



ANNUAL REPORT 2024





CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR	3
ERL VISION, MISSION & VALUES	4
EUROPE	5
AMERICAS	7
MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA	8
GOVERNANCE	9
MEMBER REGISTER	11
FINANCIAL REPORT	12
THE BOARD	14
APPENDIX 1: ORGANISATION	17

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

It gives me great pleasure to present the 2024 European Rugby League (ERL) Annual Report – a year where a record number of games were played in Europe outside of a Rugby League World Cup year.

I'd like to congratulate France and Wales on earning automatic qualification to the Women's Rugby League World Cup and wish good luck to Ireland who will represent Europe, Nigeria who will represent Middle East & Africa and Canada who will represent the Americas at the World Series next year where they fight it out for the final berth.



My congratulations also go to France who will represent Europe next year in the final stages of the men's qualification, where South Africa and Jamaica will also be hosting to secure one of the two remaining berths at the Men's Rugby League World Cup.

The U19s event in Serbia yet again showed everything that is great about Rugby League, with six participating teams and some fascinating, competitive games taking place and congratulations go to both England who were champions, with thanks going to Serbia who hosted the event superbly and also staged supporting events such as coach and match officials education for their Balkan neighbors.

The Wheelchair Rugby League Celtic Nations also broke new ground by being played in Ireland for the first time, providing the perfect platform for the home side to also secure their first tournament title.

Our organisation continued to operate on a prudent financial footing and it was with regret that we had to say "farewell" to our longstanding consultant, Jovan Vujosevic who acted as our European Director, at the end of October and later in the year to our General Manager, David Butler and to our MEA & Americas Director, Remond Safi, who both left the organisation to take up employment with International Rugby League. I would like to thank all three of them, plus our volunteer network of Phil Caplan (Media Manager), George Stilianos (Social Media Manager), Martin Crick (Coaching Manager), Tom Mather (Match Officials Manager), Phil Smith (Match Officials Tutor) and Steve Hogan (Match Officials Tutor) for all their efforts on behalf of European Rugby League throughout the year.

As ever, I would like to close by thanking our members for the work they do, often unpaid, for the good of and for the growth of Rugby League. Much of the work described in this annual report and the lists of matches played on our website are a tribute to your efforts and you should be very proud of all that you have accomplished this year.

Dean Andrew
Chairperson

ERL VISION, MISSION & VALUES

OUR VISION

To Grow Participation and Develop High Quality Rugby League

OUR MISSION

Deliver Great International Competitions and Enable Sustainable Federations to Grow Rugby League



EXCELLENCE

We deliver high quality services and events so all users have the best possible experience.

We continually seeking to improve, listen and have outstanding governance practices and behaviours.

DYNAMISM

We make it as easy as possible for people to engage with the European Rugby League and be proud of their involvement.

We respect language, culture and participant needs.

INNOVATION

We look for new and better ways to achieve our goals and strive to look at positive solutions to barriers.

INTEGRITY

We create an environment of trust, respect and honesty between members of European Rugby League.

We protect the positive image of our sport.

UNITY

We generate a spirit of togetherness with members and partners by showing respect and celebrating our individual and collective successes.

EUROPE

Rugby League in Europe continued to lead the way with more senior international matches played involving European teams than ever before, with a total of 40 Senior Internationals played across the across the men's, women's and wheelchair game.

A major focus was on Rugby League World Cup 2026 qualification, with men's and women's tournaments taking place. For the men, Wales eliminated Serbia in the first semi-final whilst France had the upper hand over Ukraine in a floodlit double-header in Carcassonne before France overcame Wales in the final on the following weekend in Perpignan to progress to the next stage of qualification.

The women's tournament served up feast of games throughout the year, with several nations taking huge strides forward. Netherlands eliminated Italy in the preliminary game to take their place in Group A alongside Wales and Ireland. Wales edged Ireland out in the opening group game in April, before Netherlands pushed Ireland all the way in Dublin the following month, narrowly losing by just a four-point margin. After a close first half, Wales eventually overpowered Netherlands in Amsterdam to qualify for RLWC26, with Ireland taking 2nd place in the group.

