

MINUTES

RLEF LIMITED

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING 2019

Location	Radisson Blu Hotel, Ataşehir, Turkey	Date	Saturday 17 May 2019
Chair	Maurice Watkins (Independent Director)	Time	3pm
Members present	<p><u>Full Members 9/11 = 36/44 Votes:</u> Alan Davidson (England/United Kingdom), Mathieu Khedimi, Anne L'Heuillet (France), Barry Coede, Andrew Coede (Ireland), Tiziano Franchini (Italy), Assaad Ferahli, Nayef Abi Said (Lebanon), Allan Cameron, Ollie Cruicshank (Scotland), Dragon Pavlovic, Vladan Kikanovic (Serbia), Artur Martyrosian, Sergiy Kirpichnikof (Ukraine) and Brian Juliff (Wales)</p> <p><u>Affiliate Members 5 + 2 Skype /10 = 7/10 Votes:</u> Joshua Knight via Skype (Canada), Tomas Douda (Czech Republic), Bob Doughton (Germany), Jean Pierre Zrab, Yanika Spiteri (Malta), Daan Van Rossum (Netherlands), Guroł Ylidiz, Julien True (Turkey) and Steve Williams via skype (United States)</p> <p><u>Observers 7/18:</u> Xhino Drangu, Arnaldo Telo (Albania) Carol Manga, Adamou Sadjou (Cameroon), Yamina Abdeselem, Mohamad Boukassal (Morocco), Daniel Potts, Martin Crawford (Nigeria), Rabieh El Masri (Palestine), Lukasz Lucka (Poland), Rajendra Shah (Sweden)</p>		
Board present	Maurice Watkins, Colin Cleyweg, Mahdi Choudhury, FFRXIII represented by Anne l'heuillet and Mathieu Khedimi, RFL represented by Alan Davidson.		
Staff Present	Chris Thair (Board General Secretary), Jovan Vujosevic, Remond Safi.		
Apologies	<p>Members 5: Russia, Jamaica (full members), Norway, Greece, Spain (affiliate members).</p> <p>Board: Graeme Thompson, Paul Nicholson. RFL and FFRXIII represented at the AGM however Alan Darfi and Marc Palanque sent their apologies.</p>		
Votes	Votes held by each member: Full 4, Affiliate 1 and Observer 0.		
Quorate	Quorate met as members present held 50% of the eligible votes (41 of 54 present = 76%) and representatives of the RFL and FFRXIII were present.		
Item No.	Agenda Item		

1.0 ROLL CALL OF VOTING REPRESENTATIVES & APOLOGIES

1.1 Maurice Watkins opened the meeting, welcoming all the delegates and recording the apologies. Chris Thair called the roll and the meeting was declared quorate.

1.2 Following the roll call Mr Watkins thanked the Turkish RL Association for its hosting, congratulated the Federation on becoming an affiliate member and paid tribute to founder Julien True and President Gurol Yildiz who were both present in the room. Albania were welcomed as new Observer members, as were the representatives of the new federation representing Nigeria. Mr Watkins then congratulated Jamaica and France for winning their respective Confederations Championships and qualifying for the 2021 Rugby League World Cup, along with Wales who also qualified as runners up. Congratulations were also offered to RLEF Board member Graeme Thompson who recently became the RLIF Chairman. Finally, Mr Watkins thanked all members for their attendance and continued commitment towards developing rugby league.

2.0 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on 11th August 2018 were presented and unanimously approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Moved by Wales, seconded by Lebanon and all subsequently approved.

3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING

Chris Thair has since been appointed to the position of RLEF General Manager. A qualified teacher and owner of a sports consultancy business CT has previously held positions with professional club London Broncos and two RLEF members, the RFL and WRL, the latter as CEO and Director.

4.0 NOTIFICATION OF RLEF BOARD CHANGES

4.1 Before updating members on changes to the RLEF Board, Chris Thair explained how the RLEF's Articles of Association dictate the make-up of the Board. The RLEF Board has one position each for both the RFL and FFRXIII. As founding fathers of the organisation in 2003 and biggest members, this has been in the constitution from the start. The articles also state two Board member positions must be elected from the membership. Colin Kleywag, Serbia and Graeme Thompson, Scotland, were both appointed at the last council meeting. The articles also allow the RLEF Board to have up to three independent directors who are Mahdi Choudhury and Paul Nicholson.

