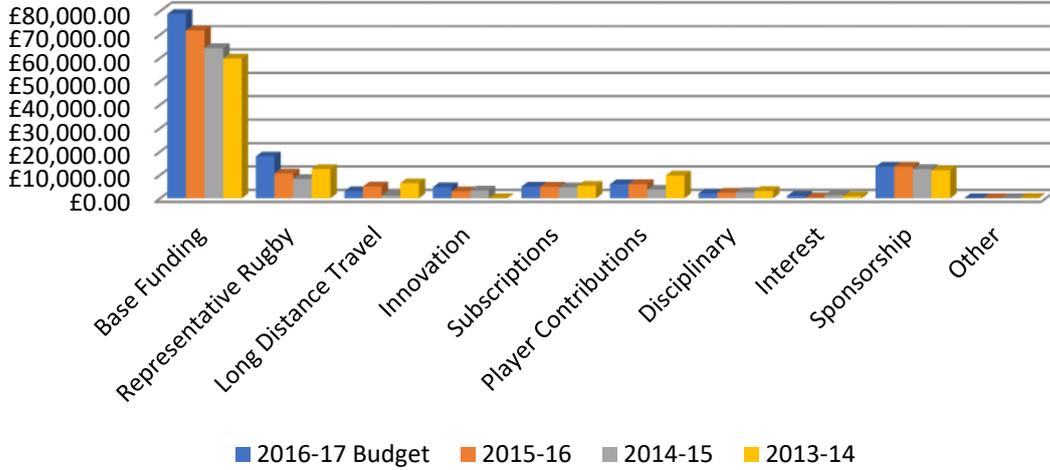
##### Current Assets

Stocks	£1,257		£1,740
Debtors and Prepayments	£2,719		£5,631
Bank and Cash in Hand	£193,160	£197,136	£214,521
			£221,892

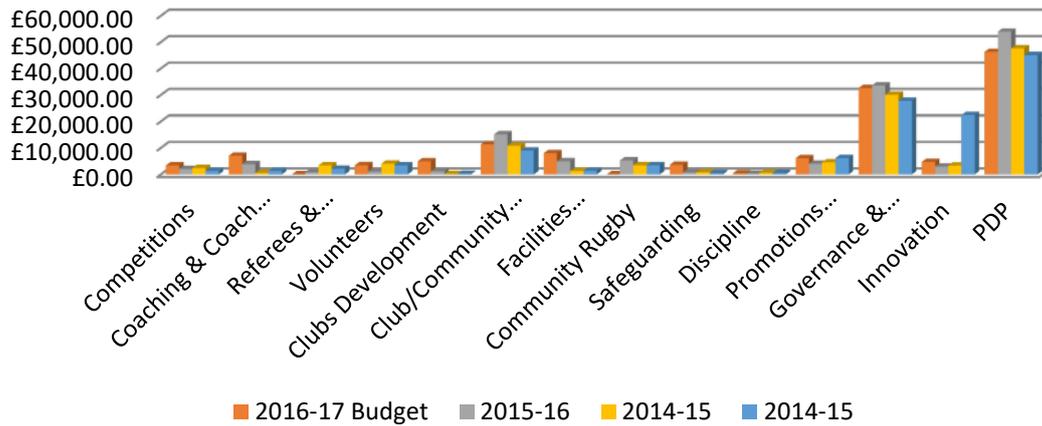
##### Less: Current Liabilities

Sundry creditors and received in advance		£65,644	£78,543
		<b><u>£131,492</u></b>	<b><u>£143,349</u></b>

