



Hertfordshire **Rugby Football Union**



**President: John Gregory**

### **CHAIRMAN'S NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2020**

**I hope you are all safe and keeping well.** Well, when I started writing this the county of Hertfordshire was in two tiers of Covid-19 restrictions. The local authority areas of Broxbourne, Watford, Three Rivers and Hertsmere being in tier 3 and the other local authorities being in tier 2. By the time I had finished writing this I had learnt that the whole of Hertfordshire will be in tier 3 as of Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2020!! The government has said it will review the tiers every two weeks, so the next reviews are scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Further the government is revising the regulations and guidance for the Christmas period 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 to 28<sup>th</sup> December 2020. So, the big question apart from "is a scotch egg a substantive meal" is what this all means for Hertfordshire rugby both on and off the field? The regulation and guidance are a minefield but the R.F.U. have done their best and have given a variety of guidance on various aspects all of which be found on the R.F.U. website at: -

<https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/running-your-club/coronavirus>

**I will not even try to go through all** the scenarios but would refer you to that website and a useful webinar that lasted 45 minutes that was given on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December by Steve Grainger (a man who has worked tirelessly with central government and deserves all our thanks), and John Lawn and which was hosted by Nick Mullins. The direct link to this is: -

<https://jwp.io/s/3cga8x7x?spMailingID=11529762&spUserID=MjY5ODA2NzI4OT E3S0&spJobID=1653071887&spReportId=MTY1MzA3MTg4NwS2>

**So, what is the situation?** Well on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2020 you will be allowed to play Stage E games under the agreed variation with the amended laws, but only against teams in Hertfordshire. This is because of the travel restrictions imposed upon tier 3. You already can train to Stage E and the amount of contact time etc in training is described on the R.F.U. website. Any questions coaches may have either consult the R.F.U. website or e-mail our Director of Coaching David Paine at [coaching@hertsrugby.co.uk](mailto:coaching@hertsrugby.co.uk). You should remember that if some of your adult players live outside Hertfordshire it is their place of residence that control movement in tier 3. Therefore, if a player lives in Stansted and plays for Bishops Stortford they cannot play or train at Bishops Stortford as they live in Essex! There are regulations on the R.F.U. website for tag and junior rugby at the various age levels. This includes explanation of the travel restrictions on the under 18s which is different from the adults.

**The intension is that the 1<sup>st</sup> XV fixture clusters will** be published on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020. It is appreciated that with Hertfordshire clubs now all in tier 3 and some clubs in clusters that contain clubs outside Hertfordshire, some fixtures may not be able to be played. We must remember that there will be two reviews before the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021 start date for the clusters so anything could happen and we will be reviewing the situation regularly to make sure our clubs have the best playing solution. With reference to the merit tables, groups and fixtures have been produced. Again, they may not be ideal and due to the tiers system, some again may not be able to be played, they are there with the prime intention to provide fixtures for clubs so that players can get playing again. There is no sanction if the game is not played for whatever reason, but it is hoped that all the games that are played are in the spirit of the "game on protocols". If clubs find alternative fixtures outside their "merit table" for teams so be it. We want people playing rugby of some sort again! The above applies to the men's game but I understand the R.F.U. with our own Director of Women's Game Laura-Jo Pearce are working on similar for the women's game. With reference to the junior game and fixtures then please consult the Chairman of Mini and Youth Christoph Lavelle e-mail: - [c\\_lavialle@hotmail.com](mailto:c_lavialle@hotmail.com)

