



**From Grassroots to International Success;
One Island, One Passion, One Goal**

Strategic Plan for Irish Rugby
Summary 2013 - 2017



RESPECT
INTEGRITY
INCLUSIVITY
FUN
EXCELLENCE



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1. INTRODUCTION



1. INTRODUCTION

It is with a sense of realistic optimism for the future that the Irish Rugby Football Union launches its Strategic Plan 2013 – 2017. Our two previous Plans, covering the last eight years, were instrumental in driving Irish rugby to the current levels across all strands of the game.

At the time of printing (November 2013) there remains a lot of debate about the future of one of our premier competitions the Heineken Cup. However, while the negotiations on the future of this great competition are on-going it is incumbent on us to proceed with our plans for the future of our game. The outcome of the on-going discussions may result in an amendment to this plan, but the overarching ambition, goals and targets for the development of Irish rugby must remain.

As the Governing Body for rugby across the island of Ireland and following almost two years of research and consultation with stakeholders, it is our collective resolve that this next stage in our vision for Irish rugby should be titled “From Grassroots to International Success; One Island, One Passion, One Goal”.

It is a source of satisfaction that the many achievements by our National and Provincial teams have served to enrich the profile of Irish rugby. Notwithstanding the negative effects of the economy on our game, rugby provides a stimulating and uplifting effect on our sense of identity and provides a favourable antidote to ease the current difficulties. We are conscious that our game commands a distinctive place in our communities and society generally and that it traverses social, religious and political divisions across the Island.

A key component of this document is the inclusion for the first time, of a co-aligned plan for the professional game - named Plan Ireland. Its objective is to recognise the importance and primacy of the National team, including the ambition for Ireland to deliver consistent performances in the RBS Six Nations and Rugby World Cups in 2015 and beyond, while simultaneously sustaining success by the Provincial teams in the Heineken Cup and RaboDirect PRO12 League. At the core of Plan Ireland is the belief that by developing enhanced governance and performance structures we will create a platform for consistency in all our European Tournaments and attain a Top Four position in Rugby World Cup 2015.

Central to the objectives for Irish rugby 2013-2017, is the realisation of the aspirations set out in Plan Ireland, the creation of integrated governance structures based on best practice, transparency and accountability and the achievement of the targets relating to the Community and Club game. Our goal is to ensure the continuance in our clubs and schools of a structured environment, which maximizes the participation and retention of all involved - both males and females - and which provides an environment that upholds all the time-honoured and worthy principles and values of Rugby football. These values are the foundation on which rugby and its great traditions and bonds are based. During the consultative process for this plan, the values of Respect, Integrity, Inclusivity, Fun and Excellence were confirmed as our core values. The challenge now is to cement these values within the Irish rugby family and spread them among the wider audience that comes into contact with the game.

Issues relating to financial sustainability, the world game and Irish rugby's role in it and the development of proactive communication and social media are a snapshot of some of the many telling factors that need to be addressed through the plan. The role of the Irish Sports Council is greatly appreciated in this regard, as through its funding it has allowed the Union and the Provinces to deliver critical participation programmes which are key to achieving our goals.

The ever-present passion throughout Irish rugby and the Irish rugby family gives us confidence that together we can meet the challenges presented by this Strategic Plan and ensure the enhancement of our game and its values for the future. The IRFU acknowledges all those who took part in the preparation of this document and in doing so would emphasise that this is a plan to meet the aspirations of the entire Irish rugby family, of which the IRFU is but one stakeholder. We invite you all to support this plan and its objectives, as we believe it is incumbent on us all that in our shared vision we achieve its aims and values, so as to further enrich the pride and enjoyment we get from our game long into the future.