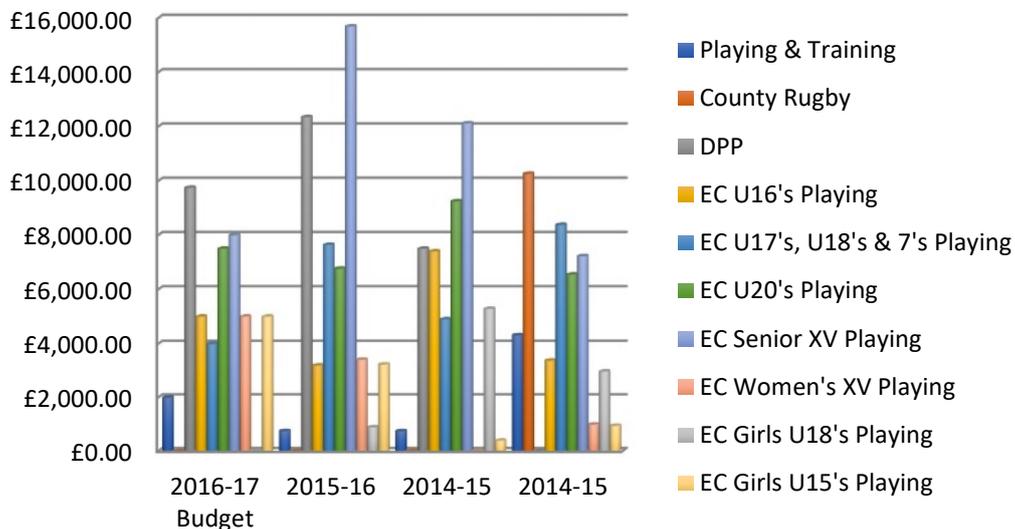
### Income over Previous Seasons



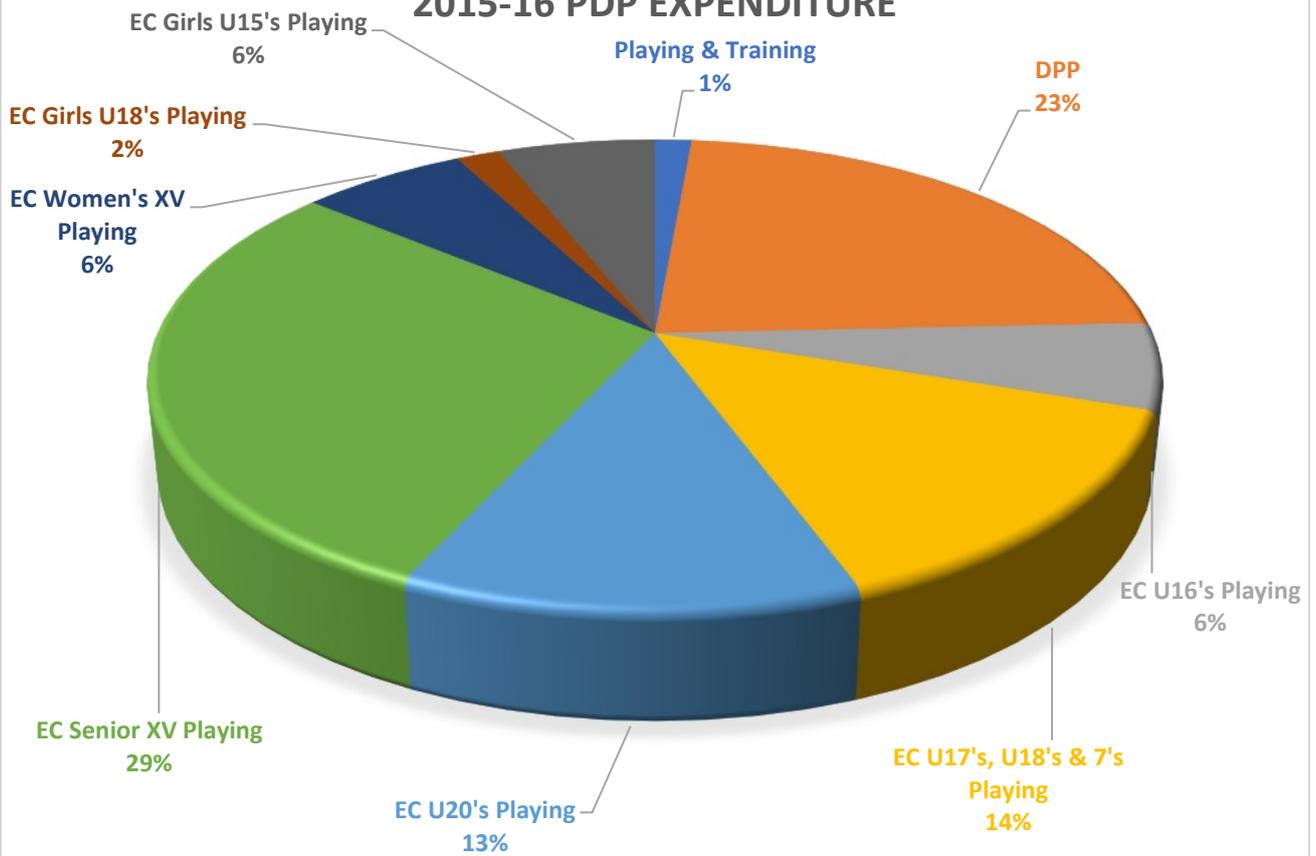
### Expenditure over Previous Seasons



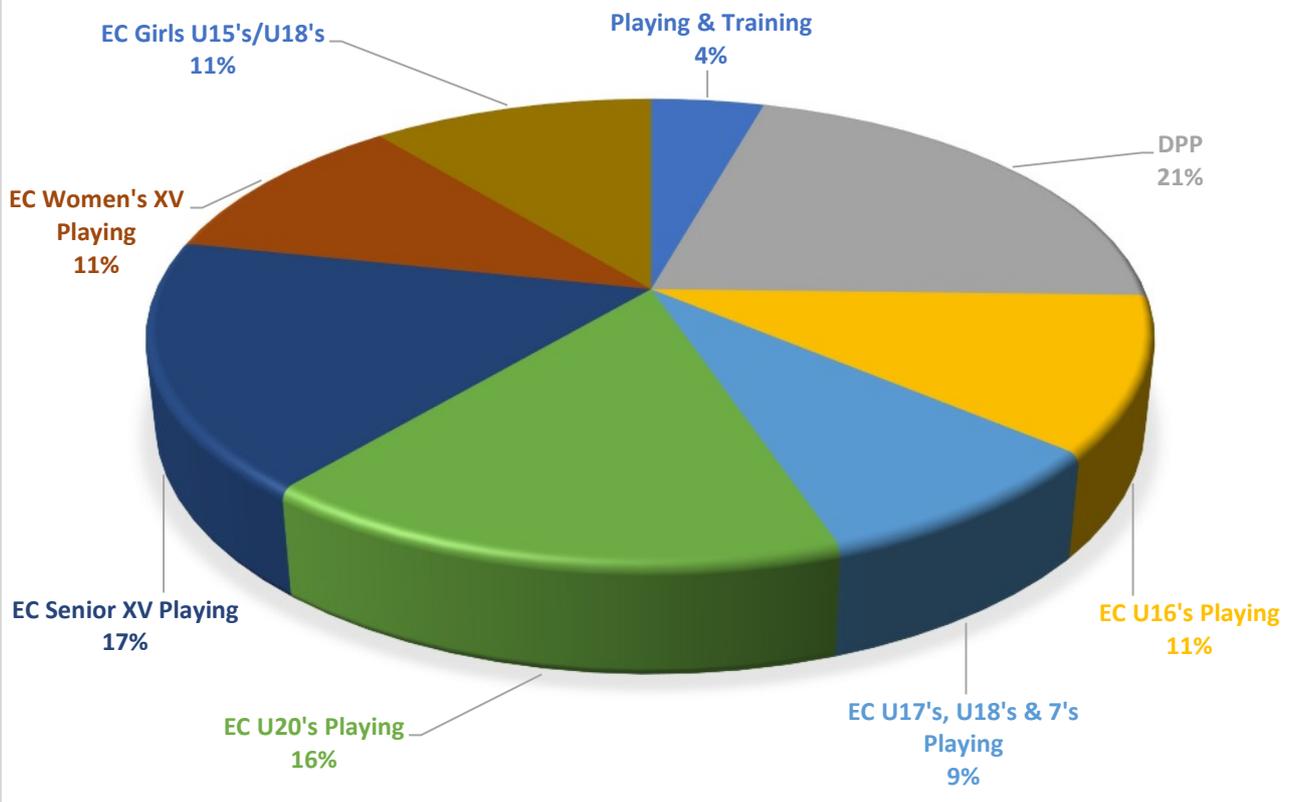
### PDP Expenditure over Previous Seasons



2015-16 PDP EXPENDITURE



2016-17 PDP BUDGET



**RFU COUNCIL MEMBER**



I would firstly like to thank those Clubs that have supported my election as your RFU Council Member – this is a privilege, and one in which I will do my best to repay your confidence in me.

Under usual circumstances the role of RFU Council member commences on 1 August, but my excellent predecessor, Andrew Sarek, has found that work pressures have forced him to step away a while earlier. Thus, I found myself attending my first Council Meeting on 7 April, just over a week from the completion of election process.

I have to say that I was made most welcome, thankfully recognising several familiar faces, and I was impressed at the depth of knowledge of my fellow Members. I hope to be a ‘fast learner’ and will draw on the experience of my peers.

For the first year of tenure I will be asked to attend a number of sub-Committee meetings, after which, and in the hope that I will be re-elected for the following season, I will then be put on a committee as a serving member. My attendance at the regular Council meetings will be ‘as norm’.

To pay sufficient tribute to Andrew is a difficult task; he has worked with energy and passion during his ten years as your Council Member, and has represented the Clubs in Eastern Counties fully in all that he has done. Many thanks, Andrew, and my best wishes for the future.

I will report frequently on what is going on at Twickenham, and your feed-back will be welcome.

I intend to continue visiting as many Clubs as possible, will be happy to discuss issues that arise, and, where possible, find solutions within the RFU or ECRU organisations; it is extremely important that our Clubs, and Counties, have a channel for their views – the sustainability of our Clubs is my number one priority.

**Roger Pierson - RFU Council Member (Eastern Counties)**

**GOVERNANCE**



The role of Governance is to be the ultimate back room body in Easter Counties, trying to make everything run correctly and to head off possible problems and challenges before they arise. Our foundation to this is our constitution – known formally as “Rules” and it is an annual task of the Governance committee to decide whether the Rules need any review.

This year the process of review has been a major piece of work, as over time our practice has diverged from what the Rules say, and so it was felt necessary to try to reframe the Rules to fit what we do (rather than change our practice back to what the Rules say).

There are other changes, including bringing our financial year into line with that of the RFU, and bringing the Rules into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The outcome of this work appears on the agenda for the AGM this year.

This is in addition to “standing” tasks, such as administering International ticket sales, arranging the AGM, and organising the election of the CB’s RFU Council member.

**Richard J Watson - Chair of Governance**

## SAFEGUARDING



This year has been an interesting one. We have had the introduction of the new Age Grade regulations a push to encourage players to stay in the sport after they stop playing and also the encouragement of younger players to not only play but also take up the whistle.

I must thank the County Safeguarding Managers (Sally Lloyd, Clairice Pepper and Malcolm Bell) who have continued to offer support and guidance to the counties and the Club Safeguarding Officers.

We have continued the hard work to support our young players and the clubs, for which the RFU have kept us true and honest and offered great assistance in this endeavour. With the good work of the CSM's and CSO's we have kept the incidents down, with reinforcement of good working practices, club visits and club audits.

We have had a few areas to look at this season: -

- 'Poor Practice' by coaches, players and clubs
- Failure to report incidents
- Non- Conformation of the Core Values
- Referee abuse

However, with the first CB Safeguarding Conference for a while happening on the 4<sup>th</sup> June at the Heath Court Hotel Newmarket, we are aiming to address all these and to help instil into the clubs and game, the importance of Safeguarding and the Core Values, along with information and guidance on Social Media, Medical and other topics. The Conference is being opened to all the Club Safeguarding Officers, Youth Chairs, Coaches and Referees.

The future of our game relies heavily on our young players as well as those who coach and referee them. Safeguarding allows this to be achieved by ensuring a safe environment for these to flourish as the game expands from Grassroots through to National and International level.

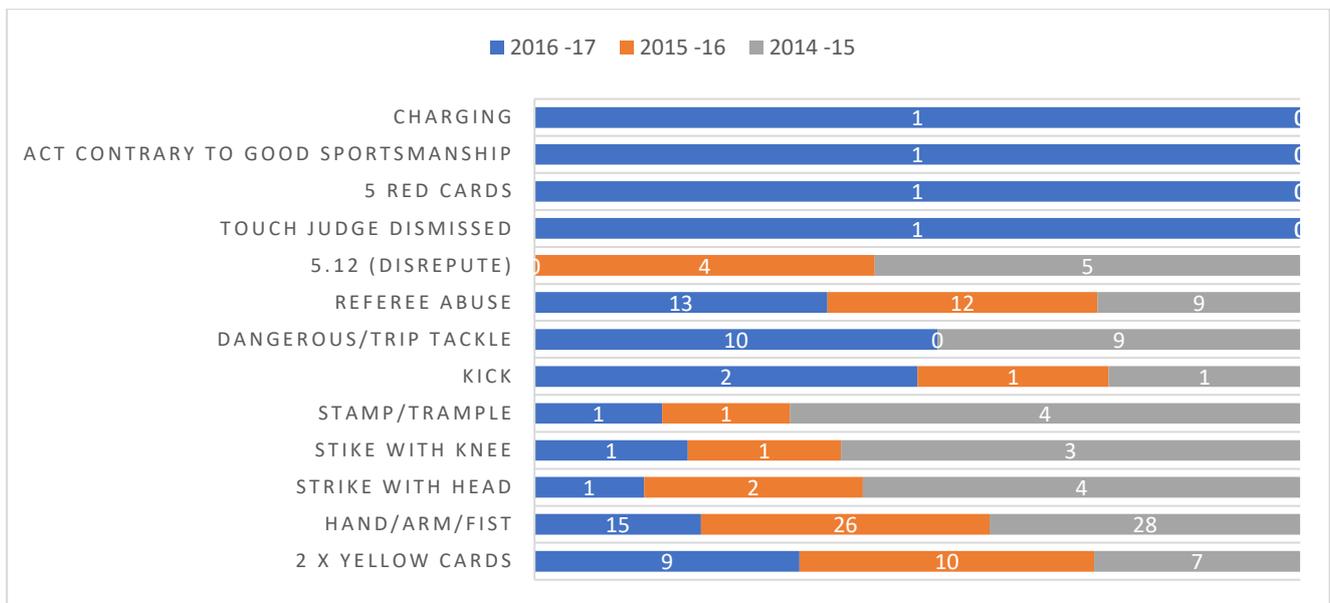
Let's make next season even more enjoyable for everyone and encourage best practice by all.

