



England
Rugby

PREMIER 15s 3.0 STRATEGY DOCUMENT

**LAUNCHING THE NEXT
ITERATION OF THE
PREMIER 15s**

A. OVERVIEW & CONTEXT OF THE NEW LEAGUE

RFU, as part of a wider working group consisting of club representatives, are delighted to announce the launch of a new phase of Premier15s from 2023/24 onwards, which aims to transform the league into 'the most competitive, progressive and sustainable domestic league in the world'.

Elite women's rugby in England has never been in a stronger place; 2022 saw record attendances in Allianz Premier15s home games, the most competitive Premier15s season to date, unprecedented player talent depth and England announced as the hosts of the 2025 World Cup. The next iteration of the Premier15s will harness these foundations and accelerate the growth of the league.

Over the last year, the RFU and clubs have worked collaboratively to design a new strategy for the future of the league; the first jointly developed cycle of the Premier15s to date. A specific working group was set up, consisting of RFU Leadership, Allianz Premier15s Club Owners, Allianz Premier15s Directors of Rugby and PRL Leadership. The work consisted of three phases:

- 1.** Setting the aims and aspirations for the league, including the development of a Vision and Mission and establishing eight clear objectives
- 2.** Defining the 10-year business model for the league
- 3.** Developing the league proposition

In addition to the Premier15s working group, all clubs were engaged to ensure individual aims and aspirations were captured and used to shape the new league. Player representatives from all Allianz Premier15s clubs were also consulted on their views of the league today and their ambitions for its future. The league will align to the RFU's Every Rose Strategy to ensure growth within every aspect of the game is realised.

Portas Consulting have provided independent expert support to RFU and clubs.

This document details the aims and aspirations for Premier15s going forward and the plan to further develop the quality and profile of the league.

B. AIMS AND ASPIRATIONS?

At the heart of the ambition for Premier15s 3.0 is a new vision and mission.

Vision (what we will achieve)

'A generation of players and fans inspired through world-class club competition'

Mission (how we will achieve it)

'By being the most competitive, progressive and sustainable domestic league in the world'

To support this vision and mission, there are **eight objectives** for the league:

- 1.** Become the first professional women's club rugby league across all aspects of the game
- 2.** Improve the overall quality of play and produce sufficient world class talent for the Red Roses by investing in high quality training environments and prioritising player welfare
- 3.** Be part of a coherent player pathway from grassroots through to elite competition across England
- 4.** Increase commercial revenue to drive long-term financial sustainability of the league
- 5.** Grow audience engagement through both live and digital products, reaching new fans and deepening relations with the existing audience
- 6.** Lead the way in rugby by aligning with the international calendar and by creating a high-quality, innovative product
- 7.** Develop and retain a world-class workforce of players, coaches, officials and operational staff
- 8.** Collaborate with the rugby community to drive the growth of the women and girls game across England

C THE ROADMAP

SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT

Achieving this ambitious vision and mission for the league will require significant investment. The overall cost of the league will total £222m over a ten year period, with projected revenues expected to be £174m. From 2023/24 the RFU and clubs will invest the remaining £48m, reflecting a significant uplift in investment into Premier15s to drive on-pitch performance and to increase awareness of the league. This is a long-term strategy to ensure sustainability and longevity. This investment will be made into improving the quality and reach of broadcast coverage marketing the league, recruiting club and central league staff, enhancing the performance environment, developing the quality and consistency of officiating, improving the match day experience for fans and players, as well as a phased increase in player salaries.

ENHANCING THE PRODUCT ON AND OFF THE PITCH

Players are at the heart of Premier15s 3.0. As well as moving towards being the first fully professional club rugby competition, investment will be used to support a transformative uplift in the Minimum Operating Standards (MOS) for clubs, which will mandate substantial investment in the performance environment. This will include an increase in the number of coaching staff, enhanced S&C provision, performance lifestyle support, medical cover and improved facility quality and access. As a result, players will be better supported and the overall quality of play will continue to improve, enabling sufficient world class talent for the Red Roses.

A remuneration cap will be in place in order to ensure a level playing field and Red Roses central contracts will remain in place until the league is fully professional. The league will aim to attract the world's best players to provide fans with the opportunity to watch global stars, whilst simultaneously providing players the opportunity to test themselves against the best in the world every week.

Investment will also be made to the off-pitch product, to raise the profile of the league, engage new audiences and improve the offering for current fans. All league fixtures will be played in stadia with enhanced requirements for matchday presentation supported by increased marketing activity to drive attendances. There will be significant investment into the broadcast product to transform the quality of coverage with the aim of securing a free to air broadcast deal. The aim is for there to be clubs geographically covering the whole of England to ensure as many people as possible have the chance to experience Premier15s.

LAUNCHING A NEW LEAGUE

Premier15s 3.0 represents a significant departure from the league as it is today, from the product to the operations of the league. From 2023/24 onwards Premier15s will become a new company, owned by the RFU and clubs, with its own CEO reporting into an independent board. In the short term, the league will be operated by a combination of dedicated Premier15s employees and RFU employees, with the intention of all operations moving to the new company within 10 years.

The league will remain a 15s competition with initially up to ten teams playing each other home and away in the regular season. Entry will be based on a successful tender application. The number of play-off games will be expanded from 3 to 5, with each of the top 6 teams in the regular season able to compete to win the league.

The intention is for the league to expand over the next 10 years, at a time when it is mutually beneficial for the league and clubs to do so. To enable the successful entry of these clubs and to ensure competitive balance is maintained, an interim mechanism will be in place to support clubs aiming to enter the league at a later date.

In addition, the new Premier15s will be built to align with the global calendar, allowing for a fully de-conflicted product. The first season will kick off in November 2023 after the World Cup and will conclude in June 2024 following the Six Nations.

D. WHAT NEXT?

An immediate priority for the league is to appoint a CEO. This process is underway.

Over the next few months of the Premier15s working group we will continue to meet to co-design and ultimately deliver the remaining detail. This work will include agreeing the minimum operating standards (MOS), defining the player remuneration cap, recruiting key individuals, agreeing full decision-making rights, and developing a clear implementation plan to support a successful transition to the new Premier15s CEO. All clubs will continue to be consulted in this period from June to September 2022.

Portas Consulting will continue to provide independent expert advice.

The 2022/23 season will continue to operate as planned before the launch of the new iteration of Premier15s.