

WORLD DEAF RUGBY EXECUTIVE UPDATE NO. 4

December 2020

This is the fourth and final ***WDR Executive Update*** for 2020 to keep you up to date about what's been happening and what we've been working on during the year.

2020 - WHAT A YEAR!

2020 has certainly been a year none of us in our worst nightmares would have envisaged, and a year we would never again want to experience - *rolling lockdowns, widespread fear, almost 75M infections and almost 2M deaths worldwide!* In late February 2020, the novel coronavirus 2019 (*Covid-19*) was declared a pandemic, spreading to every country across the globe.

We have all been massively challenged by this pandemic in our personal, work, and recreational pursuits and the situation remains very unstable, with many countries still battling second and third waves of the virus. Our lives were put on hold as we focused on keeping ourselves, our families and our friends safe, looking after our local communities and struggling with the financial impacts of it all. It has been impossible to plan for the future.

And as the world ground to a halt with everyone needing to isolate, socially distance and wear masks to protect ourselves and others, there could be no Deaf rugby training, matches or tournaments. But the *WDR Executive* has used this time to work in the background, fix up "*paperwork*" and progress various administrative matters. And we have very much appreciated the active involvement of *WDR Members* in all these activities.

2020 ACHIEVEMENTS

Things we've worked on during 2020 include:

WDR Website: We reviewed and amended various existing *Website* documents, added new documents and other content and regularly updated the membership listing and contacts

WDR Hearing Loss Policy: We created a formal *WDR Hearing Loss Policy* document that fully explains the *WDR Hearing Loss* regime voted on by the *WDR Members* in 2019, sent it to all *WDR Members* and posted it on the *WDR Website*

WDR Member Information: We sent out *Questionnaires* to update the information we have about national Deaf rugby organisations/committees that are *WDR Members*

World Rugby: We made contact with *World Rugby*, introduced the new *Executive Committee* and started discussions about the relationship between National Deaf Rugby Unions and National Rugby Unions, how *WDR* fits into the overall world rugby picture, what information *WR* would be interested in receiving from us and how our respective organisations could interact for mutual benefit

World Rugby Overview: We developed a five-page *World Deaf Rugby Overview* document to introduce the organisation, outline why it was established and explain what it is seeking to achieve. This document is intended as a resource for *WDR Members* to use in discussions with their home Rugby Unions, Government and potential sponsors to enhance understanding of what Deaf rugby and “*World Deaf Rugby*” is all about. (Emailed to all *WDR Members* and posted on the *WDR Website*)

WDR Constitution: We undertook a major revision of the *WDR Constitution* so that it would better reflect the current and possible future activities of the organisation and make sure it covered everything needed. This included two lengthy consultation processes that catalysed valuable *WDR Member* input and, subsequently, two formal voting processes. The revised *Constitution* was formally adopted in October 2020, sent to all *WDR Members* and posted on the *WDR Website*

Additional Executive Officer Positions: Four additional *Executive Officer* positions were approved as part of the approval of the updated *WDR Constitution* - i.e. a *Treasurer position* and three *Project Officer positions*

WDR Executive Committee Position Descriptions: A short document summarising the key responsibilities of each *WDR Executive Committee Officer* (*Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary & three Project Officers*) was developed and attached to the *WDR Constitution*

Quarterly WDR Executive Committee Updates: During 2020, four quarterly *Executive Committee Updates* were prepared, emailed to all *WDR Members* and posted on the *WDR Website*. Quarterly updates will continue to be provided each year to keep *WDR Members* informed about what is happening, what we are working on and what we might need from them.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Vacant Executive Officer Positions

Over the past three months we have taken steps via a call for nominations to fill the vacant *Executive Committee Officer* positions - i.e. the *Treasurer position* and the three *Project Officer positions*. This resulted in the following:

- **Gwynne Griffiths** (*Wales*) has agreed to take on a **Sponsorship/Marketing** role;
- **Fortunate Irankunda** (*Uganda*) and **Gareth Evans** (*Wales*) have agreed to jointly take on the **National Deaf Rugby Database** role.

The *Treasurer* and other *Project Officer* roles are still vacant.

Sponsorship/Marketing Role

The *Sponsorship/Marketing* role will focus on:

- Identifying and pursuing **corporate** and **event-specific** sponsorship opportunities;
- Negotiating, putting in place and administering **corporate** sponsorship agreements;
- Working with the event host country on **event-specific** sponsorship possibilities and arrangements; *and*
- Developing marketing strategies and approaches to increase participation in Deaf rugby, enhance WDR recognition and promote WDR championships & tournaments

Gwynne has already started working on some of the above, and has raised some issues that the *Executive Committee* and *General Committee* will need to discuss/address in the new year, including *Funding*, *Membership Fees* and the *WDR logo*.

National Deaf Rugby Database Role

The *National Deaf Rugby Database Role* will focus on compiling information/data from *National Deaf Rugby Unions* on

- Participation in grassroots and elite Deaf rugby in each *Member* country;
- Deaf rugby audience sizes in each *Member* country;
- What each *Member* is doing to develop/grow Deaf rugby in their country;
- Perceived barriers to expanding participation/audience sizes in each country; *and*
- What *Member* countries are doing to overcome such barriers.

Fortunate and Gareth are working together on this project, and in the new year will undoubtedly be in touch with all *WDR Member* countries to obtain relevant information.

Future Events Discussions

During the year we initiated several discussions with *Members* about future *WDR* and *Regional* Deaf rugby events, though the *Covid-19* pandemic made it impossible to plan with any degree of certainty. And substantial uncertainty will inevitably remain, particularly with respect to the resumption of international travel, the cost of international travel and the border restrictions countries may impose.

And given the continuing impact of *Covid-19* on the financial status of individuals and businesses, *National Deaf Rugby Unions/Teams* will also face ongoing challenges in raising funds through donations and sponsorship.

Notwithstanding the possible rapid distribution of vaccines over the next twelve months, it is likely that the uncertain *Covid-19* situation and associated economic challenges will continue for some time. This, together with fundraising constraints, will pose ongoing challenges for *National Deaf Rugby Unions/Teams* in being able to readily commit to travelling or attending events.

Though the above may seem somewhat pessimistic, it needs to be borne in mind in trying to make plans for the future and assessing what might and might not be realistically viable, particularly over the next twelve months.

Argentina WDR Sevens World Cup 2022

Argentina is continuing to work on a plan for hosting the *2022 WDR Sevens World Cup* in Argentina, and has made substantial progress on getting the people and resources needed for staging such an event. It is understood a timeframe of April 2022 is envisaged.

It is clearly early days yet and nothing has been set in concrete. But it is encouraging to see that there may be a real opportunity for *WDR Members* to participate in an international tournament in the not-too-distant future.

Other International Deaf Rugby Events

Prior to the start of the *Covid-19* pandemic, tentative plans had been made for various international Deaf rugby events including a small number of fifteens tests, a *Pacific-Rim Deaf Rugby Sevens* tournament and an *Oceania Deaf Sevens* tournament. Whilst the pandemic inevitably put a hold on such plans, it is anticipated that progressively during 2021 planning might be able to resume, and some events might be possible.

FUTURE

The imminent availability of *Covid-19* vaccines gives us hope for the future, and we need to remain optimistic that it won't be too long before international Deaf rugby can again be active - *2021 might well be a "Happy New Year"!* But it is critically important for humanity that the vaccines are equitably provided to all countries in terms of availability, affordability and speed of distribution. Only then can the world as a whole recover.

And finally, thanks to everyone for your cooperation, input and support during this difficult year. We wish you a relaxing and safe festive season and look forward to continuing our work together in 2021.

Michael Oosthuizen
WDR Chair

Tim Stones
WDR Vice-Chair

Johanna Plante
WDR Secretary