

DRAFT MINUTES

ERL ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

11th November 2023

Location	Online via Zoom	Date	11 th November 2023
		Times (UK)	Start: 09.00 End: 10.10

Present:

Full Members (8/11)	Alison O'Brien, England (RFL), Gilles Dumas, France (FFRXIII), Orazio D'Arro, Italy (FIRL), Wael Hard, Lebanon (LRLF), Vladan Kikanovic, Serbia (SRLF), Krappie Eloff, South Africa (SARLSA) Artur Martyrosian, Ukraine (UFRL), Brian Juliff, Wales (WRL)
Affiliate Members (9/16)	Adamou Sadjou Bouba, Camerron, (CRLXIII), John Cameron, Canada (CRLA), Lukas Hergott, Czech Republic (CZRLA), Bob Doughton, Germany (NRLD), Jafaru Mustapha, Ghana (RLFG), Richard Nyakwaka, Kenya, (KRLF), Yamina Abdesselem Morocco (FMRL), Daan van Rossum, Fleur Van Garderen, Netherlands (NRLB), Ade Adebisi, Nigeria (NRLA)
Observers (4/21)	Jean Du Christ Rusiga, Burundi (BRL), Joe Mbu, DR Congo (CRL), Issouf Ouattara, Ivory Coast (CIRL), Łukasz Łucka, Poland (PRXIII)
Directors	Dean Andrew (Chair), Tatiana Doncaster, Alison O'Brien, Gilles Dumas, Brian Juliff,
Apologies Received	Richard Coleman (Independent Director)
In Attendance	David Butler (ERL General Manager), Remond Safi (ERL Regional Director – MEA), Jovan Vujosevic (ERL Regional Director – Europe)

Item		Action
1	Introduction	
1.1	<p>Welcome & Apologies</p> <p>Dean Andrew (DA) introduced the agenda for the 21st Annual Council Meeting of the European Rugby League (ERL).</p> <p>DA noted the sad passing of Keith Hogg, former Chairperson of Scotland Rugby League and described some of the contributions that Keith had made to both Rugby League in Scotland and globally during his tenure. The meeting paused for a moment of reflection.</p>	

	<p>DA noted that the previous Annual Council Meeting had taken place hours before the start of the Rugby League World Cup and commented on the excitement and impact that the event had had in terms of profile for the game of Rugby League, but noted that unfortunately the tournament had not met its financial targets and as such the international game faces financial challenges.</p> <p>DA also noted that global challenges such as the ongoing war in Ukraine and conflict in the Middle East, global economic pressures and a cost-of-living crisis have all caused additional challenges for the international game, but congratulated the member national federations on their tenacity and efforts to continue in the face of adversity.</p> <p>DA welcomed two new national federations to the organisation who have joined as Observer members since the last Council meeting; North Macedonia and Slovakia and noted that Kenya have been upgraded to Affiliate status following their achievements.</p> <p>DA welcomed other members of the Board of Directors who were present on the meeting; Brian Juliff, Alison O'Brien, Gilles Dumas and Tatiana Doncaster and noted that Independent Director Richard Coleman had sent apologies as he was attending a commercial meeting on behalf of ERL that clashed.</p> <p>DA also welcomed the organisation's staff David Butler, Remond Safi and Jovan Vujosevic and paid tribute to their efforts throughout the year and in addition the efforts of Romeo Monteith and Nigel Hansford who have left the organisation as part of required cost saving measures.</p> <p>DA continued that it was important to set some context to the meeting by explaining the ERL's financial position, which has been impacted by all of the factors described. The ERL is currently awaiting payment of an invoice of £110k by the International Rugby League (IRL). This money is to cover costs already expended by the ERL during 2022 and such is the financial pressure that should the invoice not be paid before the end of November, ERL will begin to make further redundancies.</p>	
1.2	<p>Roll call and confirmation of voting representatives</p> <p>David Butler (DB) conducted the roll call (as listed above) and confirmed that with 8 full members and 9 affiliate members present, there were 50 of the 76 votes present and thus the meeting was quorate. 26 votes would be required to pass an ordinary resolution.</p>	
1.3	<p>Conflicts of Interest Register</p> <p>The most recent Conflict of Interest Register for Board and Staff had been distributed with the papers for the meeting for the members' information. DA gave the opportunity for members to ask any questions on this. No questions were asked.</p>	
2	Minutes of the 2022 Annual Council Meeting	
2.1	The draft minutes of the 2022 Annual Council Meeting were supplied with the papers for the meeting. DA gave the opportunity for members	

to raise any issues or ask any questions on the minutes. No questions were asked.

As such the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting, with the motion proposed by Richard Nyakwaka, (Kenya) and seconded by Orazio D'Arro (Italy) and were unanimously approved by the voting members present (50 For, 0 Against)

Action: The 2022 Annual Council Meeting Minutes to be added to the ERL website.

DB

3 2022 Annual Report

3.1 DB noted that the 2022 Annual Report had been circulated to members with the papers for the meeting and would be released publicly in the week following the Annual Council Meeting:

DB summarised some of the highlights of the year, which included:

- The staging of the first continental women's competition with Euro B, with Wales and Greece the respective champions and six nations taking part.
- A superb European U19s Championships in Italy with seven nations taking part and exemplified the Rugby League community being family as everyone came together following the tragic loss of England Assistant Coach Gary McMahon during the tournament.
- The MEA Championships took place in Ghana with Nigeria winning the event.
- The Governance review was brought to life, with the increased Board composition and recruitment completed and embedded and other changes undertaken.
- A UK Sport funded technical education event was delivered in Kenya to several MEA members with a focus on improving technical competency within the region.
- Return to domestic competition for vast majority of members' domestic competitions following the global pandemic's restrictions being lifted.

