



## Minute of Annual General Meeting of Howe of Fife Rugby Football Club

Date: Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Time: 7.30pm

Location: Meeting held in the Howe of Fife RFC Club House Function Suite.

Agenda Item	Action
1. Welcome and Apologies	<p><b>Members Present:</b> Gordon Thomson, Grant Robertson, Alan Hendry, Russell Cockburn, Gordon Douglas, Chris Reekie, Steven Player, Innes Petrie, Janet Douglas, Euan Amos, Graham Lang, Tom McAskill, Gavin Anderson, Laura Anderson, Alister Stewart, Lynsey Maxwell, Aaron Anderson, Jan Thomson, Dave Rollo, Dunk McNab, Joe Manson, Craig Manson, Lisa-Jane Croniken, Rachel Croniken, Jim Darbyshire, Dave Davies, Lyndsay Petrie, Neil Strachan, Charles Samson, Bruce Rollo, Craig Stockton, Chas Anderson, Jennifer Smith, Forbes Catto, Sandy Green, Brian Imrie, Fraser Allan, Cameron Walker, Stuart Dawson, Will Howley, Cameron Service, Barbara Wardlaw, Ali Paton, Nyssa Farmer, Victoria Nicoll, Sally Bousie, Gregor Smith, Daryll Warrander, Cullen Macdonald, Dyllan Suttie, Finlay Foulkes, Jake Douglas, Ian Manson, Stewart Lathangie</p> <p><b>Also in attendance:</b> Angus Cook, Matthew Struthers</p> <p><b>Apologies:</b> Bill Wardlaw, Innes Petrie, Ian Rankin</p> <p>Chris Reekie in the chair welcomed all members to the meeting.</p>
2. Minutes Silence for Past Members	The chair led the meeting in a minute's silence in memory of members who have passed away since our last AGM.
3. Approval of Minutes from AGM 2023	Minutes from the Annual General Meeting of 2023 were proposed by Chris Reekie and approved by Grant Robertson seconded by Graham Lang
4. Matters Arising from Minutes of AGM 2023	There were no matters arising.

5. Trustee's Report	Chris Reekie gave the Trustees Report. See Appendix 1
6. President's Address	Gordon Thomson gave President's Address. See Appendix 2
7. Rugby Report	Gordon Thomson, Alan Hendry and Lynsey Maxwell gave the Rugby Report for Seniors, Youths & Minis respectively. See Appendices 3, 4 & 5
8. Financial Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Club Treasurer Russell Cockburn delivered the Financial Report. Please see attached as Appendix 6</li> <li>- Following this report the treasurer took questions from the floor after making several points as follows</li> <li>- Trading - we had less home games, a rise in minimum wage also had an effect &amp; it was likely bar prices would have to rise accordingly</li> <li>- Charity - fortunate donations still being made to the club, subscriptions were up 6.6% &amp; we are looking at an online system to try &amp; simplify collections of subs. Many costs have remained the same</li> <li>- Cash reserves are now limited &amp; club must get back to a positive position after 2 years of a deficit. General appeal to all members for any ideas for fund raising</li> <li>- Queries - Graham Lang queried the payment from SRU &amp; it was explained this was an annual sum for the costs running of all rugby at the Howe</li> </ul> <p>Tom Macaskill asked re figure for tour. Russell Cockburn confirmed this was included due to requirements by OSCR</p> <p>Gordon Douglas asked re SRU funding this coming season now we have less league games. Gordon Thomson advised there was a new cup competition but we only had one home game</p> <p>Sandy Green advised members it was hoped solar panel project would go a long way to offsetting deficit. Chris Reekie also advised re various steps being taken to try &amp; save energy costs in immediate future</p> <p>With Russell Cockburn now standing down Chris Reekie asked all to give a vote of thanks to him for his unstinting effort for the club &amp; also to appeal for any volunteer to take on this role</p>

