

2020/21 competitive season closure confirmed by Scottish Rugby

A recommendation by the Scottish Rugby Council to close 2020/21 competitive fixtures at all levels of the club and school game due to the national impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent public health guidelines now in place, has been supported by Scottish Rugby's Board

Teams had previously seen the season delayed until January 2021, however this timescale has now been extended to the end of the regular season, spring 2021.

In recent weeks, the prevalence of Covid-19 in Scotland has continued to remain high, and now 20 local authority areas – impacting four million people – are living under level three or level four of the Scottish government's five-tier system.



With the current public health guidelines in place, full contact training and non-competitive (friendly) matches cannot be resumed, resulting in the vast majority of players being unable to fully and safely prepare for competitive matches in the new year as previously intended.

The current government regulations also continue to limit the ability of clubs to journey to games as travel restrictions at various levels are in place across the country, including some areas where this is limited to essential purposes only.

Despite the cancellation of the revised competitive league programme, Scottish Rugby aims to facilitate local friendly fixtures in the months ahead at a time when it is safe to do so.

FOSROC Super6 teams will continue to work towards the possibility of delivering a full programme of fixtures, with the aim of starting at the end of March 2021, should government guidelines allow.



Watsonians v Heriots Rugby, FOSROC Super6

Scottish Rugby President, Ian Barr said: "After much careful ongoing consideration by the Scottish Rugby Council, who received a detailed briefing by colleagues in Rugby Development and updates from Scottish Rugby's Threat Management Group, on the impact of current government restrictions, we took the difficult decision as a Council to recommend closing the 2020/21 domestic season, which the Board then fully supported.

"We know many clubs and schools were looking forward to resuming competitive matches in the new year, but Covid-19 remains an active threat and we must act responsibly, putting the safety of our players, volunteers and their local communities first.

"We understand the decision will be disappointing, however it is important that we make the right choices to contribute to helping lower the infection rates and support public health guidelines, which can hopefully enable us to return to rugby fully at the right time."

Over the coming months the Rugby Development Department at Scottish Rugby remains committed to providing clubs and schools with practical and financial support.

The Supporting Clubs Investment Programme, which was created in response to Covid-19, sees important changes to elements of its criteria, due to the closure of the competitive season, namely participation funding and player improvement funding, which were previously listed as conditional upon fulfilment of fixtures.

These elements will now be replaced by a top-up payment, similar to the amount which a club may have earned from the original Supporting Clubs Investment Scheme had the revised competitions for this season gone ahead.



Scottish Rugby's Director of Rugby Development Sheila Begbie said: "Along with the Scottish Rugby Board and Council, Rugby Development are equally disappointed that there will be no competitive fixtures at the grassroots level for season 2020/21.

"We will continue to communicate any changes to the Return to Rugby Levels Framework through our weekly Club Communications email, the Club Support page on our website, and we will host webinars to update the club community where appropriate.

"Our focus is resolute on supporting our clubs. On a practical level, we are developing a new digital tool to enable clubs to canvas for friendly fixtures when it is safe to do so and in-line with the Scottish government guidance and regulations.

"We hope that the practical and financial support on offer will reassure clubs and schools of our dedication to guide them through what continues to be a difficult time."