

WORLD DEAF RUGBY EXECUTIVE UPDATE NO. 2

April 2020

This is the second quarterly ***WDR Executive Update*** to keep you informed about what is happening, what we are working on and what we might need from you.

Following the first quarterly *Update* we sent you at the end of January 2020, we started progressing the list of things we told you about in the January *Update* - *i.e.*

- *WDR* Website Updates
- *WDR* Hearing Loss Policy
- Schedule of proposed Sevens & Fifteens Tournaments
- World Rugby
- *Deaflympics* Rugby Sevens
- *WDR Member* Information
- *WDR* Constitution Updates

During February 2020 we began discussing and working through many of these matters, including contacting all of you to obtain information about how Deaf rugby is structured and organised in each of your countries. We also initiated discussions with *World Rugby* and several individuals who had indicated a particular interest in progressing *Deaflympics* Rugby Sevens.

Another task we embarked upon was to review both the *WDR Constitution* and *Website*, and discuss some amendments and updates.

Covid-19 Pandemic

But by late February 2020, things were slowing down as the novel coronavirus 2019 (*Covid-19*) was declared a pandemic, with horrendous impacts right across the world.

We have all been challenged by this pandemic in our personal, work and recreational pursuits. And it seems likely that this situation will continue for many, many months into the future.

There is no doubt that almost all aspects of all our lives and most other things in the world have changed and been put on hold. We all now need to focus on keeping ourselves, our families and our friends safe, looking after our local communities and socially-distancing and/or self-isolating to save lives.

In these sober, sad, scary times our hearts reach out to you and our thoughts are with you, particularly those of you living in countries where things are very bad.

Please stay safe and look after yourselves and each other.

Covid-19 & Deaf Rugby

As we know, the *Covid-19* pandemic has shut down all sports right around the world. Local, National, Regional and International Deaf Rugby have similarly been impacted.

This means that inevitably all the *World Deaf Rugby Tests/Tournaments* and other Deaf rugby international matches/regional events planned for 2020 have been, are being or will almost certainly be postponed.

It is impossible at this stage of the pandemic to predict when it might again be possible to stage such events. But it appears highly unlikely that there will be any international Deaf Rugby events at all during 2020.

However, from the relatively safe social isolation of our respective homes, the *WDR Executive* is continuing to do what we can to progress various other aspects of “*World Deaf Rugby*”, as summarised below.

WDR ACTIVITIES & PROGRESS

WDR Website

We have reviewed and done some minor amendments to various existing *Website* documents and added some new ones, as well as updating the membership listing and contacts. Our next focus will be on seeing how we can make the *Website* easier to use from mobile phones and tablets.

WDR Hearing Loss Policy

The formal *WDR Hearing Loss Policy* document has been sent to all *WDR Members* and put on the *WDR Website*.

WDR Constitution

We’ve been making some editorial changes and updating the *WDR Constitution* to better reflect the current and possible future activities of the organisation, and make sure it covers all the things needed. This is being sent to all Members as a ***Draft for Comment*** document to give an opportunity to comment. Once any comments have been received and considered, it will then be sent to Members again for a formal vote.

WDR Overview

We’ve put together a five page “***World Deaf Rugby Overview***” document to introduce the organisation, why it was established and what it is seeking to achieve. This document may be a useful resource for 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.

The “*World Deaf Rugby Overview*” is being sent to Members and will also be posted on the *WDR Website*.

WDR Member Information

Some *WDR* Members have responded to our request for all Members to send us information about how *Deaf rugby* is structured and organised in their countries, but we are still waiting on responses from many of you. We are sending the *Questionnaire* again to give those Members who have not yet responded an opportunity to do so.

Schedule of Sevens & Fifteens Tournaments

Prior to the current *Covid-19* situation, we were working on compiling and distributing a schedule of 2020 international and regional *Sevens* and *Fifteens* matches/tournaments. We have clearly now put that on hold and will continue to monitor the situation.

Deaflympics Rugby Sevens

We have had some email discussions with several individuals who indicated a particular interest in progressing *Deaflympics* Rugby Sevens. Some are very keen to get it all going very quickly and want to have it included in the 2021 *Deaflympics*.

But, of course, this is not feasible given the timeframes, protocols and process complexities associated with getting a new *Deaflympics* sport approved - *even inclusion in the 2025 Deaflympics might prove challenging given the prerequisites for such inclusion and the current hiatus in Deaf rugby events.*

We will continue to keep in touch on this and ensure that before anything is progressed *WDR* Members are fully consulted and given an opportunity to provide their views.

World Rugby

Earlier this year we made contact with *World Rugby* and exchanged several emails as well as having a productive phone meeting in mid-March 2020. We provided them with an overview of *World Deaf Rugby* and what we are seeking to do, and had a general discussion about how Deaf rugby fits into the overall world rugby picture.

World Rugby shares our views re the priority importance of closer alignment, engagement and cooperation between national Deaf Rugby Unions/Associations and their national Rugby Unions, and the benefits of mutual understanding and support.

They emphasized that such national relationships are where we should focus rather than trying to seek formal “*recognition*” or any financial support from *World Rugby*, though they did indicate a readiness to assist in promoting and communicating official, sanctioned *World Deaf Rugby* tournaments.

They additionally suggested the following two-pronged approach as possibly reaping the most rewards - *i.e.*

- *WDR* to work with National Deaf Rugby Unions/Associations to better understand the Deaf rugby participation (*particularly grassroots*) and audience potential in each country, with each National Deaf Rugby Union/Association compiling a “*wish list*” of areas/items you believe your National Rugby Union may be able to assist with.

Better information about Deaf rugby participation and audience potential in each country would also enable us to highlight to *World Rugby* the wider benefits to rugby *per se* of social inclusion/diversity and attracting new audiences to community clubs.

- *WDR* to consider developing resources and materials to “*demystify*” and help fill knowledge/information gaps within *World Rugby* and National Rugby Unions about “*Deaf Rugby*”, its characteristics and its cultural imperatives. This could also include “*Guidelines*” on how a Deaf Rugby tournament should take place in accordance with the particular requirements of a “*Deaf*” sporting event, and how it could be successfully incorporated into a mainstream event as occurred at the *Oceania Sevens* event in Fiji late last year.

World Rugby could then share such documents and resources with its members as well as promote Deaf Rugby activity to rugby fans across the world through the *World Rugby* communication channels.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are being sent to Members with this *Update*:

- ***Questionnaire Form*** for completion and return by those Countries who have not yet submitted their completed *Questionnaire*
- ***Draft for Comment WDR Constitution***. Please send us any comments you have within 14 days. We will then send out a ***Final for Vote*** document for all Members to formally vote on
- ***World Deaf Rugby Overview***

We look forward to future opportunities to again meet face-to-face and play Deaf Rugby.

Michael Oosthuizen

WDR Chair

Tim Stones

WDR Vice-Chair

Johanna Plante

WDR Secretary