**James Pepper - Safeguarding Manager**

**DISCIPLINE**



The following is a breakdown of matters in respect of which sanctions have been imposed with the corresponding figures for the previous two seasons.



There is one unresolved matter and 4 where there was either no case to answer or the player was found not guilty.

Additionally, the panel assisted Twickenham in dealing with two safeguarding issues.

The risk of over-analysing the statistics for this population is demonstrated by the bizarre swing [10-0-9] in dismissals for dangerous tackling over the past three seasons.

What is clear, however, is that the figure for referee abuse remains unacceptably high. Approximately 23% of total offending for each of the past two seasons, and still not enough improvement in the base figures for the past three [13-12-9].

Under our most recent initiative we have been increasing sanctions for referee abuse by 50% of the relevant entry point. From the start of next season this enhancement will be a minimum of 50%.

For the first time in a few seasons one club managed to acquire 5 red cards. Unusually, and after careful analysis, we concluded that this was not indicative of an ongoing problem requiring specific intervention.

With the tiniest of exception, our clubs continue to fully engage with the disciplinary process. Conduct before us remains exemplary and it is clear that senior officials espouse and are committed to core values.

There may be scope for education at younger, more junior levels.

**Declan Gallagher - Chairman Disciplinary Panel**

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS



Sponsorship

During the 2016/17 season Greene King continued to support Eastern Counties, not only via direct financial contribution but in addition supporting the Twickenham “Drinks in the Car Park” and the Annual Dinner, generously providing a selection of fine ales. and Musks’s Sausages have extended sponsorship of the Women’s and Girls team into a third year and in addition provide delicious sausages for consumption at the events, who can argue with that culinary combination.



Figure 1- Club volunteers from across the region enjoy beer and sausages ahead of the Calcutta game in this year’s Six Nations, courtesy of our sponsors

PRESS COVERAGE

With Eastern Counties being a large geographical area and having a number of regional/local publications getting articles printed is often problematic as the press prefer locally focussed articles. However, during this year’s Men’s and Women’s respective County Championship campaigns a few publications have picked up the match previews and reports, in particular in their online publications. Examples are shown below: -



Figure 1- EC Women's victory over Cheshire featured in the EDP



Figure 2 - EC Men's game featured in the EADT

**SOCIAL MEDIA (EC FACEBOOK AND TWITTER FEEDS)**

Social media engagement continues to grow steadily, with Facebook likes now at **1,352** (1,102 in 2016) and Twitter followers at **1,741** (1,446 in 2016)

The most popular social media posts related to the EC U20s team, during their successful campaign in the Jason Leonard U20s County Championship: -

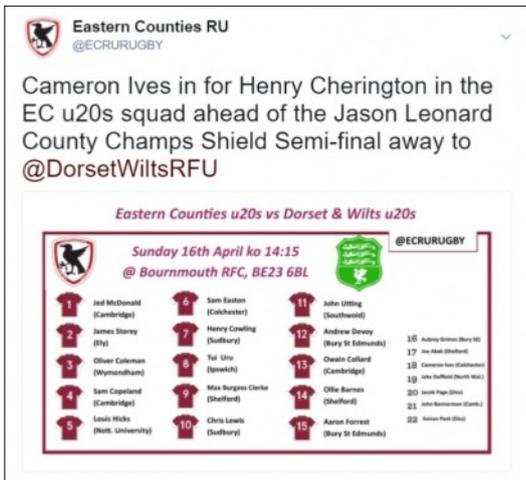


Figure 3 - Top Tweet of 2016/17 receiving 5,557 views

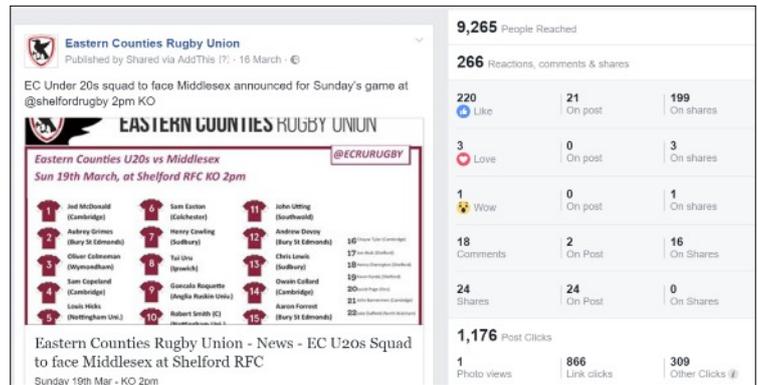


Figure 4 - Top Facebook post of 2016/17, reaching 9,265 people

Posts relating to all the representative teams continue to be popular, with team announcements being the most popular, as well as post-match summaries of games.

**WEBSITE ACTIVITY (MAIN EC WEBSITE)**

Since October 2014 when Google Analytics was enabled on the website there have been more than 890,000 page views of the ecrurugby.com website. As expected activity continues to peak at the weekend, with the vast majority of access being to the league results. December the number of visits reduced and most likely as a result of fewer league games being scheduled at this time.

Whilst there has been a reduction over time of the total number of visitors, conversely those visiting are spending longer on the website and viewing more pages the average time increasing from 1min 30secs to over 2mins compared to the 2015/16 season. Interestingly the way people access the website has changed dramatically compared to the previous season which saw almost 45% accesses via Windows devices, and 34% via iOS (iPad/iPhone), this season saw this switch round with 47% accessing via iOS and 29% by Windows.

By far the most popular pages are the league tables and league results, which as you can see from the graph above result in peaks of activity on Saturday evening and during Sunday following league games.



Figure 5 - Website Activity

**Russ Clarke - Chairman Marketing & Communications**

## RFU REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS



With the full implementation of Age Grade Rugby at the start of the season the local development team were busy delivering the new Age Grade specific CPD courses, which were positively received from those that attended.

Chloe having been in the role for 16 months has fitted into the development team seamlessly, bringing her wealth of sports development knowledge to Eastern Counties.

### Education

The All Schools Programme continues to grow with an additional three schools welcomed into the rugby family. As the next batch of schools reach the end of the initial three year investment they maintain a connection with their hub club in Chapter 2. There are now a total of 38 schools partnered with 17 different clubs engaged with the All Schools Programme across the CB.

To showcase the great work being delivered in Eastern Counties, newly engaged Chantry Academy and City Academy Norwich were invited down to Twickenham to perform the pre-match curtain raiser as well as the guard of honour at the England vs Italy RBS Six Nations game.

Outside of the All Schools Programme there continues to be a large amount of targeted work involving schools, colleges and universities, supporting them to grow the game in the communities around our member clubs. Transition to the rugby clubs from all of the targeted delivery is key, which contributes to both growing and sustaining our clubs. This year alone we've developed twenty age grade teams, four senior male, one senior female, three girls' teams and a new university team, the majority of which are a direct result of our targeted delivery.

### Club Support

The local delivery team continue to support clubs within Eastern Counties based upon their specific developmental needs. This season has seen a slight alternation to the RFU Club Accreditation. For those of you that attended one of the two 'RFU GROW Your Club' workshops, you may already be familiar with the balanced club approach and the three elements that encompass it: **People, Environment, and Business**. We are now at a stage where there are only a handful of clubs across Eastern Counties that are not actively engaged in the accreditation process, a tool for clubs to review and continually develop.

There has been a greater emphasis to work closely with clubs and teams to sustain current rugby provision, whilst at the same time supporting those with the capacity for grow. There have been a couple of teams without RFU intervention who would more than likely no longer be in existence.

**Air Cadets Touch Cup**

A change in Sportivate funding this year restricted the support available from Active Norfolk and Suffolk Sport with the 6<sup>th</sup> Air Cadets Touch Cup, therefore engagement and support from our local clubs, Local Delivery Team was pivotal to its success. This season we did have difficulties securing a venue for the festival, therefore we would like to thank Beccles RUFC for stepping in at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour and helping create another fantastic event. We continue to strive to make the programme sustainable, and looking ahead to next season the Air Cadets will be taking a much more ownership of the programme.



*Figure 6 - Photo from the 6th Air Cadet Touch Cup*



*Figure 7 -Great Team effort at the Air Cadets Rugby Day*

We wish you all the best in the coming season.

