



## President's Newsletter

### June 2021

Greetings, fellow members of the RFA. I hope that you are all well and that the playing cohort of our membership is enjoying the return to fives.

This is the first of a quarterly series of newsletters designed to update members on matters being discussed and decided upon at RFA Board meetings. We recognise that historically we've not been great at communicating with the membership and want to rectify that to let people know what is going on behind the scenes. Which is quite a lot.

### Strategy

We have one 😊. Building on the excellent work carried out by Matt Shaw and David Butler last year which recommended a phased Sustain, Nurture and Grow approach, we are focussing on four crucial activities:

- Reducing player drop-out rate after school
- Protecting existing courts
- Encouraging new players to the game
- Raising funds more effectively

Below is the strategy update slide reviewed by the Board at its meeting of 6 June. There has been a pleasing degree of progress in all four crucial activities. Attached as an Appendix to this newsletter is a two-page graphical summary of the strategy. For those interested in reading the full strategy please check out our website [here](#).

# RFA Strategy Update

## Issue One: 6th June

### OVERALL STATUS

#### Last Board Meeting

- RFA strategy realigned to four workstreams, each with a Board sponsor
- Initiatives from the RFA strategy repurposed against four crucial activities or removed
- RFA Strategy Programme Management established

#### This Board Meeting

- Confirm actions and timelines for each workstream before the next Board meeting

#### Issues/Challenges and discussion items

- Coordination between fundraising and identification of courts for refurbishment
- Communication of activities to Board, wider membership

Workstream	Key Activities
1 Reduce dropout rate after school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postponed National Schools Tournament rescheduled for August</li> <li>• University advertisement video from the Uni captains</li> </ul>
2 Protect existing courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court database established on G Drive</li> <li>• Visitation plan over the next couple of years</li> <li>• Coordinate repair / funding requests</li> </ul>
3 Encourage new players to the game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added 2 new players to the City of Durham Rugby Fives Club by running sessions of 3 -Wall Wallball at Ushaw college. Programme lasted six weeks and included multiple Easter sessions</li> <li>• Identified 2 location opportunities for Wallball courts</li> <li>• Wallball club starting in durham primary school in September</li> <li>• Received funding for banner and 50 rubber balls</li> </ul>
4 Effective Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundraising paper for the Board issued</li> </ul>

## Finances

We need more money to make the strategy work. Our income streams are membership subscriptions, tournaments, the 100 Club, donations and Gift Aid supplements, typically amounting to £25k a year. Our expenditure in each of the last three years has been around £30k. To fund the basic elements of the strategy we need to make a surplus of around £15k a year. Our overall cash position is positive, standing at around £60k in the bank, but we do need to spend a period of time re-building our cash reserves. In addition we need to continue the funding of the repair and refurbishment of existing courts as we have done recently at Loretto, the Edinburgh Academy, Merchiston Castle and Stoke Newington. There is no doubt that the RFA's financial support has helped enable the continuation of fives at these venues.

Unfortunately, in order to solidify our financial position, we have had to take the very difficult decision this month not to renew the contract with Gareth Price to work as our paid Development Officer. Our thanks go to him for all his efforts over the past three years, especially the Stoke Newington initiative. In future, Development Officer type activities will be carried out on a project-by-project basis, as and when budget permits.

On the income side we have decided to restructure membership subscription rates which have remained the same since 2015. Full membership will cost £50 with that rate kicking in when members reach the age of 25. Members aged between 21 and 25 will be asked to pay £25 and members aged under 21 will have free membership. All members aged 30 and under will be entitled to participate in the Young RFA programme (see below). These changes will take effect in September 2021 and our Treasurer James Tilston will be in touch with all members over the summer with further details.

## Fundraising

Fundraising is a critical element of the strategy and we are most fortunate to have an extremely active and creative Fundraising Committee with Peter Mellor, Dave Fox and Richie Murby making many valuable contributions with their challenges to conventional wisdom. The Board has accepted its proposals that:

- A. The RFA concentrates fundraising efforts with immediate effect to enable Development Officer projects, court refurbishment and the ancillary activities of coaching and club support. The target for this fundraising activity is £25k pa. To be effective it should take place for a period of five years, meaning a total target of £125k.
- B. The RFA commissions a working party to assess the commercial feasibility of developing a new suite of courts. Of particular importance is the demand for such a suite, its location, its operational management, profitability and how it could be funded. This working party should report back to the Board by 1 September 2021 with a formal report and recommendations.

Under the short-term fundraising activity we have subsequently developed a plan for the next 12 months involving a Patronage scheme, increasing involvement in the 100 Club, maximising the potential from the Gift aid scheme, obtaining corporate sponsorship and holding a fund-raising dinner in London in 2022. More details on each of these initiatives will be announced over the coming weeks and months.