France were the standout package in Group B, recorded comfortable wins over Greece in April and Serbia in June to book their place to Australia. Greece took second place after a 32-4 win over Serbia in Athens in May.

The final game of the competition saw Greece, who were awarded the home game due to their superior world ranking position, host Ireland in October for the play-off game, which saw Ireland victorious and progress to the second-stage of qualification in 2025.

Elsewhere in the running game there were several notable bilateral games played, including England hosting a two-match series against Samoa men, Wales hosting Jamaica in Neath, Scotland travelling to the Netherlands with a team made up entirely of players from their domestic competition and Czechia hosting both Ukraine and Poland for a bumper weekend of action in October.

The wheelchair game also continued to break new ground, with Wales undertaking a pioneering two-game tour to the USA in February before the annual Celtic Cup, played in June, was contested in Ireland for the first time and seeing the home side victorious for the first time in a decade, with Scotland taking the runners-up position and condemning Wales to last place.

The Autumn slot saw England host France in a thriller in Wigan, before the wheelchair season concluded in November with Spain pushing a fledgling England side all the way in Nantes in a double header that also saw France beat Ireland, before France had their revenge over England two days later in St Lo.

2024 saw several nations make progress with youth development, with Norway travelling to Czechia and to Serbia with U16s and U19s teams for the first time to play their first games at youth level.

Wales defended their U16s Four Nations title for the second year, with England coming second and Scotland and Ireland bringing up the rear, whilst at Student level England were victorious over Wales in both games of a two-match series after Scotland and Ireland withdrew from the annual Four Nations competition.

The main focus in Europe at youth level was the biennial U19s European Rugby League Championship which took place for the second time in Serbia having also hosted the 2018 event. Six teams contested the event – England, France, Scotland, Serbia, Ukraine and the USA who took their first steps to fielding a youth international side.

The format saw two quarter-finals take place with Scotland beating USA 32-10 hosts Serbia losing to Ukraine 4-24. 2022 finalists England and France were seeded into the semi-finals, with England facing Ukraine in a game which finished 58-4 whilst France laboured past ANNUAL REPORT | 2024 Scotland in a bad tempered game which concluded 30-18. Serbia lost the 5th v 6th play off 12-40 to USA played on the same day.

On finals day, USA held off Ukraine in a 26-22 game in a grading game which was played in the presence of both countries ambassadors to Serbia before Serbia were punished 0-56 by Scotland in the other grading game. In the Championship Final, England left it late to secure victory over France. A 7-0 lead at half time was overturned as Les Bleus fought back but Miller Dalton's 79th minute try secured England back-to-back titles with a 15-8 victory.

Alongside the U19s Championship, almost 30 coaches, including three women, and eight match officials were certified through courses which were staged as part of the event.

Delegates from ten nations attended across five days of activity, with accommodation and ground costs for the candidates covered by the Serbian Rugby League Federation who in turn were granted funds from Belgrade City Council towards the event.

The level 1 coaching course saw several different nationalities represented on the course, whilst the match officials course saw Greece's Maria Avzoti and Poland's Zuzanna Orlik appointed as interchange officials to games taking place in the last day of the Championship, while Malta's Lionel DaSilva was appointed as a touch judge for the USA v Ukraine game, giving him instant on-field experience

AMERICAS

In 2024, there were robust domestic championships and several representative and international games.

Canadian Provincial domestic championships were executed in both British Columbia and Ontario. The Launch of the youth program in USA and Canada, along the vibrant Jamaica youth marked a major milestone in the region. The USA organised four regional club championships on the East and West Coasts under the banners of the USARL Championship, with Pacific Coast Rugby League, Utah Rugby League, North Rugby League, and USARL South Rugby League. The winners from each conference competed for the National Championship, with DC Cavalry emerging victorious over the Provo Broncos. In the Caribbean, Jamaica once again delivered a full calendar of competitions across U14, U16, U19, intercollegiate and community club National Championships. The women's domestic game continued to grow with playing of the nation's first domestic 13s Championship.