**Chloe McMorrان Suffolk and Cambs RDO**  
**Sam Carpenter Norfolk RDO**

## COMPETITIONS



### Members of the committee:

John Mackay (Chairman), Roger Pierson (Secretary), Eric Nye (League Secretary ECN), Colin Garrod (League Secretary ECS), Richard Craddock /Calvin Joce (League Secretary ECW), Colin Edmond (Referee Representative), Alasdair Bovaird, Ian Forton.

Season 2016/17 passed with relatively few problems although a small number of clubs struggled to fulfil their fixtures, particularly at 2<sup>nd</sup> /3<sup>rd</sup> team level. It is important that clubs are realistic about their prospects of completing fixtures when entering the leagues as otherwise there are knock on effects for other clubs who end up short of competitive fixtures.

Following local consultation conducted during season 2015/16 to establish whether there was a desire to 'regionalise' the league structure at RFU level 8 (London 3 NE), there was no clear mandate for such a move. However, since this suggestion had arisen from the RFU's Adult Game Review, London Divisional Organising Committee decided to consult across the whole of London and SE Division to determine whether such a move would lessen the number of unplayed games and encourage more players to stay within the game.

The result of this consultation, which was heavily backed by Essex clubs, was favourable to the change and, for season 2017/18, there will be two 12 team leagues at Level 8- namely, London 3 (EC) and London 3 (Essex). As a result, 6 teams moved automatically from EC1 to the new league.

The EC Competitions Committee then consulted with all clubs at the annual League meetings to determine the structure below level 8. The result was the split of EC1 into three Regional leagues with a two phase programme to determine promotion and relegation with the establishment of new inter-regional competitions for all level 9 clubs for the second phase of the season.

The changes will be closely monitored and discussed with clubs at the annual round of consultation meetings at the end of next season. These meetings are now well established and enable the Committee to understand and respond to the wishes of clubs in order to provide a playing framework and regulations which meet their needs and encourages the attraction and retention of players.

The Chairman would like to thank members of the Committee together with London League Secretaries Mike Stott and Ron Hatch for their commitment and hard work throughout the season.

**John Mackay - Chairman of Competitions**

COMMUNITY CLUB DEVELOPMENT



OVERVIEW

At the beginning of the season membership of the parent Club Development Committee comprised of; John Winders, Sam Carpenter, Mike Daniels, Dale Hoffman, John Langford, Barry Male, Chloe McMorran, Roger Pierson, Andrew Sarek and Andrew Wilesmith. It can also be recorded that the Committee has been very well supported by the Chairman, John Phoenix with his attendance at meetings and with general encouragement throughout the year. Alasdair Bovaird has also played a part.

The Committee met four times during the season to review progress made towards achieving the objectives of the Action Plan and to consider other issues relating to the development of the community game in the Eastern Counties. In addition, many clubs in the CB were visited over the season by a Member of the Committee when advice on a wide range of topics was given. These visits help to provide a point of contact for a club when issues arise and it is known that clubs appreciate these on-site contacts.

The strategic objectives of the Committee seek: -

- i) To secure more effective and efficient club management and governance;
- ii) To raise facility standards; and
- iii) To boost the numbers of active volunteers.

CLUB DEVELOPMENT

A meaningful part of the Committee’s role is to encourage the development of all clubs in the CB. Following this objective the Committee continuously assesses data obtained from club visits, the review of club accounts, playing performance records and information obtained from the GMS system. The intention is to secure the sustainability of all clubs and in particular those deemed to be potentially at risk. Experience has shown that problems resulting from a lack of players or volunteers are common to a number of clubs and that these problems may become compounded when clubs do not look to the future. When issues arise Club Development reaches out to clubs with the objective of helping those struggling to address the problems they are facing.

The Committee also seeks to strengthen club development through improved links with their local communities and by encouraging good governance and improved management. Best practice is promoted.



Figure 8 – Mistley, Aldeburgh & Thorpeness and Felixtowe achieve re-accreditation

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Under the direction of Andy Wilesmith the Volunteering Action Plan has been refocused on the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Unfortunately, it has to be recorded that the keynote event, the CB Volunteering Conference did not go ahead because the low number of candidates rendered the event unviable. However, the volunteer reward policy has been implemented. With fewer awards we now concentrate on our most worthy volunteers and the awards themselves cover a wider range of topics that reflect the key drivers of our sport. This seasons awards are listed as follows: -

Club of the Year – Thetford RFC

Lifetime Achievement – Richard Cresswell (Stowmarket RFC)

Club Volunteer of the Year – Andy Pott (Norwich RFC)

Coach/Referee of the Year – Duncan Andrews (Woodbridge RFC)

Young Ambassadors of the Year – Ellie Rogers (Sudbury RFC) & Kieran Palmer (North Walsham RFC)

Club Facility of the Year – North Walsham RFC

We have also held CB social events for volunteers before England games at Twickenham and ECRU representative fixtures played at the end of the season. For next season our recruitment and retention objectives are being simplified concentrating on an approach designed to engage with the Club Volunteer Coordinators. Using this format, we are planning positive progress. Club Development firmly recognises that volunteers are the lifeblood of our game and that their recruitment, retention and recognition are vital if clubs are to flourish.

## **FUNDING & FACILITIES**

The Funding and Facilities Sub-Committee, led until March by Andrew Sarek, has continued to be busy identifying opportunities for funding within the CB and establishing the readiness of Clubs to promote facility improvements by confirming a number of projects for review and prioritisation for RFU investment. The Cambridge Club was subsequently awarded £75k towards a changing room extension and Diss have £25k for new training floodlights. In addition, Lowest and Yarmouth (pitch maintenance equipment), Holt (floodlights) and Wisbech (showers) have all gained support from the Rugby Football Foundation.

In addition, following the objectives of the annual delivery plan the group has: -

- i) Identified four clubs that would benefit from the adopted goal post safety scheme;
- ii) Helped two clubs to improve their playing surfaces. In addition, pitch improvements have also been supported through a decision taken by a National Panel involving Keith Kent and Natwest;
- iii) Helped 10 clubs furnish their pitches appropriately with support for post protectors;
- iv) Supported 10 clubs and Cambridgeshire Youth Rugby, in their efforts to ensure spectators are standing at a safe distance from the field of play, with assistance to acquire respect barriers; and
- v) Encouraged clubs to provide advertising to enable sites to be better recognised by visitors and identified within the local community.

Furthermore, following a resolution of the Sub-Committee the CB has again engaged with the Nat West Rugby Force initiative with the following results: -

- i) Two clubs have been selected to receive support through the Crowd Funding Booster Programme; and
- ii) A number of worthy clubs were invited to attend a Natwest Rugby Force workshop programme that is designed to encourage the sustainability of rugby clubs.

It must be acknowledged that this Sub- Committee has played a significant role in promoting improvements in the quality of the experience at clubs for members and visitors alike.

Finally, it can be recorded that the RFU is injecting a significant investment into the game through their artificial pitch strategy. One of these pitches is currently being installed at the Shelford Rugby Club. Any proposals for further pitches in the Eastern Counties will be determined following consideration by the Funding and Facilities Group.

### **ASSESSMENT**

In drawing this note to a conclusion, I must firmly acknowledge the support that is being given to us by our RFU partners to help us achieve our objectives. I refer in particular to Sam Carpenter and Chloe McMorran our Rugby Development Officers and Pete Shaw the RFU's Area Facility Manager. My assessment is that our Rugby Clubs are becoming better at providing the rugby experience for their members and it is very satisfying to be part of a committed team that helps facilitate this process. As for the future it is unfortunately for us that Andrew Sarek and Andy Wilesmith have moved on and resigned from the Club Development Group. Andrew Sarek in particular with his great wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm will be sorely missed.

**John Winders - Chairman Club Development Committee/Community Chairman**

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### **REFEREES**



2016/17 has been a mixed year for referees. On the one hand we have more promising referees who are being considered for promotion to elite level, but we have also had a lot of mature referees retiring and as a result it has proved difficult to cover all games at all levels.

I am delighted to say that Eastern Counties Rugby has responded by making referee recruitment their primary objective for the coming season.

Clubs and schools can help by making their people aware that refereeing is an excellent way to join or remain in the rugby community. Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambs Societies all welcome prospective referees regardless of ability, age or sex. They offer first class training and a great community spirit. Whether you want to referee every week or just now and again in social rugby, everyone is welcome.

**John Bissell - EC Referee Federation Chairman**

**CB CLUB/COMMUNITY PLAYER DEVELOPMENT GROUP (CCPD)**



Another busy, interesting and successful season.

**Age Grade Review and New Rules of Play**

The start of the season saw the introduction of The Age Grade Review together with New Rules of Play at all age groups. Together with our RFU Delivery Team, we implemented these protocols throughout the CB, and provided support and advice for our clubs by assisting them through the complexities of the *RFU Age Group Regulations and Guidance* – this season saw a significant number of queries regarding age group requirements, and this consumed some considerable time and effort – but I do hope that we have been able to assist most clubs most of the time! In the spring the RFU took a number of follow up workshops around the country. Unfortunately, the location did not suit Eastern Counties, but we were able to persuade the RFU to hold our own workshop at Diss – this was very well supported by most clubs, very successful, and also with considerable input from our schools.

