

## **Henley Rugby Football Club – Three Year Plan (2021)**

### **Be part of Henley Rugby Football Club (HRFC)**

#### **“A Premier Community Rugby Club in the Thames Valley”**

HRFC is the go-to club in the area known for our great rugby teams, who play attractive and competitive rugby at all levels and our work in training and developing a pipeline of talented young players. The Henley Hawks is our flagship team and their continued success is important and integral to the club.

We are a rugby club and rugby is our main focus, but to both support this and in addition to this, we want to provide a social and leisure hub, that’s open to all.

We therefore have two aims:

- **provide an all-year-round club facility**

Our aim is to provide all-year-round club facilities for use by the whole community. We have excellent facilities for hire, in addition to the events organized by the club. We want the club to be used out of season over the summer months. The new 4G pitch and changing facilities, along with the refurbished clubhouse and café provide a perfect venue for any event, fitness challenge or children’s activity. On-site parking is an important benefit for a Henley town-centre location.

- **lower the age profile of club supporters and benefactors**

To ensure the continued success and financial viability of the club, we need to seek to lower the age profile of our supporters and benefactors. To do this we need to engage with the Henley community and attract new members and supporters, increasing the diversity and offering something relevant to a wider audience.

### **Henley As One**

We believe the success of the club depends on the whole club working as one, with each section complementing the other. The whole is more than the sum of its parts. We will achieve this by focusing on the following:

- **Success through teamwork**

As a community rugby club we are heavily reliant on volunteers, members and sponsors to make the club operational and viable. We have a very small team of paid employees who have to juggle a whole range of activities and tasks to ensure things get done and we deliver a safe, welcoming club environment. Just as it is on the pitch, it is vital that off the pitch, we all work together as a team for the success of the whole club. Through teamwork we can continue to create and deliver not just great rugby but a great place to be part of.

- **Pride and belonging**

We want to be a club where people feel proud to be part of it. It's important to us to create a welcoming atmosphere where people feel they can socialize, contribute and belong. Community clubs are a place to have fun, make friends and share experiences. Our club is based around the sport of rugby and having playing sides that play attractive and competitive rugby is important to attract and retain members. Pride can stem from our success on the pitch, our contribution to the community or from our support of key issues and links with partners such as Brave Mind.

- **Growing our community**

We want to grow our community to include the full range of people that interact and come into contact with the club. For some it's the place they watch the Hawks play, for others where their children train and take part in events, for some it's as a member of the gym or a trip to the physio or simply as a visitor to the café for lunch. All are most welcome and we want to provide a positive and enjoyable experience on each occasion. We need the support and financial contribution from each individual but our club is about much more than that – it's about belonging, a place to meet friends, young and old alike – it's a place where you feel at home.

**Great rugby - Great facilities – Great food – Great people**

## **HRFC – Three Year Plan**

### **Hawks, Women, Bulls, Community**

Attracting, training, developing and retaining great rugby players; creating teams who play attractive and competitive rugby at all levels.

#### **Hawks:**

- In the three-year time period there is a desire for the Hawks to be promoted to National 1.
- Players and coaching staff believe promotion is achievable in season 2021/2.
- There are two key challenges:
  - o Funding for senior squad at salary threshold level
  - o Recruitment of players due to geographical proximity to other clubs in National 1 (Rams and Chinnor) and a National 3 club (Maidenhead) and players not living in local area.
- Opportunities:
  - o The formation of a business group who can support players finding jobs etc would help with recruitment.
  - o Develop a prospectus to give to potential recruits to sell HRFC and the benefits of being part of the club
  - o Partnership with Ealing is an excellent opportunity to help develop aspiring players. Learning from the experience with Wasps and setting ground rules upfront.

#### **Women:**

- The development of the Women's side is ongoing with a new coaching structure in place.
- The plan for the ever-growing Hawks Women is to consolidate our position in the Women's Championship South whilst expanding the set-up to incorporate a Development XV.
- We want to create a pathway from our newly-formed Girls team into the Hawks Women's squad as well.

#### **Bulls:**

- The plan is to continue running the Bulls (2<sup>nd</sup> XV).
- The coaching team feel it is important to have competition for places in the squad and to create an atmosphere where all of our players can thrive and be the best they can be.
- There is a question around the costs involved and some other clubs are looking at whether to continue with this model. We are still very committed to making the Bulls a viable proposition. The key for us to find an appropriate competition for them to enter, and discussions with the Zoo League, RFU and ORFU are still ongoing.

