Chairman's Report 2021-2022

Chairman's Report

Backdrop

First of all, welcome to everyone here this evening. The Rugby Club constitution states that we need 20 voting members to turn out in order that the meeting can take place and this can be a challenge. This year we have opted to hold the meeting on a Club night after training and also to invite people to attend via zoom. We have, I hope, improved the on-line security protocols this year. I would encourage members to attend the AGM and the Financial AGM if they can. We are 'One Club' and the Club is managed through the Executive Team on behalf of the membership so your engagement and involvement are crucial.

Last season was the first full season of uninterrupted league rugby since the pandemic and it threw up some interesting challenges that appear to have been common across the Country! Nevertheless, it has been great to get back to some sense of normal and generally across the whole Club, on and off the pitch, we have had a good season. There have been some impressive results on the pitch with some great young talent coming through the player pathway and on the social side there has been really good support from members and others for the events and functions that have been held.

It is this support that has ensured that Macclesfield Rugby Club is well placed to continue developing for the future. A huge congratulations to our Honda Volunteer Award winners:

Pip Gregory – Girls Rugby

Mike Keeling – Walking Rugby

John Webster – Grounds

Pete Harper – Roustabouts

Also, a huge congratulations to the nominees and award winners at the end of season Black tie event last week.

Our aim remains, to be a happy, successful and sustainable Rugby Club at the heart of the community and to play at the highest level we can achieve across all age grades, types and genders of the game within our means. We are 'One Club'.

On the pitch.

Most of us thought that people would be really excited and looking forward to playing again but that didn't happen. The last Colts cohort from 2020 virtually disappeared. Young

players found other things to do and some older players hung up their boots. We struggled, along with many Clubs, in putting full sides out early in the season. The impact of injuries on Clubs has also been widely reported around the Country. There has been no research done around this but one possible reason put forward is that whilst players were gym fit and conditioning fit, they had lost their ability to give and take contact in, what is a physical game. We fielded 39 players in the 1st XV last season and registered over 60 injuries of one sort or another. When you don't have big squads anyway that has a huge impact not just on the 1st XV but on all the other adult teams in terms of consistency, game time and having to play up to avoid conceding games and risk being excluded from the league until the following season. A huge thank you to the team captain's, coaches and managers for a mighty effort this year to keep putting teams out each week. It caught up with us at the end of the season when our 2's, 3's and 4's were excluded from their leagues for the final couple of games. Despite that the 2nd team reached the Cup Final against Caldy and lost but played really well. Next season the 2's and 3's will be back in the leagues but we have taken the decision not to apply for the 4th XV to join the league next season. The 4th team is a social and for the most part a Vets team and most do not want to be bound by the rules of the league. Boz and Rufus have agreed to work with me and Andy, to establish a regular Friday night social rugby night next season on the main pitch against local Clubs with social teams. Competitive rugby in a social environment to kick off the weekend. This is probably a good time to thank Jason Walker and the tour organisers. They had another brilliant tour this year and are already selling tickets for next May so You snooze you lose!!Those who want to or perhaps should be playing league rugby will be encouraged to make themselves available for the 1's, 2's or 3's. Congratulations to the walking rugby group for participating in their very first away fixture earlier in the season. This group plays just about every week of the year and contribute massively to the social side of the Club. With regard to touch rugby, the ambition is that Macclesfield Rugby Club should become a venue for hosting Rugby Touch tournaments and that we should have our own Rugby Touch teams to compete. Rugby Touch, formerly O2 Touch, has grown massively in recent years and is played internationally. It is a gap in our offer to play all types of rugby here at Macclesfield. We just need a couple of people to volunteer?? I won't steal Tom or Phil's thunder any further save to say how good it has been to see the Women's team develop again this year and particularly to see an increasing number of Girl's participating in their age grades and on their own pathway to

adult rugby. This a credit to those of you who have led these groups and you deserve a huge thank you. Our youth have had a brilliant season in terms of results but also in terms of the talent that is shining through. Phil will tell you more but the future is bright and a huge thank you must go to the Army of leaders, helpers and supporters across the youth for their incredible commitment. I am delighted that we will be launching the first year of a Junior Academy in September for 16-year-olds in collaboration with Macclesfield College. The mini/Junior section of the Club continues to grow in numbers and the reports of success at mini/Junior tournaments is inspiring. The U8's festival, hosted at the Club received great reviews for far and wide. We will show you the player pathway later but it is worth noting now that we want to split the Mini/Junior Section at U12 and establish a youth section from there on and in to the adult game. We are looking for a Mini/Junior Chairperson and a Youth Chairperson to join the Executive team. Phil Mason is currently covering both roles. If you are interested or you know of someone who is please let me or Phil know.