**Mini Rugby**

The authorisation of Mini Festivals continues, and I trust that clubs’ and CB preparatory work here has resulted in well managed, well governed, and enjoyable festivals for our youngest players, in line with RFU policy, which prohibits results driven tournaments. We have tried hard this season to encourage clubs to run these as festivals where the development of all players, providing playing opportunities for all, and having fun, is the greater priority than the winning of a trophy. Next season we will try to eliminate barriers to participation, by abolishing the number of teams requirements at festivals, encourage mixed ability and reduce streaming. For the future, we want to continue to encourage and improve the understanding of Kids First Principles.

**Under 13s**

Sept 16 saw the introduction of a 13-a-side “line-out less” game on a 90% sized pitch. With the welcome demise of cup competitions, we devised a series of 3 tired festivals, with the aim of providing meaningful games for development and playing opportunities for all players whatever their standard or ability. Played initially within the counties, we finished with 6 different festivals across the CB on the same Sunday. This project was a huge success, and we will continue with it next season.

Next season sees the introduction of a half game for all players’ pilot. We have been selected by the RFU as one of four CBS, and we have agreed to implement this trial at U13s next season.

**Youth Rugby**

We are required to prepare a Youth Structured Season; this aims to co-ordinate all Youth activity within Eastern Counties from CB teams, the County program through County Cups, Development Festivals, Sevens competitions etc., in order to avoid clashes; this enables all stake-holders to plan their various activities with confidence. The calendar for 17/18 was prepared in January, in line with the RFU template – CBs can only organise club competitions in certain weeks of the year, and we have to quickly distil our requirements into the RFU calendar. Our annual Fixture Secretaries meeting was held at the end of January, and once again 90% of clubs with full youth sections attended this year. A

huge thanks there to Darren Wright (Suffolk) Andy Jermy (Norfolk) and Chris Mepham (Cambs) for their work.

A small amount of competition is provided with County Cups. Each County ran its own Cup competitions from U14s through to U16s, including a Plate competition. We continued with our “Final of Finals” Sunday, where County Cup Winners, County Cup Runners-up, Plate Winners, and Plate Runners-Up at each age group played each other – 11 different events took place across Eastern Counties on 12<sup>th</sup> March.

Suffolk continued to run its highly successful Sevens at The Royal Hospital School; and its Development Festivals at U14s & U15s. Norfolk and Cambs both commenced their seasons with successful Tens event, and completed them with Sevens competitions.

We continue to support to a number of club run age group festivals:-Stowmarket ran their Colts Festival in October (see below); Colchester ran their U14 & U15 Festivals in April, Diss ran their U14 Festivals in April, and Eastern Counties ran an U16 Festival at Newmarket. Ipswich ran their Sevens at all age groups from U13s through to Colts.

### **Colts Rugby**

We have a relatively thriving Colts rugby culture of in Eastern Counties. The well attended Stowmarket Festival in October gave the season a very encouraging “lift off”.

20 teams entered the Cup & Plate competitions this season, with 12 teams in the Cup and 8 in the Plate There were some many close and competitive games in the pool rounds, but, regrettably, there were more call offs this season than last – we need to understand the reasons for this.

In the Plate, Shelford beat Ipswich, and Ipswich YM beat Ely in the semis, with Shelford winning the final.

In the Cup, Woodbridge beat Hadleigh, and Colchester beat Bury in the semis, with the outstanding Woodbridge squad winning the Trophy for the first time. My thanks to Wilf Lambert for his excellent administration of the competition.

The Eastern Counties Colts Sevens held at Stowmarket attracted 9 entries from 8 different clubs at an event that was played in the best possible spirit and atmosphere – again Woodbridge were the winners, with Ipswich taking the Plate.

We are looking to establish a Colts Merit Table pre-Christmas next season.

### **Transition / Retention / Under 21s / University Returners.**

#### *University Returners’ events:-*

We all know that there is a huge drain from the game of players between the ages of 16 and 24, with many, many clubs running very successful youth sections, but losing players once they go to university. We were able to support four clubs, Diss, Woodbridge, Colchester and Ipswich who all run successful games during college holidays.

In addition, in conjunction with Southwold Rugby, we organised a University Returners / Under 21s Festival on Easter Sunday. 4 clubs, Southwold, Diss, Colchester & Hadleigh attended a most enjoyable day. This will become an annual event, and we really hope that more clubs will support in 2018. For

season 17/18, we plan to put more emphasis on Transition and Retention, and will be looking to support more college holiday games.

*FE 10s:-*

Our RFU Delivery Team successfully ran a series of 10s events across the CB aimed at providing rugby for Colleges & Schools for Further Education.

### Schools

With the introduction of the same playing regulations at all age groups for Schools & Clubs, and with many players in both environments, it is important that both streams work more closely together. This collaboration has stepped up in the latter half of the season, and we hope that we can improve still further next. Many thanks to Schools Union Chairman, Andy Wilesmith for his intervention and efforts.

**Ross Cowie - Chairman CCPD**

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### CB PLAYER PERFORMANCE PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT GROUP incl. CLUB EC & COACHING

#### DPP, ACADEMY & CB LIASION



#### DPP, Academy & CB Liaison Manager

Eastern Counties Rugby Union have been working closely with Northampton Saints & Leicester Tigers over the past season to build a strong relationship that supports the DPP, Academies, The individual Constituency Counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and our CB.



The Eastern Counties Developing Player Programme and Aspirational Player Pathway for 2016/17 and going forward in to 2017/18 is set out below: -

#### Eastern Counties Under 16s

In April 2015 RFU Council approved the recommendations of an U16s Pathway Strategic Review. As a result, the current U16 Divisional Programme will be replaced by an U16 Academy Programme. The Wellington International Festival will now involve 14 Regional Academy sides. Implementation of these and other recommendations will be managed locally by the Regional Academies.

The new format of the Wellington Festival reflects the guiding principles of this review, namely to promote: Broad numbers accessing talent development opportunities, more development, less

selection, Age appropriate competition, professionally led development, Supported by talent coach development.

Following a consultation period with the professional clubs in our area CB U16's Rugby will continue within Eastern Counties as from January 2017 this is subject to any change from the RFU. EC U16s will consist of Northampton Saints & Leicester Tigers DPP & EPDG players that are being assessed for included in the Squads to play at the Wellington Academy festival. U13s-U16s Constituency County Rugby will be replaced by the professional club DPP programme in the form of U13s-U16s Norfolk Tigers, Suffolk Saints and Cambridgeshire Saints.

Northampton Saints and Leicester Tigers are both running DPP U13's, at Saints the U13's start their assessments early in the season whereas Tigers will be carrying out their U13s assessment towards the end of the season (dates TBC) at U14s and U15s both prem clubs operate in parallel until the U16s age group. Tigers currently do not run a DPP U16s players in this group are either moved up into the PDG group or released from the programme into the Eastern Counties Trials on the 22Nov 2017 where they continue to be monitored by Leicester Tigers.

### **Eastern Counties Under 17s**

The U17s programme will benefit from the Academy EPGD U16 players not involved in the Wellington Academy Festival, these players will parachute into the EC U17s programme after Christmas where they will continue to be monitored by Eastern Counties RU, Northampton Saints & Leicester Tigers. The Academies will promote EC U17s Programme as a platform to playing a continued higher level of rugby and a possible stepping stone back into Academy rugby.

### **Eastern Counties Under 18s**

Eastern Counties U18s programme will continue in its current format subject to any change from the RFU.

### **Eastern Counties Under 20s**

Eastern Counties U20s programme will continue in its current format, as with the EC U17s Programme players that are released from the Academies in February each year will be encouraged by the Academies and our CB to step into the EC U20s Programme as a platform to playing a higher level of rugby where again they will continue to be monitored by Northampton Saints & Leicester Tigers.

Special thanks to Dave Wilks & Tim Malone of Leicester Tigers and Simon Sinclair & Dusty Hare of Northampton Saints for their help and support to Eastern Counties Rugby throughout the season.

### **Premiership Club Coaching Support**

Going forward into next season both premiership clubs will be running cascade coaching events to support the counties coaches and referees. More details to follow.

**Chris Capps-Jenner - DPP, Academy & CB Liaison Manager**

COACHING



**Overview** In total over the 2016/17 season, ECRU Coaching will have delivered and supported over 250 coaches and referees with their rugby development in 15 clubs, the positive impact on the players to whom these coaches and referees work with is invaluable. Eastern Counties RU has delivered on its promise to support coaching across Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and will continue to do so going forward.