The Americas Region embraced its first ever Americas Women's Championship which doubled up as the RLWC2026 qualifier, with USA hosted Canada and Jamaica. Canada will be progressing to the Women's World Series in 2025 representing the region, whereas Jamaica will proceed in the men's qualifiers uncontested from the region. Several international matches took place in the region, with Canada and Jamaica played bilateral fixtures. The NRL launched the Las Vegas events with NRL teams playing on USA soil and a 9s festival with Canadian and local USA teams participating, USA defeated South Africa in a two match series in South Africa and the USA I19s participated in the European Youth Championship held in Serbia.

The USA governance reform, which spanned two years, has been successfully concluded. The new structure includes 9 directors from an 11-member elected board, representing 7 voting clubs and one voting league. The elected officials are: Chairperson: Matt Goshnick Board Members: Chris Martin, George Tupou, and Dustin Zerrer Directors nominated by the 11 member clubs and one league: Billy Neilson, Darren Piggins and Drew Slover, Individual Female Member: Miranda Barnard, Individual Male Member: David Abo. This new governance structure aims to enhance the leadership and strategic direction of the organisation

MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

The MEA Region has shown further growth in all categories with the increase in women's participation particularly encouraging. The first ever bilateral international fixtures were played (ones outside the MEA Championship) with South Africa playing Kenya in two men's senior internationals, and Nigeria playing Ghana and Kenya against Uganda in women's rugby league.

Local championships were completed by Lebanon (men), Ghana (women, men and youth), Nigeria (women, men, youth), Cameroon (women, men), Kenya (women, men, youth) and South Africa's seasons concluding in 2024.

MEA nations are expressing a growing desire for more input in the future of the game which demonstrates their growing capacity and confidence. The region welcomed its newest member, the Kenyan Rugby League Federation, as an affiliate member, showing further growth: within 12 months KRLF hosted Uganda women's national team and France men in late 2023, in what was a diplomatic success for the sport. Kenya's men also played two away games against South Africa.

The MEA Steering Committee appointed its new extended committee for the next 12 months with representatives from the two full members, Dr Frans Erasmus (South Africa) and Nayef Abi Said (Lebanon), plus elected affiliate member representative Andy Gilvary (Ghana) and observer member representative Fortnuate Irankunda (Uganda). Three independent members have also been added to the committee with Vuyolwethu Bokwe (Chair), Bolu Fagborun and Saad Boujmal. Remond Safi has been appointed as secretary of the steering committee. A subcommittee has been established to develop the region's first strategy.

Elsewhere, Ghana completed a technical L1 coaching and match official education, while English club York Knights visited Uganda with 13 tourists to deliver on ground support, helping to set up the local championship and academy.

Finally, the region continued to embrace the innovation initiated by Rugby League Federation Ghana's partnership with Salford, as London Broncos paired with South Africa, Hull KR with Nigeria, and Leeds with Kenya. The collective plan is to develop player pathways to the clubs and establishing academies to be led by local coaches. Amongst various knowledge transfer activities between the pro clubs and their African partners, the Red Devils produced a set of branded apparel that the club sold out of, with the funds raised invested in the Ghana rugby league academy project.

GOVERNANCE

Changes to the Board

At the 2024 AGM, Dean Andrew and Tatiana Doncaster (Independents) commenced their second terms and Jim Reynolds (Member-Elected Director) was voted onto the Board following Gurol Yildiz (Member-Elected Director) coming to the end of his term of office. Richard Coleman (Independent) resigned his position in June 2024 and it was decided not to replace the position to allow time to review the position.

Board meetings

The Board held 2 meetings throughout the year, on 1 February (Zoom) and 11 October (Zoom)

	No. of meetings attended	No. of meetings held during Director's period of office
Dean Andrew	2	2
Tatiana Doncaster	1	2
Richard Coleman	1	1
Brian Juliff	2	2
Gurol Yildiz	1	2
Ileana Iacopetti	1	2
Jim Reynolds	0	0
Alison O'Brien	2	2
Gilles Dumas	1	2

SUB-COMMITTEES

The ERL administers three sub-committees, all of which operate independently of the plenary Board and reporting to it at the subsequent Board Meeting.

Dispute Resolution Committee

The DRC was created following a Board resolution taken at its 19 February 2016 Board Meeting. It is a standing committee of the ERL and is the first instance organ for Members to lodge formal grievance. The Committee is convened by order of the Board upon formal complaint being lodged in writing to the ERL General Manager or the Board and therefore there are no sitting members or fixed terms. The DRC was not required to be convened in 2024.