Pat Fitzgerald - President

Finbarr Crowley - Chairman

This document is a concise summary of the strategic goals for Irish Rugby over the next 4 years. Further documentation providing more background on all aspects of this plan can be found on the IRFU website at:

www.irishrugby.ie/strategicplan

1. Vision 2020 report - 2012

2. Millward Brown Lansdowne Irish Rugby Survey October 2011

3. Club Engagement Report 2012

4. Plan Ireland Report 2013

5. People Strategy 2013

6. Club and Community Game – Operational Plan 2013

7. IRFU Annual Accounts 2012

8. IRFU Annual Report 2012

9. Club Sustainability Report April 2013

10. IRFU Strategic Plan 2008 – 2012 – “Building on Solid Foundations”

2. THE PROCESS

This Plan has been developed on the back of an extensive process of consultation in Irish Rugby, which took place over an eighteen month period involving our key stakeholders and the wider Irish public. It is important to reinforce that this plan is for Irish Rugby – it is not about the IRFU - the IRFU is merely a stakeholder in this process.

The main elements of this consultation were firstly an omnibus survey conducted by Millward Brown Lansdowne which set out to establish how the general public in Ireland perceive Irish rugby, its strengths and weaknesses and its role in society. This extensive study was conducted in 2011 along with some associated studies commissioned by the IRFU Commercial and Marketing Committee who were looking at similar themes in more defined population groups attending matches at the Aviva Stadium. The outcome of this exercise is available on the IRFU website.

In autumn 2011, there was a parallel Club Engagement process held around the country, where 43 open forum meetings were facilitated with clubs, to establish the opportunities and challenges facing the club game and to get feedback from clubs. Again, the report on the Club Engagement Process is available on the IRFU website.

It took some time to collate and organise the information gathered in these two exercises and it was agreed that there should be a further consultation with clubs to ground the findings and to ensure that they were validated by the club community. This exercise took place in autumn 2012, along with meetings with stakeholders from Schools, Exiles and Women's rugby.

A separate but parallel process took place in the professional game, termed Plan Ireland. Following the 2007 and 2011 Rugby World Cup reviews it was clear that if Ireland is to achieve its potential in international rugby a greater degree of alignment between provinces and the National team is required. The process of reviewing the professional game, our vision for it and its governance involved all the key people in Provincial and National teams, voluntary and professional, technical and administrative. This group met on a number of occasions from May to November 2012 with further meetings by specialist working parties, reaching a consensus recommendation on the vision and values of the professional game and how it should be managed into the future.

In conclusion, I am firmly of the view that this Strategic Plan has been thoroughly researched and our key constituents and stakeholders have had a major input to the whole process through transparent and inclusive consultation. It is now about implementation and achievement of the ambitious targets that Irish Rugby has set itself and the IRFU will continue to work closely with its key stakeholders to ensure that this is the case. It is important that we have the right people, volunteers and executives, in the right place at the right time to drive and deliver the strategies outlined in this document.

Philip Browne - CEO

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In developing the plan, eight key strategic areas were identified. To become a more successful rugby nation there must be shared ownership, accountability and responsibility across all levels of the game for the delivery of this plan:

	OUTCOME	HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVES
GOVERNANCE	<p>Independent review of IRFU and Provincial/ Branch governance structures.</p> <p>IRFU and Branch structures are revitalised and in line with best international leadership practice.</p>	<p>Identify improvements and ensure sustainable best practice for providing leadership of Irish Rugby.</p> <p>Ensure high quality succession planning for all key leadership positions in Irish Rugby.</p> <p>Ensure governance is 'fit for purpose' for the game and business of rugby.</p>
PLAN IRELAND	<p>Successful National team underpinned by winning Provincial teams.</p> <p>Providing the best programmes / structures managed by the best people.</p>	<p>Winning a 6 Nations Championship once every 4 years, and finishing runner-up in 2 of the other years.</p> <p>Pursue a model of best practice to allow Provincial academies continue to meet the player needs of the professional game.</p>
CLUB & COMMUNITY GAME	<p>Grow our clubs and schools through a player experience that maximises retention and integrates with a development pathway to Provincial and National teams.</p>	<p>Increase player numbers in all game types (from tag to XV a side) to over 180,000 participants by Sept 2017.</p>
FINANCE	<p>Financially secure, strong governance, leadership and financial accountability to support Irish Rugby at all levels.</p>	<p>Maintain financial sustainability and integrity through current economic conditions.</p>
PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT	<p>Implement sustainable volunteer and staff development programmes and work together to become a more unified force.</p>	<p>Ensure people and skills are in place to support and deliver this plan.</p>
COMMERCIAL AND SPONSORSHIP	<p>Maximise the brand equity of Irish Rugby within communities, clubs, schools and key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Maximise revenue generation to ensure we continue to support the Professional Game and Rugby Development Activities.</p>
COMMUNICATION and SOCIAL MEDIA	<p>Effective communication at every level, from grassroots to national media.</p>	<p>Development of social programmes that promote and reinforce our values and support community leadership.</p>
INFLUENCE	<p>Maximise our impact at Local, European and International levels.</p>	<p>Develop an international strategy to ensure influence at World, European and Domestic levels.</p>