Finally, a word on discipline. We, as a whole club, have done well this season but we still need to improve our discipline and I mean the players and coaches and supporters. We nearly came a cropper through an incident with the U15's in the season that we can't afford to repeat. We must live by the rugby code of conduct and make sure the right behaviours are embedded in all of us.

Off the pitch

We have a simple business model for the Club. To generate as much money as we can from commercial activity and hospitality and to invest that money back in to our rugby and in developing our site and facilities. We are a Mutual Company so we don't generate profits and returns for shareholders. We generate reserves to invest back in the Club for the benefit of the membership.

This has been the first uninterrupted season off the pitch since the pandemic and I feel we have taken full advantage of opportunities to hire facilities and host functions and events. Our priority is always to create a social environment for our members and supporters in which everyone feels welcome and included as part of the Macclesfield Rugby Club family. Functions and events are only as good as the people who attend them and the membership and community have turned out brilliantly this year to support the Club socially at the Oktoberfest, The Priory Park Horror, Comedy nights, match day lunches and

so on. Of course, a lot of this is down to Andy and his team but also to Wilkey for organising the Priory Park Horror and Pete Harper for galvanising people to attend the lunches. The Presidents lunch, Player's lunch, Christmas lunch were all sold out. And, of course huge thanks to Julia Maxton-Close and her team of stalwarts for organising the amazing ladies Lunch.

There is lots of activity planned for the summer months everyone. The Macclesfield Annual Golf Day is at the Tytherington Club on the 1st July with over 80 players registered. Money raised will go towards the costs of the new floodlights on the main pitch. The Club 7-a-side tournament is on the 8th and 9th July. This was a great success last year in its inaugural year, and the Family music festival is on the 16th July. All fantastic events to ease you through the summer break

I will mention investment in the Club a little later but at this stage I would like to thank all those people who have been involved in any way in improving our social facilities this year. We have improved the Sin Bin Bar over the year including laying the decking on the pitch side and we have built a brand-new bar in the Priory Suite which is amazing. Thanks everyone

The house and grounds of the Club continue to be maintained and improved thanks to John Webster and the grounds team alongside the 'Roustabout' group. The Roustabouts, formed during the first lockdown, have continued to meet at the Club every Tuesday come rain or shine to do a wide range of jobs, indoors and outdoors, that keep the Club looking good for members and guests despite the vandalism and arson that the police seem so difficult to deal with. Fantastic job everyone.

At the last AGM I said that we were pursuing a plan to bring the back field back in to use. The player benefits are huge and the commercial opportunities significant and we continue to investigate the possibilities. Needless to say, the project is quite complex and will take time and money but we will get there. I also floated the idea of an extension to the Clubhouse at some point, not for the sake of it but because there is a genuine need for more space both downstairs in the player areas and upstairs in the hospitality areas. We are not actively pursuing this project at this time and will wait to see how things settle down when the Club is running on a 'business as usual' footing.

Financial

Phil Ainsworth will deliver his summary report later but I just want to say a few words before then. Managing the finances this season has been a challenge. We have changed the financial platform we use. We have changed our EPOS system and we have changed our accountants. Phil, with support from Pete White and Clive Hammond at times, has been working with Boz and his firm to make sure that we have full and accurate accounts at all times and an up-to-date balance sheet. After a lot of hard work, we are almost there and a big thank you to all those individuals for what you have done. We have done this despite dreadful service from the Nat West who twice locked us out of our own account and would only talk to Clive Hammond who last did the job about 15 years ago??

With regard to investment this year we have been able to complete the following:

- Replace the floodlights on the artificial pitch with LED's including new lights out to the half way line on the top pitch.
- Replace the floodlights on the main pitch with LED's including new lights out on to the 2nd XV pitch
- Complete the refurbishment and facilities in the changing rooms
- Build the new bar in the Priory Suite
- Continue with improvements to the Sin Bin bar

We have, with the help of all those who have given generously of their money, time, products, services, equipment and materials, invested over £100,000 in the Club. In addition, we have been successful in applying for an £85,000 loan from the RFU/Government winter survival fund to, at last replace the surface of the artificial pitch. Unfortunately, the price of steel has gone through the roof so we might need to fundraise to bridge the gap in the cost of the fencing around the pitch.

These investments and the loan would not be possible if the membership were not as engaged and involved in our Club as they are. Please keep up your generous support.

If anyone is interested in supporting the Rugby Club financially there are a number of ways available. Please contact Andy Appleyard or any member of the executive team at any time and we would be happy to discuss them.