Financial, Audit and Risk Committee

The purpose of the FARC, constituted in February 2012, is to advise the Board on financial management, audit and risk management matters. In 2024 FARC was chaired by Brian Juliff, with Dean Andrew and Tatiana Doncaster as sitting members. Robert Graham (RFL Finance Director) is a co-opted member with ERL General Manager David Butler in attendance.

Meetings are usually held approximately every six months, however in 2024 FARC only met in April 2024. In addition, FARC also monitored the risk register in close consultation with the executive team.

	No. of meetings attended	No. of meetings held during Member's period of office
Brian Juliff	1	1
Dean Andrew	1	1
Tatiana Doncaster	1	1
Robert Graham	0	1
David Butler	1	1

Remuneration Committee

The purpose of the Remuneration Committee, constituted in September 2011, is to oversee a formal and transparent procedure for developing policy on executive and consultant remuneration. It is chaired by Dean Andrew, with Tatiana Doncaster and Alison O'Brien as its other members. The committee met once in 2024

	No. of meetings attended	No. of meetings held during Member's period of office
Dean Andrew	1	1
Tatiana Doncaster	1	1
Alison O'Brien	1	1

COUNCIL

National Federations represented at the 2024 Annual Council Meeting which took place on Saturday 16th November 2024:

Full Members: Alison O'Brien, England (**RFL**), Gilles Dumas & Berenice Flores, France (**FFRXIII**), Orazio D'Arro, Italy (**FIRL**), Andre Coetzer, South Africa (**SARLSA**), Brian Juliff, Wales (**WRL**)

Affiliate Members: Lukas Hergott, Czech Republic (**CZRLA**), Bob Doughton, Germany (**NRLD**), Juliana Storey & Jafaru Mustapha, Ghana (**RLFG**), Terry Liberopoulos, Greece (**GRLF**), Jim Reynolds, Ireland (**RLI**), John Mbai, Kenya (**KRLF**), Nayef Abi Said, Lebanon (**LRLF**) – Item 6 Onwards, Anthony Micallef & Jean-Piere Zarb, Malta (**MRL**), Yamina Abdesselem Morocco (**FMRL**), Daan van Rossum, Netherlands (**NRLB**), Ade Adebisi & Isah Lawal-Saulawa, Nigeria (**NRLA**), Anne Haigh, Norway (**RLN**), Alistair McVicar, Scotland (**SRL**).

Observers Members: Arnaldo Telo, Albania (**ARL**), Joe Mbu, DR Congo (**CRL**), Abdul el Karim, Libya (**LRL**), Damjan Georgievski, North Macedonia (**NMRL**), Rabieh El Masri, Palestine (**PRL**), Łukasz Łucka, Poland (**PRXIII**), Charles Cimetiere, Slovakia (**SKRL**), Rodrigo Molina, Spain (**AERL**).

Full Members At 31/12/2024



England, France, Jamaica, Serbia, South Africa, Ukraine, Wales

Affiliate Members At 31/12/2024



Canada, Cameroon, Czechia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Ireland, Italy Kenya, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Russia, Scotland, Spain, Turkey, United States

ERL Observer Members At 31/12/2024



Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, DR Congo, El Salvador, Hungary, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Libya, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Palestine, Poland, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Uganda

FINANCIAL REPORT

The following commentary is provided on the Annual Accounts for 2024:

1. The matter regarding the EU Funding was resolved during the 2024 financial year which resulted in a payment of £13,090 being made to the EU and the company needing to take £112,238 off the assets on its balance sheet.
2. As a result of the £112,238 and £13,090 sums noted above being reversed through the profit and loss account, this shows company making a loss of £251,643 in 2024 compared to a loss of £24,287 in 2023.
3. The Accounts have been reviewed by Howard Matthews Partnership and they have reported that nothing has come to their attention that causes them to believe that the financial statements have not been prepared so as to give a true and fair view of the state of the Company's affairs as at 31 December 2024.
4. Member fees realised approximately £4.6k of income and are being collected on time.
5. Staffing costs were below budget following a restructure of consultancy services, with European Director Jovan Vujosevic's consultancy being terminated during the year as a cost saving measure. To safeguard the future of the organisation, remaining members of staff were transferred by TUPE from 1st January 2025, reducing future expenditure to essential costs only.
6. Net assets decreased as a result of the loss in the year from £300k to £48k as a result of the EU grant clawback and are represented by £54k in bank balances; with debtors (£3.4k) and creditors (£9k) accounting for the difference.
7. Cash flow was satisfactory with combined balances of £54k at the year end.