During the 2016/17 Season Eastern Counties supported: -

- 15 - L1 & L2 award courses
- 8 Clubs with their CPD award courses
- 4 Clubs in its 'in club coaching programme'

Looking forward to 2017/18, the EC Coaching & Referee Conference is set for the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Based on numbers attending last year's event we estimate 100-120 coaches and referee delegates attending. We will be delivering a wide range of coaching and referee sessions during the conference. EC's focus this season has been on the female game, Racheal Burford will be delivering a session on the Girls and Woman's game. Dusty Hare has agreed to join us for the day & Premiership clubs Leicester Tigers and Northampton saints will be delivering practical and theory sessions to the EC clubs coaches.

We are confident our referee key note speaker Wayne Barnes will confirm & Paul Evans British Olympian will be dropping in to deliver a session on conditioning, 3-point sprint starts & Biomechanics.

**Chris Capps-Jenner - Eastern Counties Coaching Chairman**

## REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY

### EASTERN COUNTIES BOYS

#### UNDER 16s



Figure 9 - EC U16s Squad 2016/17

#### Season Review:

Eastern Counties under 16s produced another productive season, their squad consisted of 38 players from Northampton Saints & Leicester Tigers PDG & DPP along with players from clubs and schools within the CB.

Eastern Counties ran U16s trials for players who were not involved in the PGD from Norfolk V Suffolk V Camb's many of these players were invited to join the players from Tigers and Saints to form the U16s Squad.

**Results:** - Leicestershire 22 - 10 EC | NLD 41 - 31 EC | EC 20 - 12 East Midlands

#### Coaching

With just one coaching session with the squad before the first game, with the programme being moved to post Christmas the weather conditions cause problems with several training sessions. The Coaching Team performed exceptionally well considering the short period of time they have with the players prior to the start of the premier assessed matches.

#### Thank you

A big thank you to Nick Pressling (Lead Coach), Simon Atkinson & Spencer Williams (Forwards Coaches) Mark Bolton & Richard Mallett (Backs Coaches). Darren wright joined the team this season to shadow the manager and shall be taking on the EC U16s Managers role next season. Also thank you to Ryan Hopkins our physio and to Gary Lee and Thetford RFC for looking after the Players, Coaches and management team.

#### Feedback

The feed-back from players & parents was positive and praised the hard work and quality of delivery from the whole EC U16s Team. Constructive comments were raised regarding more training sessions prior to the fixtures and increased feedback to players regarding none selection.

**Chris Capps-Jenner - Eastern Counties U16s Manager**

## UNDER 17s



Changes to the timetable of the youth representative season saw the established pattern somewhat disrupted with the U16 players not joining the U17's until late in the season. This meant that the U17's operated with a smaller squad but also enabled the introduction of County rugby at this age group which allowed Coaches James Herbert and Dave Griffiths to see many more potential players playing for Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and to ensure that, as far as possible, any player of the required standard had a chance to join an EC squad.

The U17 programme is developmental and we try to play 30+ players in each match (usually 3x30 minute format) to allow players game time and the coaches to see them in competitive situations. For this reason, the results are relatively unimportant although the highlight was probably the match against Middlesex at Old Merchant Taylors where EC played some excellent rugby. Many boys were introduced to EC rugby with the most common reaction being "It's so much faster than I'm used to!" We look forward to working with the squad as they move to U18 next season.

## UNDER 18s

The short season for the U18's saw EC win 2 matches, draw one and lose the last having demonstrated some outstanding individual and collective skills. Highlights were the win away at NLD despite arriving late and under prepared due to a tyre failure on the team coach, and playing Essex in the awesome surroundings of Allianz Park.

Coaches James Herbert and Nick Murray operated with a large squad drawn from a very varied mix of clubs and schools across the CB. Whilst the coaching and management team strive hard to put forward players to represent London Counties and, ultimately, England Counties, they also aim to provide an enjoyable experience for the many players who will not reach these heights. A key target is to ensure that these young men return to club rugby as better players having been coached by and played alongside high calibre mentors and team mates.

A glance around the playing squads within and beyond the CB shows the success of this policy with many graduates from the EC Youth programme playing rugby at all levels within the adult game.

We would like to congratulate George Borakis (Ely & Cambs) who was selected to play for London Counties and Joe Colcomb (Hadleigh & Suffolk) and Bobby Hopkinson (BSE & Suffolk) who played in the London Counties trial.

**John Mackay**

**Eastern Counties U17s/U18s Manager**

UNDER 20s



A great season with outstanding teamwork and potential shown with Tui Uru and Sam Copeland having London & South East trials, with Uru being selected for the England Counties Under 20 squad to tour Holland in June 2017. Henry Cowling and Christopher Lewis should also be mentioned as they made their Senior XV debuts in May. Victories against Sussex (81-0), Middlesex (34-12) meant that Counties topped the group and had a home quarter final versus Devon.

A 44-21, outstanding victory meant an overnight trip to Bournemouth to play Dorset & Wiltshire in the semi-final. However, this proved to be the final game in the campaign, with Counties' being overwhelmed early on, despite coming back into the game during the first half Counties' ultimately lost 39-17 to complete their season.

Thanks must go to coaches: Simon Kidney and Alun Minifey, and also Shelford RFC which was our home for three months.



Figure 10- EC U20s Squad and management team 2016/17 – photo Cat Goryn

**SQUAD**

Jed McDonald(Cambridge), Aubrey Grimes (Bury St Edmunds), Oliver Coleman (Wyndham), Sam Copeland (Cambridge), Louis Hicks (Nottingham University), Sam Easton (Colchester), Henry Cowling (Sudbury),Tui Uru(Ipswich), Goncalo Roquette (Anglia Ruskin University), Robert Smith (Nottingham University),John Utting (Southwold), Andrew Devoy (Bury St Edmunds), Chris Lewis (Sudbury), Owain Collard (Cambridge), Aaron Forrest (Bury St Edmunds), Chayse Tyler (Cambridge), Joe Akak (Shelford), Henri Cherington (Shelford),Jake Duffield (North Walsham), Kevin Kanda (Shelford), Jacob Page (Diss), John Bannerman (Cambridge), Keiran Pask (Diss)

**Manager:** David Masdin, **Coaches:** Simon Kidney (Lead), Alun Minifey, **Physios:** Steph Dear, Sam Jones, Annabel Neish, **Logistics:** Ray Norfolk Clarke



Figure 11 -EC and England Counties U20's Tui Uru reaches for the line to score in the EC's opening game against Sussex  
photo Cat Goryn



Figure 12 - EC U20 and Senior XV debutant Henry Cowling passes the ball out of contact during the QF clash with Devon  
photo Cat Goryn

**Dave Masdin**  
**Manager – Eastern Counties U20's**



## EASTERN COUNTIES GIRLS

Every Season we welcome back old faces and are always excited about how many new girls we will see. The number of girls playing rugby in our CB is growing and this becomes very evident when we take over Stowmarket in mid-September for our first assessment afternoon. We have changed the way we do things in the girl's section, and now run assessment sessions instead of the pressures relating to trials.

This year's CB programme introduced some new challenges as the old format was discarded in favour of a more talent I-D approach. This involved 4/6 CBs descending on one venue and meant that both our U15 and U18 girls played three away games against Bucks, Sussex and Essex and no home games. Both squads did however manage to play a friendly game against Essex at Stowmarket ahead of the EC Womens game.

### UNDER 15s



Figure 13 - EC U15s Girls Team 2016/17

Our U15s had plenty of fresh faces this season as a lot of last year's side had moved up to the U18s and as always the first game is something of a development process for us as we field a group who have very little if any experience playing together.

### Results:

Bucks 25-5 Eastern counties | Sussex 20-24 Eastern Counties  
Essex 10-25 Eastern Counties | Eastern Counties 33-22 Essex

We were very pleased with how the season played out and watched the girls grow as a team and develop as players throughout the process.

### UNDER 18s



*Figure 14 - EC U18 Girls Team 2016/17*

Whilst many of the U18 squad are players who have come through our u15s programme its always refreshing to see girls from clubs that have developed into good players come into the squad. The girls started off very well but with injuries playing a big part in the last two games couldn't quite keep the momentum going.

### **Results:**

Bucks 17-32 Eastern Counties

Sussex 50-7 Eastern Counties

Essex 31-27 Eastern Counties

Eastern Counties 14-19 Essex

I look forward to next season where we should have a very strong U18G made up of a lot of the current U15G

### **Junior Academy players;**

Many congratulations to Poppy Mayall and Ellie Wilson from the U15G and Sam Willmot and Connie Powell from the U18s who were selected into the junior academy programme.

### **Darren Wright**

**Manager – Eastern Counties Girls U15/U18**

### EASTERN COUNTIES WOMEN'S XV



With over 60+ attending the Eastern Counties Women's trials in November 2016 we knew then this had the potential to be a good season. Following the additional trials and the hard work and commitment that all players had put in, we as a coaching team had to select our 32 squad for the championship.



*Figure 15- Eastern Counties Women's Squad and support team following their final game against Cheshire*

With limited time, it's difficult to try and get a team of players working together ready for a championship where the games were going to be tough. But not for this group of women, the camaraderie and bond to help each other was clear to see. The hard work and commitment from all players was immense.