Looking ahead, DB noted several developments due to take place in 2024:

- Men's and Women's Rugby League World Cup Qualifiers in each of the three regions are set to take place, with formats to be confirmed shortly following binding expressions of interest being received currently by eligible National Federations.
- A European Rugby League 9s Championship has been advertised to take place in Turkey in April 2024.

- The Biennial European U19s Championship is set to take place, with details to be confirmed.
- Refresher training for Coach and Match Official Educators and training for new candidates in countries who have not yet had a technical education intervention and a focus on progressing Level 2 candidates to improve standards.
- Focus on financial sustainability and commercial revenue for ERL centrally.

Richard Nyakwaka asked what costs were subsidised for the 9s and U19s tournaments in Europe and asked why MEA entrant were not invited. DB explained that the costs are entirely covered by the National Federations and as such they have traditionally been kept to European members on grounds of cost.

Ade Adebisi asked why MEA could not have a 9s / U19s tournaments in the region. DB explained that there was no reason that MEA couldn't and that the MEA Steering Group was the vehicle to agree and organise a calendar.

4 Company Finance

4.1 DB explained that the ERL Annual Accounts had been circulated to members on the 23rd June 2023 with a ballot sheet to be returned by 17th July 2023 and explained the reason for the ballot was that the accounts have to be returned by 30th September which with the current AGM timing means that waiting for the AGM is not possible.

The results of the ballot were 58 Votes For, 2 Votes Against and as such the Annual Accounts had been filed with Companies House ahead of deadline.

There were no further questions on the Annual Accounts.

5 Election Of Directors

5.1 DA confirmed that following the recent call for nominations from National Federations for Member-Elected Directors, only one candidate, Brian Juliff of Wales Rugby League had been put forward and that following a ballot of members, Brian had been returned for a second term with 62 Votes For, 6 Abstentions and 0 Votes Against and offered his congratulations to Brian.

DA also noted that Brian Juliff as one of ERL's appointed IRL Directors is held in very high regard within the international game for both his business skills and knowledge and his background as a former professional and international player and that knowledge that he brings to discussions at all levels is very valuable.

5.2 DA explained that Paul Nicholson, one of ERL's Independent Directors, has come to the end of his term of office and is not eligible for a further term.

Paul has served on the Board for over 10 years and has been integral to broadcast and commercial arrangements for European Championships and RLWC Qualifying tournaments. He has vast knowledge which has been hugely valuable to both his Board colleagues and the Executive during his tenure. On behalf of everyone present, DA thanked Paul for his service.

Paul has offered to provide ongoing support to the organisation going forward and ERL will be taking him up on that offer.

DA noted that a recruitment process will commence in the New Year to replace Paul.

6 Member Resolutions

6.1 DA introduced Bob Doughton (Germany) who had submitted a resolution for the Annual Council Meeting, seconded by Artur Martyrosian (Ukraine).

The Resolution reads: *"The ERL members should form a working group to assess the needs of all members of the ERL and to formulate potential strategic options for the ERL Council to decide on at an extraordinary meeting of the Council. The members of the working group, its objectives and the time frame for submission of the options should be discussed and agreed upon at the 2023 Annual General Council."*

Speaking to the resolutions, Bob Doughton explained that he felt that this was a very important piece of work and the group should be chaired by Dean Andrew as Chair of the organisation. He noted that no consultants are required and that the expertise is present within the Federation. He added that he felt that one-two-one interviews with each members, with the use of interpreters was the preferred method and that recommendations should return to the Council for further discussion.

DA asked for any objections to resolution. There were none and thus the resolution was passed 50 Votes For, 0 Votes Against.

Action: DA to develop Terms Of Reference for the group and to propose membership.

Orazio D'Arro (Italy) asked whether there were any restrictions on the membership of the group based on location. DA confirmed there would not be.

Richard Nyakwaka added that he felt the group should consider a timeframe for members to become Full Members following their acceptance as Observer Members.

7 Any Other Business

Orazio D'Arro sought clarification on whether people not resident in Europe are eligible to be Directors of the Organisation. DB explained that it was agreed at the 2021 Annual Council Meeting by the significant majority of members that Directors should be either a) Resident in the continent of Europe for at least 210 days per year OR b) resident in the country they are nominated by as a Member-Elected Director and gave the example that in the January 2022 Member-Elected Director elections there were nominations from both MEA and the Americas.

DB confirmed that to change the Articles of Association, a member would need to submit a resolution, seconded by another member, within the specified timeframes for an Annual Council Meeting or if it wished to do so, would need to follow the process to trigger an Extraordinary General Meeting in line with the Articles Of Association.

Daan Van Rossum (Netherlands) asked about ERL's eligibility for European Union funding. DB explained that as ERL is a company registered in England and Wales, it is no longer eligible for EU funding and that we are continuing to work with the EU on the reconciliation of the grant which concluded in 2018, so regardless we would not be eligible. He explained that an option is to open a subsidiary company in an EU country, however there are costs involved in this which currently the company does not have available. There is scope for consortiums of National Federations to bid for EU funding and ERL can support applications on this basis.

There being no further questions, DA thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 10.10am.