## **Young RFA**

The Young RFA scheme forms part of the activity to reduce player drop out after school. Spearheaded by Dan Tristao and Louise Matthias, membership of the Young RFA is free of charge to all RFA members aged under 30. This entitles you to attend 4 social events a year to meet fellow players, to obtain discounts on entry fees to tournaments and to access social media platforms specifically set up for younger players. Details of the inaugural social event will be sent out over the summer.

## **Communications**

We have reviewed the management of our overall communications activity in light of user experience with the new website which was launched on 1 January. I am pleased to announce that Phil Atkinson now has overall responsibility for all our communications activity and is the first point of contact for feedback relating to our website and social media platforms. He is very ably supported by Danny Leboff, Chris Burrows, Martha Nugent, Bob Dolby, Andy Pringle, Hamish Buchanan, Matt Shaw and Julian Aquilina. While this may seem a long list please remember that virtually all the work carried out on behalf of the RFA is on a voluntary unpaid basis by members with day jobs to do, so we have to spread the load to make things happen. On that point, we do need more people to be involved in helping with our behind-the-scenes activities. We are particularly interested in those with skills in finance appraisal, project management, marketing and fundraising and are prepared to offer a bit of their time. If you meet this bill please contact me directly via [david.parlby@rugbyfives.com](mailto:david.parlby@rugbyfives.com): there is plenty to do!

Finally, recognising that communication is a two-way thing, the Board would be delighted to hear from members about the RFA and how we can improve in our task of sustaining, nurturing and growing fives. To encourage such feed-back we shall be holding the first RFA webinar for club secretaries and masters-in-charge of fives in early September. Again further details of this particular initiative will be publicised in the coming weeks.

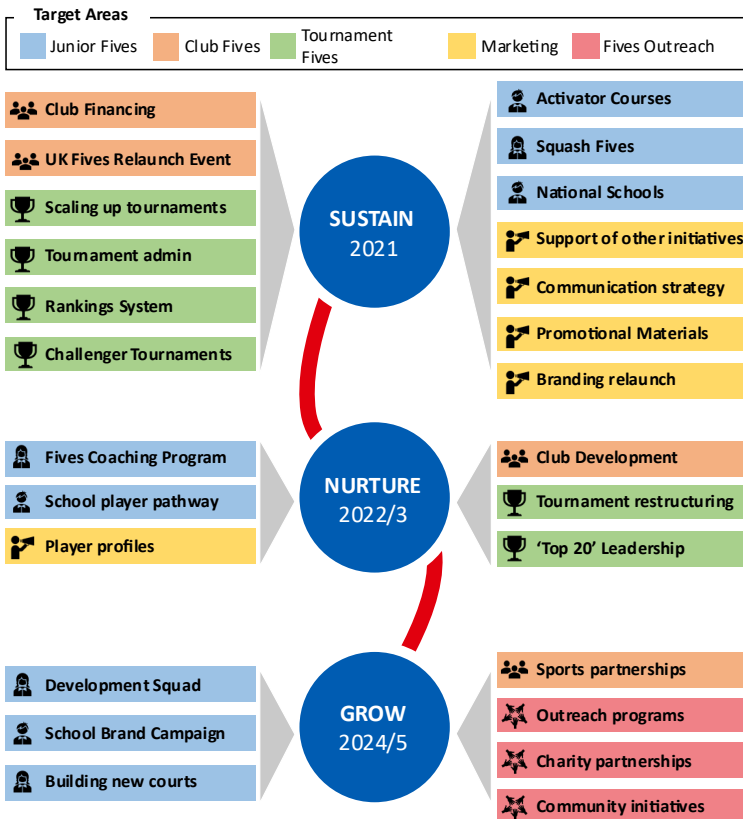
Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter which I hope you find to be of interest and informative. Stay safe and play well.

**David Parlby**  
*RFA President*

## RFA Strategic Plan 2021-2025: Summary

<b>SUSTAIN</b>	Maintaining Fives and preventing further contraction of the sport
<b>NURTURE</b>	Improving and developing Fives at a school, club and tournament level
<b>GROW</b>	Expanding and opening up the sport to new players, areas and communities

### Initiative Timeline



## RFA Strategic Plan 2021-2025: 'Sustain'

<b>SUSTAIN</b>	Maintaining Fives and preventing further contraction of the sport
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### Initiatives 2020/21



### Project Management

<b>Resource</b> <i>Assign who is responsible and accountable for each initiative</i>	<b>Dashboard</b> <i>Online dashboard for keeping up-to-date with progress</i>	<b>Timings</b> <i>Exact dates to be confirmed by the RFA board</i>
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