4.2 In the February 2019 RLEF Board meeting Maurice Watkins stepped down from his role representing the RFL on the RLEF Board. Ralph Rimmer became the new RFL representative on the RLEF Board however he will be represented at meetings by Alan Darfi. In the same meeting the RLEF Board appointed Maurice Watkins as an independent director and as Chairman. This means all three independent director positions are now filled on the RLEF Board and the RLEF has an independent Chairman. Chris Thair continued by saying all these changes are within the Boards authority, so no voting is required on this matter however it is a requirement of the articles to inform members of changes at Annual Council Meetings.

5.0 ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

As Maurice Watkins stands as the only nominee to council by decree of article 66 in the RLEF constitution the candidate is declared elected unopposed at the Annual Council Meeting.

6.0 GENERAL MANAGERS REPORT AND FINANCIAL REPORT TO COUNCIL

6.1 Chris Thair provided a verbal review of 2018 with images on the screen. A transcript of this speech is in the appendices of these minutes.

6.2 All members were provided with a hard copy of the draft 2018 RLEF Accounts which included a twelve-month income and expenditure report, a balance sheet and a comparison to the previous year's figures.

6.3 Turnover rose from £266k to £511k due to a much larger distribution from the RLIF. The 2017 RLWC was held in the previous year so no RLEF competitions took place hence the RLIF distributions were comparatively much lower. In 2018 the RLIF provided higher financial support to deliver the European Championships and Americas Championships, games which also doubled as World Cup qualifiers.

6.4 Further income was provided by over £100k from the Erasmus grant and a £10k donation from Mrs. McNeil for a project in Ghana. It is a requirement of all grants/donations that funds are spent in the agreed areas and therefore the accounts show for both grants income matches exactly to the expenditure figure.

6.5 The RLEF executive recognise the business must generate more commercial income and lower risk by diversifying its revenue streams.

6.6 The income and expenditure for the twelve months of 2018 shows a £21k loss. Consequently, the reserves brought forward from the previous year have reduced from £39k to £18k which is carried forward into 2019. The RLEF remains in a good financial position.

6.7 Chris Thair gave notice that two account lines were subject to change however all others would remain the same. The RFL income line may increase or stay the same depending upon the result of a current enquiry. The Erasmus grant income line may change should the Erasmus grant providers give advice that all income must be shown in 2018.

6.8 The budget for 2019 is complete and 2019 is scheduled for a profit.

6.9 This year's RLEF Congress in Istanbul is the earliest it has ever been held and therefore the accounts are still to be audited. In the last 10 years RLEF Congress has been held in the following months: late June x1, July x1, August x6 and October x1.

6.10 Resolution to approve the 2018 RLEF accounts knowing two lines were subject to change. Moved by Scotland, seconded by Serbia and all subsequently approved.

7.0 REAPPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

Resolution to appoint Hayes Macintyre as auditors for the 2018 accounts. Moved by Serbia, seconded by Lebanon and all subsequently approved.

8.0 RESOLUTIONS

No resolutions have been put forward by council.

9.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 9.1 Tiziano Franchini (Italy) proposed the Erasmus + grant is used to fund an U16s and U19s schools programme. CT responded by saying the programme under the current grant has now finished. Submitting an activity and financial report to the European Union is the only action yet to be completed by the RLEF. The RLEF aim to submit a new Erasmus application in 2020 and if the stipulations within the grant conditions allow for schoolwork then the RLEF will explore this.
- 9.2 Tiziano Franchini (Italy) proposed an international tariff is put onto all entrance tickets to the Super league and NRL games. TF said from last year's attendance figures he had worked out the RLEF would have brought in \$2.6 million from a \$1 Tariff and an independent company could be set up to administer the programme.
- 9.3 Colin Kleyweg responded by saying the concept is right and there should be more integration between the club and international game.
- 9.4 Chris Thair said most professional clubs only break even because of owner's contributions and/or directors' loans each year. A club is therefore very unlikely to agree to a \$1 tariff on all tickets to every game. A much more palatable option to take forward to Super League would be an international themed round, similar to the heritage round. Clubs could celebrate their past and present international players, diversity of cultures, religions and highlight all the positive aspects of this diversity and performance on the international stage. As part of the proposals it could be put forward an additional £1 is put on every Super League ticket that round which is subsequently donated by Super League to the international game. CT also said the RLEF does not have the authority to put a tariff on club games.
- 9.5 Chris Thair agreed to take this to Super League Ltd after the RLEF Strategy is complete in 2019. This would be one aspect of a wider discussion with Super League on how both parties could support each other.
- 9.6 Nayef Abi Said (Lebanon) said in the initial draft of the new RLEF Strategy he noted that match officials and coaches would be supported in their development. Nayef Abi Said asked whether the Board would consider the development of administrators becoming part of strategy. Chris Thair said this is a good idea and this can be put into the draft.
- 9.7 Assad Feghali (Lebanon) asked whether the RLEF had considered an academy franchise model? Colin Kleyweg responded by saying if the detail of this concept was sent through to the Board it would be considered.