## **Vikings and Vultures:**

The Vikings:

- Going forward the plan is to continue training for veterans and newcomers alike, providing great coaching to ensure the teams continue to improve and practise skills, enabling them to succeed and enjoy the games at the weekend. The Vikings continue to focus on providing a good level of rugby for those who want to continue playing on a more sociable level, and also as a pathway for our Colts to hopefully break into the Hawks and Bulls squad.

The Vultures (the Veterans):

- The Vultures will continue to play other top veterans about 15 times a year and aim to keep hold of the Oxfordshire County Veterans Cup. We will continue to support their aspirations, including their annual pilgrimage to Jersey for their Rugby 10s tournament.

## **Kids First and Juniors**

Henley Kids First and Juniors (KF&J) play a vital role in connecting our club with the local community, particularly families, with the section being the entry point for on average 70 new members every year, many of whom retain an affiliation with the club throughout their adult lives.

We're rightly proud that our KF&J section, led by approximately 80 parent-volunteers, sets a very high standard for junior rugby in the Thames Valley having been recognised as the best Mini & Juniors section at the 2019 national rugby awards.

We train and play on Sunday mornings and many of age groups train mid-week as well. Our ethos is to create a centre for year round rugby and fitness with some age groups also training through the summer months.

The club now has now developed a relationship with Henley College and Ealing Trailfinders which can provide the opportunity for young aspiring players to have a route to semi/professional sport.

KF&J rugby is aimed at boys and girls, it upskills coaches and creates a great rugby environment, so that everyone stays in the game for longer. HRFC have signed the Kids First pledge, which means committing to:

- Put children at the heart of everything we do.
- Encourage fun on the pitch through equal opportunity and realistic expectations of children.
- Build the skills of our adults to provide a safe, healthy, respectful and enjoyable environment for children.
  - Develop children's confidence and character as players and as people, challenging any behaviour that conflicts with this.
  - Champion rugby's Core Values inspiring a lifelong bond between children, adults and sport.

## Our Goals

1. Create a safe and inclusive environment where young people can enjoy learning to play rugby and develop their confidence, physical fitness and important life skills. Instill the RFU's T.R.E.D.S. values of Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship.
2. Increase annual membership of the KF&Js to **+75 members p/a** through our **Player Reach Out Programme (P.R.O.P.)** and continued support of local schools.
3. A sustained and successful pipeline of talent across all year groups with a view to providing players of the future for the Colts and Senior teams.
4. Develop & grow the U12-U15 Junior Girls section

## Key Deliverables

- Grow the membership to in excess of 500 with U6 and U7 contributing a minimum of c. 50 members each.
- Increase Junior Girls membership & create a pathway from Junior to Senior level.
- Ensure that all of our coaches are capable and competent with adequate training and relevant RFU courses taken.
- Sign up 5 local schools through the PROP scheme & deliver coaching
- Establish and run a successful Colts team.
- Improve overall member engagement and level of volunteering with the club.
- Continue to raise funds through annual tournaments and other fundraising events.

As the family face of our club KF&J is a constant source of positive news and PR which helps the club develop its links with the local community.

## Community

### PROP scheme

In terms of developing and supporting rugby in the local community we are planning to start up our local Primary School coaching again from September 2021 and will also supply a coach at Gillotts. This activity is supported by sponsors and significantly by the members of the Ambassador Club.

- Opportunity:
  - Develop the scheme to include further schools depending on funding

### Legacy Fund

To help secure the future and continued success of HRFC for generations to come, we have set up a legacy fund, which is an opportunity for members and stakeholders to leave a contribution to the Club in their will.

Valuable donations in the past have helped fund several projects undertaken by the Club, including the new Invesco Turf which would not have happened without the generous contributions of sadly departed members.

- Opportunity:
  - Raise awareness of legacy fund in all forms of communication e.g., programmes, On the Wing, posters

## **Henley Rugby Charitable Trust**

We have recently established the Henley Rugby Charitable Trust (HRCT) whose stated aim is to provide financial support to community sport in Henley. As a charity, it must retain independence from the club, but will operate as part of the club's financial activities, providing funding for community activities identified by the club's financial management. Examples include, coaching and medical supplies for junior teams and part payment for maintenance of an artificial surface shared with a professional team. It benefits from the taxation treatment of income received by charities. It is a way of allowing the scarce club resources to be allocated to professional first teams.

### **Opportunity:**

- Fund raising activity within guidelines for Gift Aid, certain categories of membership and one-off donations, high-rate taxpayer reclaim
- Ambassador Club contributions
- Raise awareness of legacy fund in all forms of communication e.g., programmes, On the Wing, posters

HRCT is registered with the Charities Commission (1192498) and with HMRC. Trustees are Hugh Crook, Nick Bradbury (Kids First & Juniors Chairman), Lisa Tavinor (Head of Girls Section), and John Louth. Hugh is the primary contact – (hccrook@aol.com).