European Rugby League Federation Ltd. Accounts

Year to 31 December 2024

Prepared by Howard Matthews of Queensgate House, 23 North Park Road, Harrogate, HG1 5PD

Statement of financial position 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 £	£	2023 £	£
Current assets					
Debtors	6	3,446		116,164	
Cash at bank and in hand		54,059		194,759	
		<u>57,505</u>		<u>310,923</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	7	<u>(9,045)</u>		<u>(10,820)</u>	
Net current assets			48,460		300,103
Total assets less current liabilities			<u>48,460</u>		<u>300,103</u>
Net assets			<u>48,460</u>		<u>300,103</u>
Capital and reserves					
Profit and loss account			48,460		300,103
Members funds			<u>48,460</u>		<u>300,103</u>

The directors consider that the Company is entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 and members have not required the Company to obtain an audit for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime and in accordance with the provisions of FRS 102 Section 1A - small entities. The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the board and were signed on its behalf.

Dean Andrew

Chairperson & Director

THE BOARD

At 31/12/2024

DEAN ANDREW

Dean joined the Royal Air Force from school and achieved the rank of Air Commodore following a career based mainly overseas. His most recent appointment was as Deputy Commander NATO Air Command & USAF Command Vice in Afghanistan, where he acted as deputy commander for over 9,000 personnel from 41 nations. His love of rugby league began in his native city of Hull and was evidenced during his military career when elected president of both the Royal Air Force and UK Armed Forces Rugby League for almost two decades.

MEMBER-ELECTED DIRECTOR



TATIANA DONCASTER

Mahdi Tatiana is a chartered management accountant with extensive experience in transformative change in diverse industries and charities and is recognised as a mentor and successful business partner with global teams and high-level executives.

INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR



ILEANA IACOPETTI

Now retired, Ileana's career saw her working in clinical research within a cluster involving nine European nations where she managed the budgets, organising cluster meetings, lead on marketing and organising medical congresses and product launches. In Rugby League, she joined the board of the Italian Rugby League Federation as treasurer as well as supporting FIRL's national teams with hosting and travelling to games and tournaments.

MEMBER-ELECTED DIRECTOR



BRIAN JULIFF

Brian is a member elected director and joined the board in September 2020. A former Chairman of Wales Rugby League, he made 8 appearances for Wales between 1979 and 1985 in a career spanning 270 professional Rugby League appearances for clubs including Wakefield Trinity, Wigan, Castleford and Halifax, with whom he was a Challenge Cup winner in 1987. Professionally Brian is a business and management consultant.

MEMBER-ELECTED DIRECTOR



JIM REYNOLDS

Jim joined the board in November 2024 after being elected at the AGM. Born and raised in Ireland, Jim has experience working in business all over Europe. Now retired, he resides in Galway and holds the office of Chairman of Rugby League Ireland and his tenure so far has seen the women's game introduced domestically and internationally as well as progression locally with the wheelchair variant of our game. .

MEMBER-ELECTED DIRECTOR



ALISON O'BRIEN

Currently Director of Insight & Customer at the Rugby Football League, Alison represents the Rugby Football League on the board of ERL, having worked for the governing body in England since 2015. Prior to joining the RFL, Alison worked in insight and strategy roles with major FMCG companies and food retailers in the UK. .

RFL DIRECTOR



GILLES DUMAS

Following a playing career which saw him make 27 appearances for France between 1986 and 1993, Gilles also took the coaching reigns of the French national team for 24 games between 1998 and 2003, winning 10 of those fixtures. He is currently the high performance director within the French Federation and brings elite level experience to the ERL board.

FFRXIII DIRECTOR



APPENDIX 1: ERL ORGANISATION