4. GOVERNANCE

How our game is governed will have a major impact on our future success. Throughout the history of Irish Rugby, our governance model has managed the changing needs of the game. In an ever changing environment it must once again be reviewed to assess the strengths and weaknesses, identify improvements and ensure Irish Rugby has at all times a best practice leadership model. An independent review of governance will identify an optimal governance and leadership model which will allow us to build upon, and further develop, the success of rugby in Ireland.

Sustainable 'best practice' governance will, amongst other things, facilitate adequate succession planning, at National and Provincial level, and identify expertise within our structures to ensure this is put to the best use in the development of our game.

With a turnover of almost €100 million per annum rugby is a major business and we must ensure we develop modern and progressive governance and management structures to reflect best business practice. In developing our governance we must identify the traditions and practices which must remain, as we agree a roadmap and structures, not just for a sustainable, but for an increasingly successful future.



5. VALUES OF IRISH RUGBY



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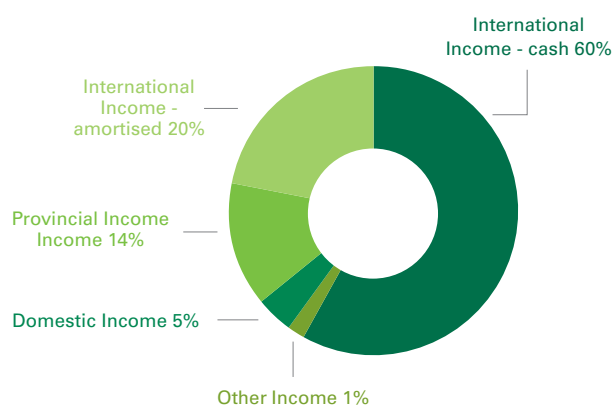
The foundations of governance and the strategic plan are built on the values of Irish rugby. These values, RESPECT, INTEGRITY, INCLUSIVITY, FUN AND EXCELLENCE should be reflected in every aspect of the game, how it is played, governed, administered and developed. Our values are a key strength and we must promote them, not only at national team level, but in every community on the island of Ireland.

During the Club Engagement Meetings and workshops (Sept 2012), examples of how we can live these values were developed and summarised below:

VALUE	DEFINITION	LIVING THE VALUES
RESPECT	Discipline and respect are cornerstones of our game. Participants show respect both on and off the pitch for team mates, opponents, match officials, and all those involved in the rugby family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Professional players are Role Models to all, and their behaviour on and off the pitch confirm and promote our values. ▶ Respect for all players regardless of ability, age or gender. ▶ Respect for referees: a key principle of the game. ▶ Respect for all coaches and volunteers.
INTEGRITY	Integrity is the foundation of the game. It is generated through honesty, transparency, ethical (Drug Free) and fair play.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Strong link between amateur and professional game. ▶ Code of conduct/Charter and education for Players, Coaches, Volunteers and Supporters.
INCLUSIVITY	Irish Rugby celebrates camaraderie and teamwork which transcends gender and cultural, racial, geographic, political and religious differences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Opportunity for all the family to be part of rugby - IRFU/Province to promote Rugby as game for all. ▶ Providing for all forms of rugby while maintaining the values and tradition of the XV's game.
FUN	Rugby generates enjoyment, passion, pride, excitement, emotional attachment and a sense of belonging to the Irish Rugby Family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clubs and Schools to ensure that players have a lifelong, and more importantly, an enjoyable experience in the game. ▶ Reform competition models to maximise camaraderie and ethos associated with the traditional club games and derbies.
EXCELLENCE	Irish Rugby aspires to be a Leader in sport and in the community, which achieves success at all levels through being transparent, innovative and forward thinking. Irish rugby prides itself in doing things well and in a professional manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ IRFU and Provinces to have transparency in decision making and the cascade of information to clubs and schools. ▶ There is a responsibility for all, IRFU, Branch, Club and School to show positive leadership at all levels. ▶ Rugby players are role models to all in their community and their performance on and off the park confirm and promote our values.

6. FUNDING OUR AMBITION

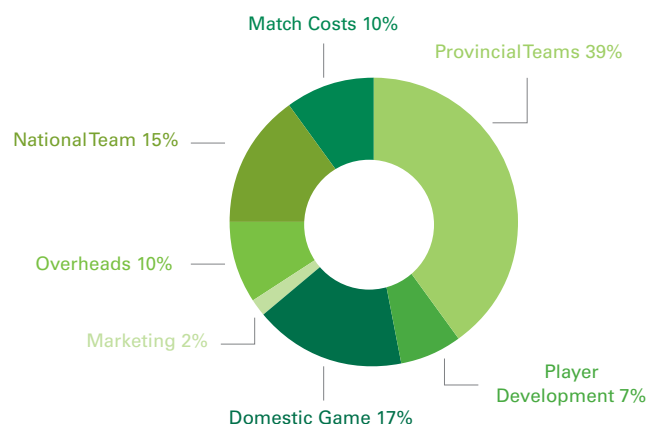
How the game is funded is a crucial part of any strategic plan for Irish Rugby. The national team income is the lifeblood of Irish rugby as it funds every level of our game. This income must be protected.



KEY FACTS ABOUT INCOME:

- The National Team participation in 6 Nations and International Tests generates 80% of our income and ERC and Celtic Rugby generate 14%.
- The Club and Community game generates 5% largely through government grants.

The importance of the National Team to every strand of the game is perfectly demonstrated by the fact that while it will deliver 80% of the game's funding it directly accounts for just 15% of expenditure.



KEY FACTS ABOUT EXPENDITURE (excl. depreciation):

- Provincial teams will account for 39% of our expenditure (employing coaches, chief executives and players in each province).
- The Club and Community game will account for 17% of expenditure, covering amateur representative teams, costs of the Ulster Bank League, development staff and other provincial, club and school funding.
- The National team will account for 15% and match costs for a further 10%.

SUMMARY OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURE (4 year cycle linked to Plan):

- Over the term of the Plan, Irish Rugby is forecasting to produce a net cash dividend from the international game of over €61m. This is made up of gate receipts, broadcast income and commercial income less the costs of the National team, match costs, administration and overheads.
- The provincial professional game is forecast to generate €36m, whilst the club and community game is expected to contribute €12m. When combined with the €61m dividend from the international game this results in a total amount of €109m available to spend on the club/community and provincial professional game.
- It is planned that €97m will actually be spent on the provincial professional game, a further €39m on the club and community game giving a combined spend of €136m resulting in a net cash shortfall of €27m. It is intended to cover this shortfall through bank borrowings, the repayment of which will come from the renewal of ten year tickets.
- It is important to note that the four Branches also generate significant revenues and incur substantial costs in relation to the professional and the club/community game.