10.0 Next Meeting

- 10.1 Maurice Watkins reported the RLEF will no longer go year to year and the tendering process for hosting congress in 2020, 2021 and/or 2022 will be sent out within a month. Nations may express interest in hosting one or more of these events however the expectation is the event will be shared amongst the members.
- 10.2 The meeting ended at 4.05pm.

2018 General Manager Report

The stronger the RLEF members, the stronger the RLEF will be as an organisation. In 2018 our two flagship nations England and France made great strides, the smaller members showed progression and the year as a whole should be a great source of pride for international rugby league. Just like any business we faced challenges, have areas to improve upon however we learn and move into 2019 with positivity.

The RFL as our largest member should be congratulated for their on-field performances and their tenacity in taking risks to help develop the sport. The year after accepting a club side from Canada into their competition the RFL took an international to Denver in the United States to record a win against New Zealand and a 19,320 attendance, the highest ever rugby attendance of either code for the state of Colorado. The RFL's England then beat New Zealand in a 3 match Autumn test series with the final game played in front of 32,186 people and broadcast around the world. England Player Tommy Makinson awarded the RLIF's Golden Boot award for the best international player in the world. With club finals attracting crowds over 70,000 and large viewing figures, the RFL are building nicely towards England hosting the 2021 Rugby League World Cup.



Left: England's Tommy Makinson and 2018 Golden Boot winner scores a try against New Zealand at Anfield, Liverpool.

Following a 50-year absence the cockerel was placed back onto the Rugby League World Cup trophy at the end of 2018 and it was very fitting it should happen in a remarkable year for the French Federation FFRXIII. The trophy is called the Paul Barrière Cup, named after the French federation's president who commissioned the trophy for the 1954 World Cup, a federation that had been pushing for a World Cup for many years. Only football has an older World Cup to rugby league, so it again shows the pioneering nature of the sport.

French players won all the major trophies in Europe in 2018: France U19s and Men won their respective European Championships. Theo Fages won the Super League League Leaders Shield with St Helens, Romain Navarrete and Morgan Escaré won the Super League Grand Final and a host of French players won the Challenge Cup Final with Catalan Dragons. Participation levels in France rose by a few thousand and off field the Federation posted record profits. 2018 was a magnificent year for rugby league in France and congratulations to all involved.



Left: Following a 50 year absence the cockerel is perched once again on top of the Rugby League's World Cup, the Paul Barrière trophy.

Results of 2018 RLEF Competitions

2018 Championships	Winners	Runners Up	Others in rank order
Americas	Jamaica	USA	Canada Chile
European A	France	Wales	Ireland Scotland
European B	Russia	Spain	Serbia
Euro C North	Norway	Germany	Czech Republic
Euro C South	Greece	Ukraine	Malta
European U19	France	England	Wales, Scotland, Serbia, Ireland, Italy and Ukraine
Played internationals but not in RLEF competitions.			Netherlands, Turkey, Lebanon, Malta

All 21 RLEF member nations played internationals in 2018, a hugely successful year.

Jamaica won the Americas Championships and qualified for the World Cup for the first time in their history.

European Champions France and runners up Wales also qualified for the 2021 Rugby League World Cup. European B Champions Russia progress to the final World Cup qualification stage.

Members who didn't participate in RLEF Tournaments still had outstanding international success. Turkey played a record seven nations in 2018 and Malta won the Emerging Nations World Cup in Australia. Congratulations to all nations.

The RLEF through the EU's Erasmus + grant again invested six figure sums into its member's technical programmes. Running match official and coach education courses and most importantly training up a workforce of educators so nations have people who are trained to deliver courses. Empowering nations to be self-sufficient in the fundamentals is a key aspect to the sports ongoing development.

Other grants were received for development work which took place in Ghana, Africa. A region which is very important to the RLEF and has big plans for in 2019 with the MEA Championships.

Whilst existing nations and programmes developed in 2018 there was also a whole lot of new beginnings. New federations in Albania and Nigeria. New people brought into the RLEF in Mahdi Choudhury and Chris Thair. A new RLEF member in the Turkey Rugby League

Association, new logos for Wales, Nigeria, Morocco and MEA. Finally, new domestic club leagues set up in Morocco and Cameroon.

New and old together, the RLEF will continue to develop.

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm.