



ECCLES RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Founded 1897

Minutes of Eccles RFC Annual General Meeting – 8th June 2026

20:01, Apologies & Introduction – Mark Greenhalgh

Apologies were received from Simon Holland, Hilary Berry, Marianne Coop, Glen Cahill, Paul Thorpe, Debbie Nicholls, Sarah Williams, Matthew Parkinson, Will Parkinson and Alan Bent.

Mark said that the minutes of last year's meeting were published to the club website for review. He requested they be approved. The motion was proposed by Chris Gaffey and seconded by Danny Appleby.

Mark informed everyone of the agenda for the evening and that full reports would be published on the club website after the meeting. He went on to explain the purpose of the meeting and this is not the only change for club members to engage with the committee; members should feel free to approach a committee member or other responsible person at any reasonable time should they have something they want to discuss.

Reports

20:05, Men's Rugby – Sam Simpson

Sam said this season had carried over the baggage of last year with a large number of long term injuries. This was exacerbated by a significant number of players lost due to retirement, commitment, and attraction of paid opportunities. And one of those losses caused the loss of a link with Salford University, which had been very productive in recent years. Overall, this meant it was a very difficult year for numbers, resulting in the Third and Fourth teams being unable to complete the season. Sam said that you can't have a good year every year, and this was just a one off bad season. Looking to the future, a working group has been established to explore how we can try and bring the numbers back. This will involve summer touch rugby, a recruitment drive, and looking at how we can become engaged in the local community.

The first competitive fixture of the men's season will be a Lancashire cup game on 5th September (one week later than previously).

Sam offered this thanks to Marie and the bar and kitchen volunteers for looking after them on a Saturday. And to the Fossils for their pitch maintenance.

Q: How many teams will we have next season? How will we fill them?

A: We will enter three teams into the leagues. To fill them, we will prioritise re-engagement with Salford University. And we will see what else comes out of the working group mentioned earlier.

Q: Will any more senior players be available to support Colts?

A: We have a lot of senior players involved in various teams at the moment. We'll keep encouraging more to get involved and we'll speak to Chris Fortune about what support he needs.

Ground and Clubhouse : Gorton Street, Peel Green, Eccles, Manchester, M30 7LZ
0161 789 2613 | info@ecclesrfc.org.uk | [@EcclesRugby](https://eccles.rfu.club) | <https://eccles.rfu.club>

President: A. Bent 07747 570345 | Chairman: C. Gaffey 07971 817375

Hon. Secretary: M. Greenhalgh 07525 434790 | Hon. Treasurer: G. Wilson 07944 222083

Fixture Secretary: D. Edmondson 07821 683516 | Director of Rugby: S. Simpson 07935 403171

M&J Chair: D. Nicholls 07789 202189 | Safeguarding Officer: H. Thorpe 07762 081105





20:17, Women's Rugby – Jenny Lakin

Jenny reported that it's been a tricky season for the women following promotion. There has been a lot of hard graft, but results haven't gone their way. "Team first" has been their mantra, which has resulted in moments of brilliance, growth within the team and unbeaten camaraderie.

Thanks to the commitment of the leadership team and the coaching squad they have set a good foundation for next season. The league tables have been published already and will be playing in a lower division, which will be more competitive and offer more fixtures.

The priorities for next season they will be looking to establish a stronger link with U18 Girls, which admittedly hasn't happened this year, and looking to re-establish links with Salford University. The women's first competitive fixture will be on 20th September.

Q: You mentioned trying to re-establish a link with Salford University. But they seem to have a strong link with Trafford MV now, so how are you going to achieve that?

A: We don't have any exact plans at the moment but we have a long history of working with Salford University, and we have the budget to support transport, so we're going to try.

20:27, Colts Rugby – Danny Appleby

Danny explained the season started well as a merged team, but numbers dwindled throughout the season, from squads of over 30 to just 20. The number of supporting volunteers also decreased due to work and other commitments. Decision was taken to train twice a week with the men, which had some advantages, but resulted in diluted numbers across sessions. As a result of this, and the availability of incoming coach Christ Fortune, they are considering going back to once a week next year. This will be a dedicated "colts training" and those that are ready for senior rugby will be encouraged to train with the men on a Thursday as well.

Six colts played men's rugby this season and more want to do moving forward. Two players nominated for country trials and two for Sale Academy trials. None were successful but provided good experience for the lads involved.

Next season we're hoping to start with a squad of 35, but with the U18s being pushed up to play senior rugby as soon as appropriate.

Q: Won't training on a Wednesday break the link with seniors?

A: No. The exact details are being worked on but they're hoping it will provide the best of both worlds. Chance for the colts to train and grow together while still providing extra opportunities for those ready to progress and/or willing and able to do more.

Q: Is there any chance of Colts being paid as "senior apprentices", where they could focus on rugby on a Saturday rather than taking a part-time job?



A: There's no chance of them being paid in cash as this would be tantamount to paying players. But we could look at other ways of encouraging their availability.

20:42, Mini & Junior Rugby – Danny Nicholls

Danny presented a detailed report which included highlights for each individual age group. The sad news is the U15s folded after Christmas and there are no plans to reform, so we won't have an U16s next season. Highlights include:

- successful piloting of "Rugby Tots" which will formally start in September.
- U12s and U13s competing at the top level of Lancashire competitions.
- More sponsorship money raised than ever
- Three teams on tour across the UK and Ireland.

Priority actions for next season include:

- M&J focus at the Eccles Festival in August. Hoping for big numbers in attendance from parents and families.
- Setting up a Salford Schools Saturday programme to challenge the existing Trafford schools programme.
- Arrange more skills clinics for players and encourage more coaching courses and development for coaches.

Q: Do we need to re-employ a CRC to try and recruit more players from high schools?

A: The feeling at the moment is that we don't need many more players, apart from maybe on the Girls side. Certainly not enough to employ a full time CRC. We can look to target any specific needs that teams may have. And we're also looking to improve opportunities for player and coach development as mentioned above.

21:05, interval

21:15, Lost members – Dave Nicholls

Dave proposed a toast to absent friends, in particular the recent losses of Colin Lee and Peter Gaffey.



21:17, Treasurer's Report – Greg Wilson

Greg distributed the financial reports then and elaborated on them. The initial reaction maybe that they are very healthy but they are somewhat inflated due to “non-recurring income” of around £16k; £8k from Gift Aid, £5k from Dragon Academy, £3k from advertising agency. While we hope to repeat some of that income we have nothing guaranteed at present. However, that income has at least allowed us to reduce our “credit card bill”, the short term debts that we often carry. Energy costs continue to be volatile and we need to continue to monitor them in the future.

Looking forward, we need to bring in more sponsorship, particularly in senior section, as those values are significantly down on where they've been in the past. We need help managing the astro which is a big revenue generator, but also a big time consumer in terms of chasing payments, replacing keys etc. We need to look to bring more money in from sponsors, grants or use of facilities to fund the capital projects we hope to undertake in the future.

Greg recommended that we not pay for an Accountants report. The motion was proposed by Sam Simpson and seconded by Mike Bateman.

Q: You said that the senior section needs to bring in more sponsorship but we found sponsors before and they weren't looked after.

A: Mistakes may have been made in the past but that doesn't mean we should stop looking for sponsors for the future, so we can correct those mistakes. We also need extra volunteers to ensure sponsors are properly looked after; that job shouldn't belong just to club officers.

21:29, Chairman's Report – Chris Gaffey

Chris started by offering his thanks to a number of volunteers: Thanks to Alan Bent for his longstanding commitment to the club. Thanks to Mark Greenhalgh and Greg Wilson for their unseen works behind the scenes. Thanks to Katie Houghton for her coaching over last two years as she now steps down. Thanks to Sam Simpson for his efforts both on and off the field with the men. Thanks to Danny Green for his role doing the admin for the men's section. Thanks to Danny and Rachel Nicholls, Heather Thorpe, Leeann Aspinall, Nathan Ariane and Stephen Russell for their efforts in supporting a flourishing M&J section. Despite all those thank yous, Chris said we still needed more volunteers, particularly on a Saturday and Thursday.

The club sets out every season with a simple idea to grow and achieve more; more players, more volunteers, more income, more facility improvements etc. We have had mixed success with this over the year. More M&J players but fewer senior players, particularly in the men's section. The club's officers have explored different business opportunities to bring in more income. This has been briefly successful but will require more effort in the future.



On the subject of effort, the enormous amount of time committed to dealing with disciplinary issues this season must be noted. This is something we must address moving forward, to allow that time and effort to be better spent elsewhere

Another area of focus is security. We have encountered vandalism of various forms throughout the season and we must remain vigilant over summer when there are fewer people at the club. Staying with facilities, Chris advised that the plans to further improve the social space at the club would not be going ahead this summer as we have been unable to secure the funding to make it viable. We've also been unable to make the improvements to the overflow car park we would like. We need a focus on fund-raising next year if the plans are to be completed in 2027.

More positively, a new long-term contract has been agreed with our neighbours at St. Patricks school, to keep sharing our facilities. And a number of small scale improvement projects will take place over the summer, including a new footpath and scoreboard. These changes represent the ambitions of the club to keep moving forward, even in the face of adversity.

Chris laid out six areas of focus for next season:

- Grow men's rugby
- Grow women's rugby
- Progress M&J rugby
- Progress facilities development
- Improve volunteer recruitment and retention
- Continue to prudently manage finances

Chris closed by thanking all sponsors for their contributions to club during tough economic times.

Q: If we're looking to increase member numbers and income, should we make it mandatory for M&J parents to become social members.

A: We would never make it mandatory as we want to support our "rugby for all" ethos and some people can't afford it. But it could be something we want to encourage. We should further discuss how we get the message across.



21:57, Election of Vice-Presidents & Honorary Life Members – Mark Greenhalgh

Mark said that there no awards to present this year. Reminder that any club volunteers can be nominated as per the AGM agenda and announcement.

21:59, Election of Officers and Captains – Mark Greenhalgh

Mark informed the meeting that appropriate nominations had been received for all posts. None of the posts were being contested, therefore they will be accepted unless any objections are raised. No objections were raised so the following appointments were made:

Officers of the Club

- President - Alan Bent
- Chairman - Chris Gaffey
- Treasurer - Greg Wilson
- Secretary - Mark Greenhalgh
- Fixtures Secretary - Don Edmondson

While everyone was happy for Don to continue in post, the need to find someone to deputise for him if he suffers any further ill health, and potentially take over from him longer term, was noted. There were no volunteers in the room.

Captains

- Men's 1XV - TBC
- Women's 1XV – Jenny Lakin, vice-captain Helena Ryan

22:05, Any Other Business

Q: Do we have a succession plan in place for the role of Bar Manager?

A: Marie's workload is already being supported by Katie Wilson, and this will continue and possibly grow in the future. We're also aware of other people interested in the role, but Marie is still very valuable at the moment.

Q: Have we resolved the situation for gaining access to the gym/changing rooms with proximity cards?

A: In short, no. There was supposed to be a handover of the system to us so that we can purchase and administrate our own cards, rather than having to keep asking for more from the supplier, but this hasn't happened. We'll look to resolve over the summer.



Q: Do we have a physio for the women's team next season?

A: Finding reliable physios to be available on a Sunday continues to be a problem. We thought we'd found a perfect solution last year but the person changed their mind. We interviewed several other candidates who were initially keen but ultimately turned down the role. We will continue to try and recruit.

- Greg provided a brief update on the "Pride in Place" programme. This is a government initiative looking to invest in Peel Green over the next five years. The current status is electing a committee to decide how the investments will be spent. We have submitted an application to be part of that committee. We also maintain regular contact with the organisers, to understand how to best represent our interests.

22:17 - With no further business to discuss, the meeting was closed.