

Rugby clubs to benefit from sustainability fund



Rugby clubs across Scotland are set to benefit from Scottish Rugby's largest ever cash injection to help improve facilities and generate new revenues.

Funding from Scottish Rugby worth over £400,000 will be shared by 14 clubs across the country in the first round of support from the Club Sustainability Fund.

The successful clubs have also received National Lottery funding from sportscotland to the value of over £600,000 for their projects, which have a combined cost of £3.8m, representing an unprecedented scale of investment in the infrastructure of club rugby in Scotland.

Over 25 rugby clubs applied for funding from the Club Sustainability Fund, which was created through the wide-reaching sponsorship investment in Scottish Rugby by BT, and announced in November 2014.

A total of £1.6million was earmarked by Scottish Rugby for investment through the Club Sustainability Fund in the domestic game across a four-year period. The awards announced today mark the first round of funding, with other clubs set to benefit in the coming three years.

Scottish Rugby Chief Executive Mark Dodson said: "From the outset we were clear the BT sponsorship investment would help us significantly improve the infrastructure of rugby in Scotland.

"I am delighted we can reward clubs with ambition to help create positive rugby experiences at a local level. This

investment across a range of major projects will enable them to improve facilities for club members and local communities and independently generate more business to reinvest in the game.

“The health of rugby at grassroots is paramount to the growth and success of the sport and we would encourage all clubs to make the most of this opportunity, get involved, and benefit from the Fund.”

Ian Rankin, President of Scottish Rugby said: “The Club Sustainability Fund enables us to give us a significant, and sustained, boost to club rugby in Scotland. Many clubs are central to their local community and by backing these improvement projects we hope it will encourage more players and more support in the years to come.

“With the 2015 Rugby World Cup on the horizon we are encouraging clubs to open their doors and engage with their communities to showcase our sport with a long term view they can become the players, volunteers and supporters of the future. Improving facilities will no doubt ensure everyone has a positive experience of rugby.”

Stewart Harris, Chief Executive of sportscotland: “We are building a world class sporting system for everyone in Scotland and this investment in rugby is a key part of this. By improving the infrastructure of rugby across the country it will provide more and better opportunities for people to take part in sport and by generating new revenues, clubs will be better placed to develop and meet their ambitions.”

Funding applications were sought for either capital or revenue projects and assessed by both Scottish Rugby and sportscotland, which will also be providing significant additional funding to enable many of the ambitious projects to be developed.

The revenue strand aims to help clubs increase their income,

membership and relationships with the local community and businesses.

The capital strand will help clubs increase the quantity and quality of rugby participation in their area, by releasing money for large facility improvement projects, such as pitches, floodlights, training and changing areas.

In many cases the Club Sustainability Fund and sportscotland support contributes towards large-scale projects already being developed by clubs and backed by other funding partners such as local authorities.

First round recipients – see table below for full award list – include Selkirk Rugby Club, which won promotion to the top tier BT Premiership, and secured £37,500 towards the cost of an overhaul of its changing facilities to accommodate the growing number of teams representing the club.

Howe of Fife secured one of the biggest awards of £60,000 for its comprehensive new pavilion project which includes new changing rooms, community café, fitness and re-hab suites.

Elsewhere Stewartry got the green light for new changing rooms, improved floodlight training area and new gym with a £38,000 award in recognition for its proactive approach and strong women's section.

Biggar will be expanding its pitches and training areas after a contribution from the Club Sustainability Fund towards its project costs.

Today's announcement brings the clubs that have received funding from the fast-track strand of the Club Sustainability Fund to 55; after 41 clubs were initially supported for maintenance and improvement projects, back in December 2014.

Many of the clubs who were not successful in the first round of funding will continue to receive support from Scottish

Rugby in order to develop their projects to investment level.

Photo by John Preece