## **Health and Wellbeing**

### **Brave Mind**

We are delighted to have partnered with Brave Mind on their mental wellbeing programme. This puts mental wellbeing on the same level as physical wellbeing and importantly starts the conversation at all levels of the club.

The club pilot is about setting up a supportive infrastructure and community. The Henley Rugby community will be encouraged to connect and discover what mental health awareness is all about by learning from and sharing experiences. Through understanding more, comes choice, opportunity and support. Social connectedness is key for emotional wellbeing as it provides belonging and sense of purpose. With such improved knowledge, attitude, communication and confidence, club environments such as Henley can evolve and help reduce negative bias and perception. It's about supporting one another and making it normal to talk about mental health.

### **- Opportunity:**

- Review our approach to health and wellbeing at the club and identify potential weaknesses or opportunities for improvement

### **Safeguarding**

We are in the enviable position of having close to 100 volunteer coaches giving up their time during the week and every Sunday morning, helping to provide the best possible rugby environment for our junior players. Every coach shares the responsibility for safeguarding and creating a safe environment within an accepted ethical framework.

The coach recruitment process now includes an obligatory RFU DBS check.

The shared ethos across the coaching workforce is to provide a standard of excellence with the emphasis on fun, mutual respect and sportsmanship as the players continue on their rugby journey and development.

The importance of Safeguarding the junior members has been strengthened in recent years with the employment of onsite medical staff for regular training sessions as well as fixtures and festivals, and the club hosts regular First Aid training in the clubhouse for the Coaches. It is now obligatory for all the age groups to have first aid trained coaches as well as their other rugby CPD courses and qualifications. We are hugely fortunate to have a highly skilled team of Coaches that also recognise that the children have a right to participate in rugby activity in a safe, positive, inclusive and enjoyable environment and as its numbers grow this will only strengthen its already strong reputation.

### **Early on-set dementia and concussion**

A study last year discovered that rugby and football players are six times more likely to have a degenerative brain disease called “chronic traumatic encephalopathy” (CTE) which is caused by repeated blows to the head. This could come from repetitive concussions caused by the amount of tackling and heavy contact involved in both training and games within the professional sport.

With several ex-professionals now engaged in legal action against their respective unions, this is an issue that cannot be ignored.

At Henley RFC we have always prided ourselves on being at the forefront of player welfare at our level, and we will continue to monitor how this issue evolves over the next few years.

Similarly, we have robust concussion protocols in place at both training sessions and on match days to make sure our players receive the best possible medical attention if it is needed.

- Opportunity:
  - Looking to host a fundraising event with Alan and Alix Popham

### **Attracting additional clubs and networks**

- We have developed a relationship with the Henley Hawks Netball team and Henley Cycling Club, providing them with a ‘home’ and opportunity to join in being part of the HRFC family.
- Opportunity:
  - To enhance the newly established relationships following end of lockdown
  - Identify and contact other clubs that could benefit from a central Henley base and our facilities. Attracting different clubs will facilitate the change and diversify the profile of potential members and supporters of the club

## **Clubhouse and Commercial**

Our aim is to provide **all-year-round club facilities** for use by the whole community.

### **Clubhouse Hire**

Following the transformation of our old Clubhouse into our new state-of-the-art, multi-purpose venue in 2016, we are very proud of our new facility which is one of the best venues in South Oxfordshire. It has also proven to be great for social distancing during the pandemic. We are able to accommodate any size or type of event or celebration, with ample car parking available and full Audio-Visual capabilities. Menza Café, our hospitality partner, offer a variety of wonderful menu options to suit all budgets.

- Opportunity:
  - o One of the objectives of our new On The Wing publication is to communicate more broadly to the wider Henley community about the club and the facilities on offer

### **Invesco Turf**

Invesco Turf is our brand new, state-of-the-art 4G surface that has been installed at Henley RFC in July 2020. Replacing our Tiger Turf surface, Invesco Turf is the only purpose-built artificial pitch in the area. Not only used by the Rugby Club, but it has also become a real community asset and is suitable for other team sports such as football, hockey and netball and we have many local schools, clubs, companies and community organisations who play on it each week.

The 4G turf meets the performance specifications for player safety, ball performance and surface durability.

Take-up has been excellent and usage is already 70+ %, increasing to 90% at peak times.