7. PLAN IRELAND

The key success measure of Plan Ireland is to put in place the required performance structures and personnel at National and Provincial level which will allow the Irish National Team to win a 6 Nations Championships and achieve runner-up over a four year period on at least two occasions. This will create the platform from which an Irish Team can have a credible chance of achieving a top 4 position in the 2015 Rugby World Cup. This objective can be cascaded to Provincial success measures as follows:

- An Irish Province to win the Heineken Cup in the next 4 years, with two Irish provinces qualifying for the Knock Out stages annually.
- An Irish Province to win the PRO12 every 2 years and 2 provinces to be in the top 4 every year.
- Irish Provinces to be successful in the British and Irish Cup, with a competitive 'A' game programme.

The key strategic themes of Plan Ireland which need to be achieved to realise the success measures are outlined in the table below:

STRATEGIC THEME	STRATEGIC OUTCOME
WORLD CLASS LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › A National Professional Game Board overseeing the management of the professional game. › A Performance Director driving and leading the National and Provincial professional game. › The National team is financially, structurally and adequately resourced and consistently achieving success. › World Class Governance.
WORLD CLASS PATHWAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › An aligned succession pathway for the National and Provincial teams led by the Performance Director. › A positional player succession strategy to meet the future needs of the National team in place. › The IRFU academy, sub academy and National Talent Programmes (NTP) delivering the qualitative and quantitative player needs of the Irish professional game. › Effective Talent Identification Process to maximise recruitment of all potential talent home and abroad is in place.
WORLD CLASS SUPPORT SYSTEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › A fully integrated management structure for all the support services to promote the highest standards of inter-disciplinary working and effective planning and standardised data management structure and service in place across all disciplines. › The National and Provincial structures have world class medical and welfare services to meet the needs of the professional players. › All support service teams maintain Continuing Professional Development to ensure that they deliver leading edge service in cooperation with relevant academic institutions. › Continued efforts to innovate and monitor best practice around the world. › IRFU Refereeing programme at the forefront of International Referees development. Three referees in the top level of the international game and seven referees in the top level of the European game.

8. COMMUNITY AND CLUB GAME



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We must continue to grow our clubs and schools through a player experience that maximizes retention and creates playing opportunities for all those who wish to play rugby, from all communities. It is our view that to create a sustainable and vibrant club environment, clubs need to ensure that men and women receive equal access to our game. The key objective of the Community and Club plan is to increase the number of male and females across all forms of rugby to exceed 180,000 participants by the end of this planning cycle and to promote an involvement in the club and game for life.

STRATEGIC THEME	STRATEGIC OUTCOME
<p>Growing the number of players through a quality game experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Vibrant clubs accommodating club players, social players and active volunteers. ▶ Competition structures where financial incentives do not influence competition outcome. ▶ Recognition of the role and value that volunteers play. ▶ Full integration of women’s rugby into all areas of IRFU and Provincial policies down through to Club operations. ▶ Women’s Domestic Competitions continue through 6 Nations. ▶ A vibrant competition for 3rd Level students, including innovative social/derivate forms of the game, is in place.
<p>Making Rugby the first choice sport for more male and female Age Grade players through the provision of a quality experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A structured season, with appropriate quality and number of games, is in place. ▶ Alignment of competition and player development programmes between Provincial Regional Squads and youth rugby. ▶ Play Rugby Programme in all established Club – School links. ▶ Providing access to rugby to all communities on the Island
<p>Player Development through playing the game, with appropriate support through high quality technical, coaching and fitness programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Irish Rugby provides a quality experience for players of all ability. ▶ Coaching and fitness expertise provided to schools to assist in player development. ▶ IRFU Rugby Faculty now part of the rugby function of clubs and schools. ▶ Vibrant competitions at all levels of schools ensuring a lifelong experience in the game beyond 2nd level education.