**Now I turn to perhaps the most** important thing of all. We can easily control the activity on the pitch, but it is not so easy to control off the pitch. There are a whole series of guidance about using changing rooms and showers safely, again referred to on the R.F.U website but if you do have any questions on safety then get in touch with Tim Bonnett e-mail: - [agegrade@hertsrugby.co.uk](mailto:agegrade@hertsrugby.co.uk) and then there is the "bacon butty and coffee question, can we serve a bacon butty through a window for "spectators" to eat?" I would here refer you to the Steve Grainger and John Lawn video where this question is answered. With off the field activities we must remember that when we got government agreement to move to Stage E, after the second lockdown, the Local Authority Environmental Health Officers were very much against this. Not because of what may happen on the pitch but what would happen off the pitch and hence spread the virus. Clubs have already been visited by LAEHOs and the police and they are not looking at the playing of the game but at what is going on around the game. Further it is easy for people to get carried away and in the excitement of Christmas and the return of the game to take photographs and post them on social media. These photos may show in the background spectators not social distancing in bubbles as required by the government. They may show parents at a Covid-19 tier 3 club from the same family, when the guidance is only one parent per child. These then getting into the hands of LAEHOs or similar, could stop the game throughout the country. It is incumbent on all clubs to make sure that all social distancing and guidance for everyone is adhered to be all. In summary this was put very well by Tim Bonnett at a recent general meeting when he said, "Clubs should not just consider what they are allowed to do but must consider what they can do safely". They are not the same thing! For example, parents may want to go back to the traditional mini and youth on Sunday morning but in many clubs this then means hundreds of people turning up at the same time, and can this be done safely?

**One could go on for pages and pages** about the various guidance and regulation to do with tiers, but I feel I now need to change the subject. So, in other news in Hertfordshire Rugby the executive and board have been discussing the presidency for the 2021/22 season. Those who know our constitution will be aware that John Gregory would have completed his two years in June 2021. The

executive feel that due to Covid-19, John has not been able to fully represent the union and that he has lost virtually a year. They, therefore, have unanimously agreed to propose at the June 2021 A.G.M. to propose a temporary suspension of the article of governance that defines the term of office of a President and to nominate John Gregory to be President for a third year during the 2021/22 season. This decision has been shared with the Past Presidents and they agree. The executive hope that the membership will support this.

**Now an update on club subscriptions.** The executive said in September that they would not be charging the 2020/21 club subscription in October but would review the situation and report to the General Committee in December. This they did and that meeting passed the resolution that the subscription to Hertfordshire R.F.U for a club should be 50% of what they paid in the 2019/20 season. This to be paid by 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021. If any club has a problem paying this subscription, then please contact Amy Welch the Hertfordshire Treasurer at: - [treasurer@hertsrugby.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@hertsrugby.co.uk) It is hoped that clubs appreciate that the union is still incurring expense but takes into consideration the cash flow of clubs and the curtailed season.

**Our Director of Marketing Steve Waller and our Director of Communication Jonathan Cirkel** have been working over the last few weeks with Club Champions. Club Champions, with their input have now produced a commercial brochure for Hertfordshire Rugby which will be used we hope to attract sponsors. This is being printed by our friends at PROCO and a copy will be distributed to all clubs. As part of the drive to attract new sponsorship we are planning to stage a virtual Leadership Academy as soon as possible in the new year and are seeking sponsors for this and several other projects. The leadership academy has been described by the people who have attended them as most useful and a great way of learning about rugby administration and networking. Alumni for past academies now occupy several key positions in Hertfordshire Rugby. These range from directors at executive level, chairs of clubs, chairs of either county or club sub-committees, members of club's boards of management and club coaches. Enquires about the academy to Colin Ashwood:- [gamedev@hertsrugby.co.uk](mailto:gamedev@hertsrugby.co.uk)

**In closing this December edition** of my newsletter, I want to publicly thank you all. You are all connected with Hertfordshire Rugby and it is because of your hard work that we have been able to weather this crisis. I know that I and my executive could not do the work we do without your support and hard work back in the clubs. So, on behalf of Hertfordshire Rugby, **THANK YOU.** May I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in which the full game of rugby returns and in the words of the late great Dave Allen, "may your god go with".

Adrian K Sparks Chairman Hertfordshire Rugby Football Union

17<sup>th</sup> December 2020