- Opportunity:
  - o Again, through advertising in On the Wing, press coverage and social media we are seeking to increase awareness of the facilities
  - o Building relationships with other clubs, schools and community groups will also raise awareness and increase usage

### **Invesco**

- *For many years, Invesco has remained committed to playing a significant role within the local Henley community and we are delighted to support Henley RFC in the refurbishment of their 4G pitch. The state-of-the art surface will be a great resource for the community and will play an important role in promoting the lifelong benefits of sport on both physical and mental wellbeing.*

Matthew Heath, Chief Marketing Officer, Invesco



## **Shop**

As part of phase two of the Clubhouse refurbishment project saw the introduction of our new Club Shop at Dry Leas. Selling a variety of merchandise for all members, including Kids First & Junior kit to adult hoodies and fleeces, there are fantastic gift opportunities for all members. In the coming weeks we will even have Henley RFC face masks available to purchase.

- Opportunity:
  - o To manage and refresh stock to retain interest
  - o To look at the opening hours of the shop so it is accessible at popular times
  - o To have a strong on-line offering available

## **Partners: Menza, Love Fitness, Physiologic**

We continue to build long-term relationships with our on-site partners, sharing ideas and supporting their aims and growth potential. Menza provide an excellent café facility for all as well as supplying our events held in the Clubhouse and on-site. Love Fitness has just extended its facilities by creating a new studio/gym space to enhance their offering. Physiologic continue to add a complementary service to the sports and leisure hub.

Opportunity:

- Further cross-pollination of ideas and hosting joint and complementary events
- Cross-selling/recommendations and sponsorship opportunities

## **Sponsors**

### **Invesco**

We are delighted to announce that long-standing club partner, Invesco have agreed a new 10-year deal that will see them continue as Main Sponsor of Henley RFC. Included in this agreement is the continued naming rights to our new 4G surface, Invesco Turf.

To have secured such an important partnership for the Club over such a long period of time really emphasises how far we have come over the past few years, and hopefully underpins how much our main sponsors value their relationships with us.

### **New sponsors**

Despite a very challenging year for us all, we are very pleased to announce that we secured several new sponsors for the upcoming 2021/22 season.

Along with the new Kids First & Juniors main sponsors, Altrad, we welcome Firco and Fill Your Flutes who also join as Elite Sponsors of the Club. We have several advanced conversations with other local companies as well that we hope to announce in due course.

### **Existing sponsors**

Whilst bringing on board new sponsors is integral to the existence of any sports club, equally important is retaining the support of our existing portfolio of club partners.

At Henley RFC, we are very proud to have formed some excellent long-standing relationships with several local businesses who have supported the Club for many years and keeping them engaged and feeling valued is vital to the success of our off-field development.

Providing them with value for money and an excellent match day experience is something we are very proud of, and we are always looking to evolve and offer new and exciting initiatives for our sponsors to be a part of.

- Opportunity:
  - One area that is a key focus for us moving forwards is bringing new sponsors to our Club events. From our Winter Sporting Supper to our annual Sportsman's Dinner, a Henley RFC event is always an excellent evening's entertainment, and we want more sponsors to feel part of these unique occasions.

Details of sponsorship opportunities are available from Alistair in the Club office.

### **Volunteers**

As a community rugby club we are heavily reliant on volunteers to make the club operational and viable, from management to fundraising to carrying out all the odd jobs, we are dependent on the generous time and efforts of a whole range of people.

The plan is to continue to attract new volunteers as well as nurture and retain our existing teams.

- Opportunity:
  - Review the profile of the existing volunteer groups and welcome a more diverse range of talent to contribute to the thinking and strategy at the club

### **Friday Club**

The Friday Club is a group of members, who meet on a Friday morning with the task of preparing the club facilities for the match on Saturday, presenting the club in the best light possible. Tasks involve tidying the entrance, car park, Grandstand and front of the clubhouse, plus emptying the waste bins.

With no matches over the last twelve months, the team have undertaken many different tasks around the site, e.g., cutting back the car park gardens, trimming overgrown trees, clearing the undergrowth, fixing fences, controlling pitch damage by rabbits and installing the new Media Facility.

- Opportunity:
  - Due to the success of the club environment (M&Js, the development of the site, with Menza Cafe, Physiologic, Invesco Turf, and the new gym) the workload is increasing and we therefore need to recruit new volunteers. Our goals remain the same: to continue to present the club and its facilities in the

best possible light and deliver a safe, secure, and a welcoming environment for the members and visitors.

- New volunteers will be made very welcome and we want to appeal to a wide audience with a range of skills – mending, fixing, gardening, clearing etc.
- Old garden equipment or tools that members no longer use would also be very welcome.