The game against Essex was an unknown but one that would give us the opportunity to test and trial players in different positions. We worked hard, stuck to game plan, and came out victorious winners against a well drilled side. Final score was 12-10.

Preparation for the championships was superb, we had players driving 2 hours plus to make training, we had some catching trains and riding bikes, this is the type of squad they are and why they are such a special group.

First game was against Warwickshire, again a hard-fought game but came out victorious with a 26-20 win. This is when people began to watch.

The second game was one that everyone spoke about, away at Oxfordshire. The word was that we were expecting another drumming post the 60 plus points they put on us the year before. Even the referee said before the game are we expecting the same. The answer of course was no and this was proven when we won the game with 2 minutes to go. The final score 31-24. Now everyone was talking about Eastern Counties Women.

Another tough game was expected at Leicestershire and we were not disappointed. With some tough decisions going against us and on the day just not having the rub of the green, the Eastern Counties fell to their first defeat of the 2016/2017 season. Final score 23-15.

## EASTERN COUNTIES RUGBY UNION LIMITED

With the women feeling so aggrieved with the result against Leicestershire the preparation mid-week for the Cheshire game was spot on. The Eastern Counties Women wanted to finish on a high and that they did. From the off Cheshire were under the pressure and the game ended with 9 tries being scored by Eastern Counties and keeping a clean sheet. Final score 59-0.

Leading up to the final weekend where Eastern Counties had no game, we hoped that the result would go our way between Oxfordshire and Leicestershire which would take us to the final. But this was not to be the case with Leicestershire winning the game. A great effort by the ladies throughout the championship, but so many positives to take away.

Gill Burns Division 2 - Pool 2											
Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	Leicestershire CB Women	4	4	0	0	127	66	61	3	0	19
2	Eastern Counties CB Women	4	3	0	1	131	67	64	3	0	15
3	Oxfordshire RFU Women	4	2	0	2	108	96	12	2	2	12
4	Cheshire CB Women	4	1	0	3	63	123	-60	1	1	6
5	Warwickshire CB Women	4	0	0	4	64	141	-77	2	0	2

*Figure 16 - Final pool position after this year's Championship Campaign*

What has been achieved by this group of women is nothing short of amazing. The hard work, the commitment and ultimately the skill of these players is what has led to an extremely successful campaign. This was only the beginning we knew that and therefore what a great future we have.

The pride has been put back in the Eastern Counties Women's shirt and all should be proud, no more than Steph Hanratty (Bury Foxes) who has been selected for the England Deaf Women's team and Kristin Kvalvik (Harwich Owls) who has been chosen to represent Norway.



*Figure 17 – International honours for both Steph Hanratty (England Deaf Women) and Kristin Kvalvik (Norway)*

**Aaron Swanborough**  
**Manager/Head Coach – Eastern Counties Senior Women's XV**

EASTERN COUNTIES MEN'S XV



The revamped Bill Beaumont Championship Division 1 with 6 sides all playing three fixtures meant that Counties played East Midlands, Lancashire and Yorkshire. This being the second year at this level, Lead Coach, Mark Bolton, and Manager, Dave Masdin, assembled a strong squad mainly based around Cambridge and Shelford clubs. A return to the squad for Steve Hipwell, whose man of the match performances in all games, was welcomed.

The Championship is over two years and after a tough set of fixtures Eastern Counties find themselves in bottom place on points difference below Northumberland. An opponent we will play next season in what could be a relegation decider.

Thanks must go to Mark Bolton, Simon Kidney and Spencer Williams for their coaching and also Cambridge RFC that was are training base whilst playing a match there and also the other match venue of Grange Road, Cambridge University.



Figure 18 - Eastern Counties Men's XV ahead of their opening game against East Midlands

The results of the games were as follows: -

Saturday 20th May		
YORKSHIRE	61 - 15	EASTERN COUNTIES
Saturday 13th May		
EASTERN COUNTIES	15 - 38	LANCASHIRE
Saturday 6th May		
EASTERN COUNTIES	21 - 24	EAST MIDLANDS

Despite losing all three games the squad performed extremely well, in particular in the opening game where the result could have been different, a mix up at the lineout, resulting in a try proving to be the difference between the teams. The Lancashire and Yorkshire games followed a similar pattern in that both games were even until the final quarter when the opposition were able to step up a gear and pull away.

## EASTERN COUNTIES RUGBY UNION LIMITED

Bill Beaumont Division 1 North											
Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	TB	LB	Pts
1	LANCASHIRE	3	3	0	0	115	46	69	3	0	15
2	YORKSHIRE	3	3	0	0	121	54	67	2	0	14
3	EAST MIDLANDS	3	2	0	1	84	67	17	2	0	10
4	CHESHIRE	3	1	0	2	54	79	-25	1	0	5
5	NORTHUMBERLAND	3	0	0	3	62	118	-56	1	0	1
6	<b>EASTERN COUNTIES</b>	3	0	0	3	51	123	-72	0	1	1

*Figure 19 - Final pool position after this year's Championship*

As these results are carried forward into next year's competition a win against Northumberland will be vital to have any chance of remaining in Division 1 of the Championship for the 18/19 season.



*Figure 20- Man of the Campaign Diss Rugby's Steve Hipwell scores the opening try against East Midlands – Photo Cat Goryn*

**Dave Masdin**  
**Manager – Eastern Counties Men's XV**

**NORFOLK RFU**



Norfolk can report a very satisfactory year as their new governance and all club meeting structure has yielded more Norfolk volunteering and club engagement with the county. On the downside, the continued decline of male senior games and senior playing numbers increases the threat of club failure and the ever-aging population of senior Norfolk referees is potentially a huge problem.

The Inclusion of the County youth and plate finals to the Big rugby day and thus now ‘Weekend’, has not only significantly promoted our sport but also brought the Norfolk rugby community together and via the club tendering process, to hold the weekend, further increasing club engagement with Norfolk. The new format of four all club meetings per season with specific agendas of interest has also increased club engagement and thus communications and volunteering.

Where we ran a significant financial deficit last season in support of our modernization and governance changes, we are expecting a small surplus this season albeit on an increased cost base. This is primarily due to an Eastern Counties financial contribution to senior, youth and women’s county rugby competitions and development, and the increased sponsorship income from the Big Rugby Weekend.

We look forward to consolidating the above next season, which will give us space to concentrate on the new priorities of referee recruitment and club/school partnerships.

Norfolk would like to thank all those dedicated volunteers and those who have supported us throughout the past season.

**Martin Crook - President and Vice Chairman, Norfolk RFU**

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**SUFFOLK**



Although administratively this has been a difficult year for Suffolk RU, with poor numbers at some meetings and the Suffolk Dinner cancelled for the second year, where it matters, i.e. on the pitch, we have been very successful and particular credit must be paid to Darren Wright for all he has done for club, county and Eastern Counties. As ever, our season has been bookended by 2 highly successful youth 7 tournaments at Royal Hospital school and Ipswich club. This year we started to run our own player development plan (PDP) which sees our U16s from Suffolk schools and clubs given a chance on a bigger stage. We also extended our U17s programme as well as relaunching the Suffolk U20s.

**U16s**

This year’s U16 programme was a success and one which Northampton are wanting to spread across their catchment sub counties. Suffolk held an initial trial for all club and school players not currently

involved with either set up and this led on to an assessment game with Tim Grimsey from Northampton Saints DPP and Chris Capps-Jenner from EC on the clipboards to see if anyone has slipped through the net.

Further progression, leading to the EC U16 trials was led by Saints. After the first trial, 4 lads were asked to play in the Suffolk Saints team against Norfolk Tigers and Cambridgeshire Saints, one of who made it through to play in all three EC U16 games. We therefore feel that we have undoubtedly played our part in giving Suffolk players a further opportunity to be spotted for elite development.

### **U17s**

This year our U17s programme was expanded and took in two matches, home and away against Norfolk, with Suffolk coming out on top in both games. The Squad met on three occasions to enable us to assess them and watch them in games that we had conditioned. They then went to Thetford to face Norfolk on Oct 12th with the return at Ipswich RFC on Nov 2nd before representing their County in the EC Trials at Thetford RFC on Nov 9th. 9 Suffolk players from that trial were taken into the EC squad. Next year we will play both Norfolk and Cambridge before going to Thetford.

### **EC U17 Barbarians**

Darren Wright organised an EC U17s Barbarian side to play the EC side on March 8th. This was made up of Suffolk and Norfolk school and club players. Another great evening at Thetford and 5 boys were invited in to the training squad for next seasons EC programme. 3 of these were Suffolk lads.

### **U20s**

It's no secret that there is a significant drop off in the game between the ages of 16 and 24. With this in mind, we relaunched our U20s this year played against Cambridge University U20s. IT was a fantastic game and the boys nearly caused an upset. This game was assessed and 4 lads were invited to play for the EC U20s against the same opposition the following week at Grange Road. We are now confident that we will get the buy in from Suffolk clubs, after a successful 1st year and have already had a few clubs come back to us to confirm their support. We will be looking to expand this next year to an additional game and travel to Grange road for a return fixture.

