

Putting Rugby First sends open letter to IRB Council and Rugby Union top administrators urging immediate change

This week, an open letter has been sent to 28 IRB Council members and over one hundred leaders of the world's national rugby unions urging them to act now in order to safeguard the future of the game.

The letter has been sent by William Field and Quentin Smith, the authors of **Putting Rugby First**. Published in July, the report provides an independent perspective on rugby's current world status, identifies some fundamental problems, and proposes six goals to help ensure rugby reaches its full, global potential.

The purpose of the letter is to ask the IRB Council (the ultimate governing body of the sport) and the national unions, who are directly or indirectly represented there, how the issues raised in the report will be addressed – there is no time to waste.

The report has been received by the rugby world with overwhelming support. It has been sent to over a thousand rugby administrators, players, referees, government ministers, commercial partners, journalists and influential supporters and has been read by many thousands of rugby supporters who have downloaded it, free, from www.puttingrugbyfirst.com. It has been covered extensively in traditional and digital press in over 65 countries, and discussed at length on blogs and face-to-face across the globe. Rugby insiders, commentators and fans have endorsed and amplified the messages contained in the document.

Commenting on the purpose of the letter, Quentin Smith said, "We are calling for those with the responsibility for the management, development and promotion of rugby to reform its governance structures, most urgently by passing greater power from the eight Foundation Nations to the other 108 unions who comprise the wider rugby world, which is where its future lies. This should represent the first step of a wider programme of change".

William Field, added "The IRB Council meeting in November this year will be the first real opportunity for it to address **Putting Rugby First's** conclusions. With the report having generated so much interest and debate, we believe Council has a duty to discuss it and explain its intentions. Council has no excuse if it now fails to provide the clear vision and leadership that the sport needs to survive and prosper in an increasingly competitive international sporting marketplace".

The full text of the open letter is attached.

Further information about **Putting Rugby First** and the authors, including a download of the full report, is available at www.puttingrugbyfirst.com.

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Open letter to IRB Council members and members of unions represented at the Council

We hope you have received our report **Putting Rugby First**, which provides an independent perspective on rugby's current world status, identifies some underlying problems and proposes six goals to help ensure rugby reaches its full, global potential. If not, it can be downloaded from www.puttingrugbyfirst.com.

Putting Rugby First has been sent to over a thousand rugby administrators, players, referees, government ministers, commercial partners, journalists and influential supporters and, downloaded from our website, has been read by many thousands of rugby supporters around the world. It has been covered extensively in traditional and digital press in over 65 countries, discussed at length on blogs and face-to-face around the world, and is even being held up by other sports as an example for planning their own futures. Fans across the globe have endorsed and amplified the messages contained in the document. The IRB has not challenged any of the points we have raised.

As intended, the report has started a debate within rugby about how to secure the future of this great game.

But now the most important people are you, the IRB Council Members and leaders of the world's rugby unions, with the power to determine rugby's ambitions and deliver its potential. Through structural reform and commercial development, it can and must reach new audiences or risk falling irretrievably behind.

There is overwhelming support for the view that the IRB Council meeting this autumn must address such important issues. Above all, the IRB Council needs a representative structure that will provide for its future and not reflect its past.

Do you endorse the six goals proposed in the report?

1. A more democratic and representative structure for the IRB, as the global governing body of the game
2. Corporate governance and management best practice applied to the IRB
3. A five-year plan for rugby's global development, encompassing elite rugby, grass-roots and commercial initiatives
4. Specific programmes, with measurable objectives, to deliver growth in prioritised territories
5. The 2015 Rugby World Cup hosted in a prioritised territory, as a springboard for the game's global growth
6. The inclusion of Rugby Sevens in the 2016 Olympic Games

If so, what will you do to ensure they are fulfilled?

We urge you to speak out on these issues and propose the changes necessary to move the game. Your voice at Council or through your representative at Council can set the course for reforms that will advance rugby's position in the global sporting landscape.

Sincerely,

Putting Rugby First

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