(Table cont'd)

STRATEGIC THEME	STRATEGIC OUTCOME
<p>Enhancing the player experience through quality Coaching and training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ High standards of coaching through the Coach Licensing programme; and only appropriately licensed coaches coaching players from 2017. ▶ A safe rugby environment through the 'SAFE Rugby Programme'. ▶ High standard of coaching within the women's game. ▶ E-learning systems for the continued professional development of coaches are in place.
<p>The IRFU supporting the development of Rugby.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increasing the profile and development of Women's Rugby through success at XVs (achieved top 6 at 2014 RWC) and Sevens (2016 Olympic Qualification). ▶ Welcoming Clubs Programme consolidated assisting clubs secure revenue streams, increase promotion in local communities and clubs at the heart of their communities. The implementation of Clubhouse system has reduced workload on volunteers. ▶ The recommendations of the Club Sustainability working party fully implemented. ▶ IRFU comply with all Child Protection legislation. An IT solution in place for the management of Garda Vetting/Access NI to assist clubs with complying with the relevant legislation and increase the efficiency of the process. ▶ IRFU to review and update policies and development programmes to grow and develop disability and special needs rugby.
<p>A seamless development pathway which creates the opportunity for school and youth players to achieve provincial and national selection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Irish provinces have a development plan integrated with the club/school game. ▶ A highly motivated and developed volunteer and professional workforce who understand the 'vision for Irish Rugby' and their role in contributing to Irish Rugby Success through their engagement. ▶ Irish Exiles providing the opportunity for Irish Qualified players to play Age Grade rugby in Ireland.

9. SUPPORTING THE GAME

Since the professionalism of the game, Irish Rugby has grown and now consists of multiple stakeholders. The IRFU needs to have the governance structures, resources and systems that support all stakeholders and ensure alignment of the finite resources to achieve the outcomes of the plan that include the following:

STRATEGIC THEME	STRATEGIC OUTCOME
GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Integrated Governance Structure. › Governance changes implemented so that leadership structures are fit for purpose and in line with best practice. › Necessary structures and processes are in place to allow assessment of performance and management objectives. › Appropriate mechanisms for accountability are in place.
FINANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develop a new long term financial model and appropriate key financial parameters that ensures that Irish Rugby remains financially secure through these difficult economic times. › Transparent Financial oversight in place across IRFU and Provinces. › Full “Value for Money” review performed across IRFU and Provinces. › Irish Rugby is utilising its financial resources in an efficient manner. › New ticketing distribution policies and systems in place appropriate for the changing fan base of Irish Rugby which maximizes ticketing revenues. › Information Technology infrastructures are up-to-date and compliant with all legislative changes.
PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › IRFU and Provincial Committee and Executives to have the optimum skills and experience to lead Irish Rugby and deliver the goals of this plan. › A documented and dynamic succession plan (Committee and Executives) in place. › Partnership agreement continues with IRUPA and agent accreditation system in place.

(Table cont'd)

STRATEGIC THEME	STRATEGIC OUTCOME
COMMERCIAL AND SPONSORSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Irish Rugby, enjoying a high profile in Ireland and Internationally. ▶ A new Irish Rugby brand programme in place. Brand architecture exists with the National and Provincial brands working in unison with each other. ▶ Revenue streams achieved that sustain and deliver the strategic goals of this document. ▶ Successful marketing programmes are in place.
COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Aligned and a more informed stakeholder engagement through the use of 'best practice' contemporary communications practices. ▶ Increased profile after 2014 Women's RWC, 2015 Men's RWC and Women's 2016 Olympic Sevens success.
INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Irish Rugby providing influential leaders in the global governance of Rugby. ▶ Successful outcome to ERC structural renegotiations and a successful Heineken Cup format in which Irish Rugby continues to thrive. ▶ Successful review of 6 Nations and PRO12 competitions. ▶ Ireland awarded the 2023 Rugby World Cup.



IRISH RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION, 10/12 LANSDOWNE ROAD, DUBLIN 4.
WWW.IRISHRUGBY.IE