### **Senior 1st XV**

This programme has proved difficult over the last few years as the fixtures always come at the wrong time of the season. It is hoped by creating a pathway from youth to seniors we will have players who have enjoyed their experiences playing for Suffolk at various stages and will want to finish it off with a senior cap.

### **The future**

We are very much committed to our player development programme and will be working closely with Eastern Counties and the RFU to continue to run programmes at all the age groups we are allowed and also to make further progress alongside Norfolk and Cambridgeshire in supporting Women and Girls rugby in Eastern Counties.

### **Rob Temple - President Suffolk RFU**

## CAMBRIDGESHIRE



The 2016-17 season has been one of continuity in terms of the activity of the county union, and in many ways, also one of continuity on the playing field as clubs have largely consolidated their position in their respective leagues.

Although Cambridge were in the lower half of National League 1 for most of the season, they never looked likely candidates for relegation, and will be looking for a stronger position next season. Shelford finished a creditable sixth in National League 3, but with the top two in that league running away from the others, promotion was out of reach from early in the year.

Saffron Walden had a strong start to life at Level 6 and, although results tailed off in the second part of the season, they will be looking to improve on eighth place in London 1 next year. Cantabrigian will likewise be looking to improve on their third place finish in London 2 North East.

The new level eight league brings a number of Cambridgeshire clubs together – Ely, Wisbech and Newmarket will all be looking to make their mark at this level, but doubtless local bragging rights will be well contested as well.

Renegades had a season to remember, carrying all before them in Eastern Counties 2 West to emerge as worthy champions – a club going from strength to strength on and off the field. March were also clear winners of Eastern Counties 3 West, winning every game they played and able to bring a growing player base to the fore as the season went on. And Mildenhall Red Lodge, Sawston, Cambourne and Wendens Ambo will be anticipating a further season of social rugby in the new league structure.

The county cups culminated in the senior final at the University's Grange Road ground – how fortunate we are to have access to a 'neutral venue' of such quality - with Cambridge Development taking the honours over Shelford Nomads, and at Wisbech where the community finals were won by Cambridge III, Ely II, Cantabs III and Wisbech II.

The county senior side lost narrowly to Norfolk at Ely, and looks forward to taking on Suffolk early in the new season. We were also pleased to be able to support Wisbech RFC's seventieth anniversary and charity day by fielding a county XV versus a Wisbech Presidents XV on 29 April. Support for the event from Eastern Counties contributed to a successful day in raising the profile of our sport in the town, and in raising some £3000 in aid of the family of an Oakham RFC player who sadly died following a game earlier in the season. A further priority for the county in 2017-18 will be to establish some wider representative rugby opportunities with additional games for the senior XV and the possibility of both veterans and under-20 county teams taking the field in the forthcoming season.

Youth rugby in the county is an area of strength – with a well-established playing programme attracting support from beyond the boundaries of the CB with clubs from Hertfordshire and East Midlands choosing to participate in county events. It has also been pleasing to see the initial steps in the reappearance of county youth sides at under 17 and 18, filling a gap that our young players seem keen should be filled.

There have also been signs of growth in Womens and Girls rugby, with new girls' sections appearing at Cambridge and Saffron Walden, and interest from across the county in creating more opportunities for girls and women to play the game.

Our referees' society has continued to support all youth and social rugby and is gearing up to meet the challenge of the move of university college games to Saturdays from next season – new recruits to the refereeing fraternity will be welcome, and hopefully the challenge of ensuring appropriate training opportunities will be met to keep the flow of new recruits going.

There are still too many games being called off, and too many where teams are playing with fewer than 15 players, or without front rows, and the focus of the county will remain on promoting the need to 'just play the game' rather than focus on regulations, league points or claiming the win – sometimes to the detriment of ensuring that all who might wish to play get the chance to do so. Committees and regulations can help create the framework for this to happen, but the attitude of clubs to the playing of rugby is key to making a difference in this respect.

The county union continues to do its job with too few people doing too many jobs – and succession planning and the recruitment of new volunteers is another area of focus for us in 2017-18. The AGM in June is likely to see a changing of the guard in some key roles and we hope to be able to continue the success of recent years in raising the profile of the county to the rugby community and in raising the profile of the game in Cambridgeshire and North West Essex.

**Alasdair Bovaird - Cambridgeshire Rugby Union Representative**



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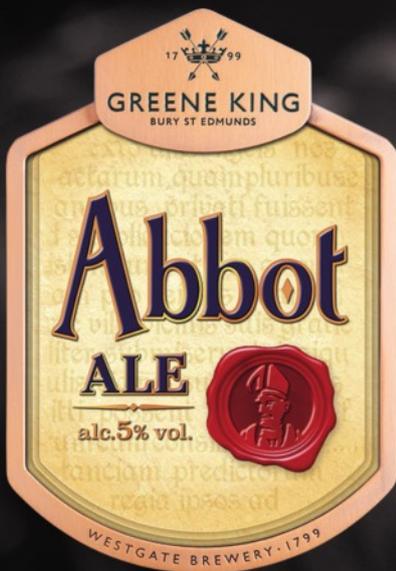
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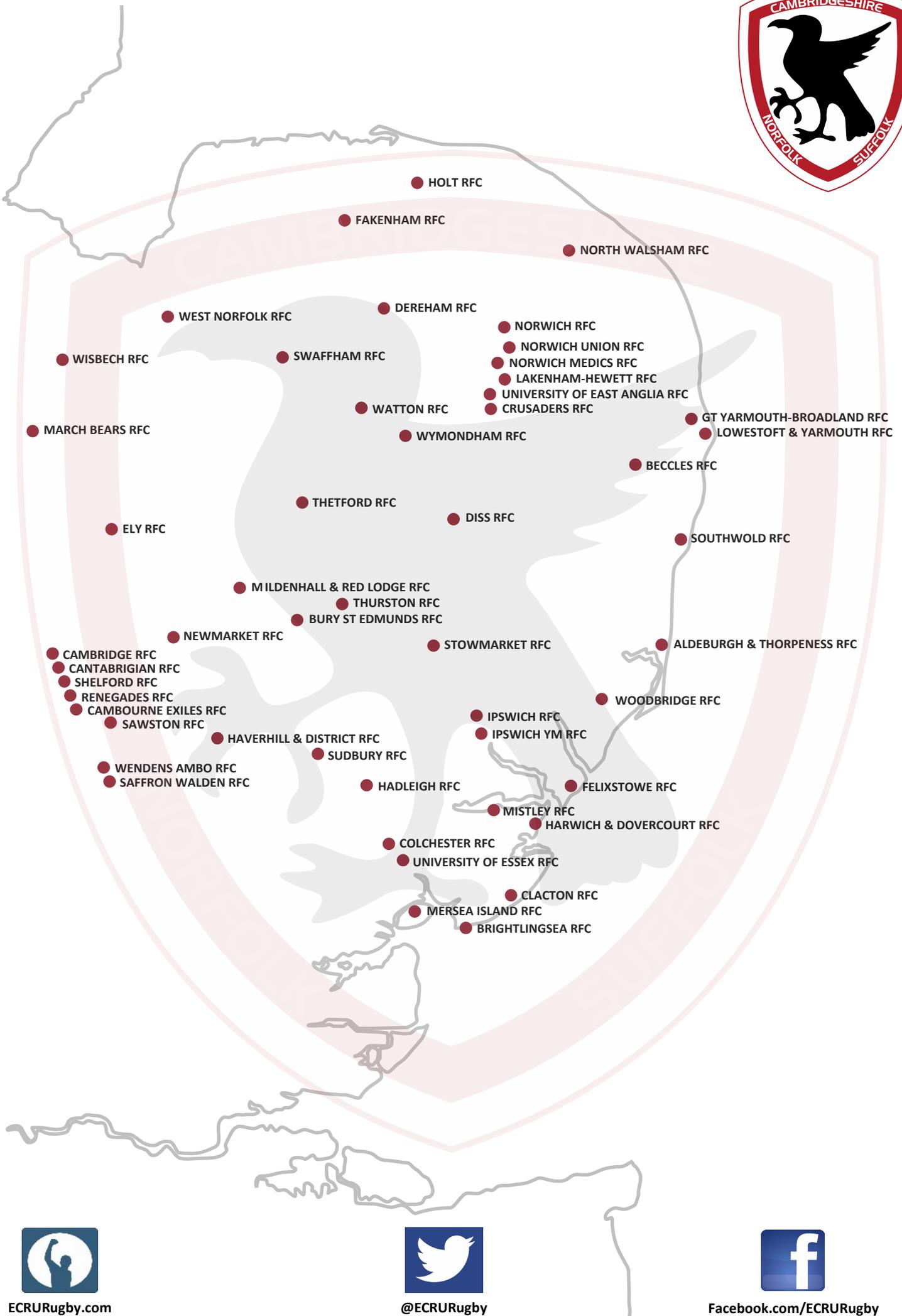
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