With regard to membership, we will communicate the arrangements for next season once we have the confirmed fixture lists for the leagues. For the record I would like to thank all those members who pay their membership subscriptions and those Life VP's who donate

generously the equivalent of social membership. Regrettably there are those, some who have been with the club for a number of years, who feel they should receive the benefits of membership without paying subs or match fees I would ask them to search their consciences and contribute along with the vast majority of members. You are letting the Club down, the members and sponsors down and most of all yourselves down. The last thing we want to do is exclude people from our Club!

I am delighted to announce that Mike Ransom, Money Guru has extended their association with the Club as our main sponsor and also thanks to Jonathan Cooper and his business TheDirectorsChoice.com for renewing his sponsorship with us. Also, I can announce that our association with O'Neills as the Club main kit sponsor will continue and that we negotiated a new brewery contract with InBev earlier in the season. Thank God we finally sorted the ale out!! We never take sponsorship for granted and welcome it in different ways from direct financial support to help with skills, services, materials and equipment. We invite all our sponsors to be actively engaged and involved in the Club as part of the rugby family. The Club website will be reviewed again during the break and the business tab will include a jobs board in which employers and employees can look for opportunities. If you know of any individuals or businesses that might be interested to support the Rugby Club and the community it represents, please put them in touch with Andy or any of the Executive team who will be happy to send them the latest sponsorship brochure and meet them to discuss opportunities.

Thanks

It would take a very long time to thank everyone who has been involved in supporting The Club but please, whoever you are and wherever you are know that your contributions individually and collectively are much appreciated. Whether you have given of your money, time, skills, products, services, equipment or materials, made the effort to support functions and events and of course in supporting the players on a Saturday's and Sunday's. All of this makes us The Club we are and every contribution, in whatever form, is very welcome.

I do have a few notable thankyou's though:

To Andy Appleyard, all the bar staff but special mention for Millie who has been a star throughout the season, The hospitality Team supported by Jim Curtis and Louis Smith and including Maggie and Barry, The Barbecue, for their enduring energy and enthusiasm

throughout the year both on and off the pitch. It's been a busy year both for Club events but also for external hires and without your initiative, creativity and commitment we would not have been able to make the most of the opportunities.
To the grounds team who, throughout have ensured the playing surfaces are fit for purpose. Also, to the 'Roustabout' team who have taken it upon themselves to carry out general duties around the club.
To all the players, captains, coaches, team managers, and support teams. The Club is about the Rugby and it is a huge credit to you Ladies and Gentlemen that we continue to sustain and grow our membership across The Club and that we build our reputation in the community based on our core values.
Special mention again to Liz Jarratt for all her work in support of mental health this season. Mental wellbeing is massively important and everything we can do to encourage it is worthwhile. Looking after mental health is as important as looking after your physical health. It is not about illness. It is about health. For those who are not aware, Liz and a team from the Club will be taking on the three peaks challenge in a few weeks' time to raise money for mental health charities. If you have a few pounds to spare please donate to this wonderful cause.
To Jason Walker and his team at Search & More for working with us to deliver an up to date and quality web platform which is reviewed annually.
And of course, to Wilkey who is the brunt of much banter but who gives of his time to do the MC duties for just about every home game and takes control of the mic during the game. To his credit he has ensured that every week over the last two years, including the period of the pandemic lockdowns, Macclesfield Rugby Club has had at least a double page spread of coverage in the local press and in the website. This is a massive achievement and a credit to Wilkey's commitment to our Club.

Finally, to my colleagues on the Exec team for their active participation and support as we continue to develop the Club on behalf of the membership. Tom Davenport is standing down at this meeting from his role as the rugby lead on the exec and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his contribution to the Club and the Exec during the year and for his knowledge and advice, particularly as we restructure the playing side of the Club for the future. WE therefore have a vacancy on the executive committee for a

Director of Rugby Operations. If you are interested or you know of someone who might be then please let one of the Exec Team know.

To Summarize

- It's been a tough 1st full season of adult rugby but we have come through
- The Junior Club has done really well, particularly the youth and colts, Girls
- The membership continues to be active and supportive
- The Players, Coaches, Captains, Managers and support teams across the club, have been a credit to the club and the sport
- Our business model is simple and effective
- Priory Park Venue continues to grow and deliver for the Club
- The infrastructure we are building is robust
- Our Sponsors remain engaged and supportive of the Club
- We continue to develop and improve our club on and off the field
- We have realistic and exciting plans for the future

We have a busy summer of fun to look forward to and we can look forward in eager anticipation to the start of next season in June (Pre-Season).
Thank you, the membership, for making this Club what it is.

One Club, One Badge, One Voice