### **Management Committee**

The HRFC Management team are a collection of volunteers supported by one member of staff that seek to control all aspects of the day-to-day operations of club.

The team comprises the President, Chairman, Finance Director, Director of Rugby, Director of Rugby Administration, Facilities Director, Chairman of Kids First and Juniors, Director of Communications and Commercial Manager.

The team formally meets monthly but interacts regularly as required and also seeks to present to the membership at least once a year at an AGM and with a Shareholders Board 2-3 times a year.

The team works hard to balance and manage the short-term operational challenges of the club, the medium-term tactics of the club (such as the creation of this 3-year plan) and the long-term financial security of the club for the benefit of all of its stakeholders.

- Opportunity:
  - As roles become available on the management team, we will look to a broader range of candidates for selection

### **Dry Leas Fundraising Team**

The Fundraising Team play a vital role in helping the Club balance the books. The Team is made up of a variety of local business people, including some ex-players – they share a passion to support Henley Rugby Club and make it the best club in the area. The team work tirelessly, giving up their free time to come up with imaginative ideas to raise money for the club. Events that are run on a regular basis now include club dinners with guest speakers, Tribute nights, quiz nights and Beer festivals... and within these events there are auctions, raffles and other such money-spinning ideas. There is also huge support from many local businesses of Henley to make these events and auctions possible.

- Raise awareness of fundraising efforts and team
- Carry out research to understand what appeals to members, potential members and wider Henley community with the aim of broadening appeal and support
- Target for fundraising activity: between £50-75k per annum for the next 3 years

## **Coaches and Administration**

We are very fortunate to have an excellent coaching set-up with Director of Rugby, Nigel Dudding ably assisted by coaches, Luke Allen, Tom Gardiner, Andy Jones and Alan Awcock. The women's set-up sees Ollie Perry as Director of Rugby with Ali Mortimore as Head Coach.

We have always been real believers of recruiting from within, rather than looking outside the Henley Rugby community for coaches. This helps us generate a togetherness that we hope is seen on the pitch.

- Opportunity:
  - o There are several current first team players that we have earmarked as potential coaches in the future, and hope that when the time comes, they will step into the coaching set-up that we have in place.

## **Admin Team**

A key factor to our off-field development is our Admin Team that works so hard behind the scenes to manage the day-to-day affairs of the Club.

Covid-19 has given us the opportunity to really look at how we function as a business and how to make us more effective over the coming years.

## **Technology**

We have embraced modern technology, with Zoom meetings now a commonplace thing, and in many respects has made us more efficient and better at time management. Working from home has also been adopted and encouraged throughout the pandemic.

We have a number of new initiatives we are looking at which harness the benefits of technology and will help to make our administration more efficient and modernise our offering.

- Opportunities:
  - o With members and supporters still unsure about whether they should attend matches in the future, our team is looking at new ways in which we can live stream matches for our supporters to watch online, hopefully in time for the 2021/22 season.
  - o The ability to purchase match tickets online is also being looked at.
  - o We are also updating our membership system so that come July 1<sup>st</sup> we hope to have a better process in place for our members to re-new their memberships, including offering a direct debit facility to make it easier for our members to manage their finances.

## **Ambassador Club**

The Ambassador Club was set up in 2018 to supply funds to help deliver the 5-year playing plan. The playing plan covered all sections of the club and each section had their own specific objectives to be achieved over the time period. The ambitions and scope were wide

ranging and required funds beyond those normally raised to support playing activities, hence the need for the creation of the Ambassador Club.

Current Status: 47 members, max annual income when all contributing £42K

- Opportunity:
  - o Relaunch in Sept. 2021 to support new 3-year plan
  - o Secure 3-year renewals of current members
  - o Obtain new members e.g. M&J parents and ex- players
  - o Target 80% of current total i.e., £35k revenue pa
  - o Evening social, revised brochure, refreshed “recognitions”
  - o Simplify admin Charity v HRFC

### **Summary**

This plan aims to cover all aspects of the club, setting out our current position, plans for the future and opportunities. It is a working document and we will look to add to it over the three years to keep it current and useful. In particular, we will seek to create more opportunities to ensure we meet our aims.

The three key risks for the club and our ability to deliver our plans are:

- insufficient finances
- loss of key personnel
- decreasing numbers of members and volunteers.

As covered in this plan we are looking to mitigate these risks by putting in place positive actions to ensure we remain financially viable as a club and over time change the age profile of the club and encourage new people to be part of HRFC.

We believe the continued growth and evolution of the club is an exciting opportunity for all, making use of our excellent facilities and creating a community-wide social and leisure club.