<p>9. Fixing of Annual Subscriptions</p>	<p>It was proposed the following Subs uplift</p> <p>P1-5 - £120 (increase of £5)  P6 – student - £148 (increase of £6)  Family £354 (increase of £14)  Adult player - £182 (increase of £7)  Adult non-player - £140 (increase of £5)  Couple- £172 (increase of £7)  Senior Citizen - £94 (increase of £4)  Unified - £15 (no increase)  Adult player with non playing partner - £208 (increase of £8)  New category - Mini Quin £120</p> <p>Agreed unanimously by the floor</p>
<p>10. Appointment of Financial Examiner</p>	<p>- Russell Cockburn proposed Henderson Black as Financial Examiner. No objections from the floor. Henderson Black duly appointed.</p>
<p>11. Appointment of New Trustees</p>	<p>Chris Reekie advised that at this point there were no new Trustees being proposed but the situation was being considered</p>
<p>12. Appointment of President</p>	<p>- It was proposed that Lindsay Petrie takes over as President &amp; this was accepted unanimously  Gordon Thomson was thanked for his tireless effort on behalf of the club over the last 2 years</p>
<p>13. Approval of Captains and Vice Captains</p>	<p>- Senior Men Fraser Allan proposed as Captain and Gregor Smith and Will Howley as Vice-Captains.</p> <p>- Crusaders Lee Croston proposed as Captain  Quins - Victoria Nicoll – proposed as Captain</p> <p>- No objection from the floor so this was carried</p>
<p>14. Presentation of Cellars Trophy</p>	<p>See Appendix 7</p>
<p>15. A.O.C.B.</p>	<p>Graham Lang queried the fact nothing happened at the club over the summer. He had previously suggested cricket or baseball may be a draw. He suggests we look at ways to keep people in &amp; around the club. It was pointed out we do in fact have Tartan Touch running through the summer. GL also wanted to thank CR &amp; GT for all their hard work over the last year &amp; requested all positions the club needs filled should be posted on club website, Facebook etc to try &amp; get these in front of as many possible members as we can</p>

	- No other competent business raised.
16. Close	With no other competent business raised CR therefore thanked all present and closed the meeting

## Appendix 1

### Chairman's Report

I was appointed a trustee in June 2023 and took over the Chair of Trustees in August 2023. Initially my priority focused on the procedural structure of meetings to maximise time spent on the critical aspects of managing a volunteer organisation running a community rugby club. Individual reports pertaining to rugby, trading, finance etc were provided prior to meetings, employing time more effectively for discussion and planning the way ahead.

The club is very dependent on four major areas of income. Membership, Sponsorship, fundraising and SRU support. Should any of these three elements fall significantly it would have a severe impact on the capability of the club to provide rugby for all. Costs have increased through higher utility and supplier prices, and Fife Council applying rates for the very first time. There is a drive to control and manage costs to minimise a rise in members subscriptions, at a time when incomes are under pressure.

The solar project is fundamental in future cost cutting. It is progressing well, with projected savings of £10 per year. I would like to record my thanks to all who have contributed to date and. Sandy Green and Grant Robertson for their energy handling the project.

During the year the potential for hiring the function suite has not reached it's potential. The café has also been under utilised. Finding and retaining staff to promote and run this continues to be a source of frustration. The facility does not operate on regular hours. Recruiting someone able to manage and promote the unpredictable diary of events and functions continues. Our thanks go to Alex McGregor for her support to the club in all she does.

The club since the inception of the new building at Duffus Park has operated with a very small group of members managing activities both on and off the field. It is their dedication and passion for the club which allows rugby to flourish. I commend them and recognise their commitment. Like many organisations the club is impacted by societal changes, with fewer people willing to take on administrative roles. We need only look at Walkerburn and Royal High how it has impacted on them. And there are many, echoing the same issues.

It is necessary for the club to engage with members, parents, supporters, and all associated parties to become involved, in a small way, to make a big difference. The club has not operated with a committee structure since 2017. The model must be realigned, and how our community of volunteers and members can be better supported.

Over the coming months you will see and hear the club promoting 'Playing To Our Strengths'. How we can shape, prepare and deliver rugby, using the passion, knowledge, skills and support of everyone within Howe. I know this will not be easy. But we need to invest ourselves in the future of the club.

First Step. We will differentiate the activities of running the rugby club, with that of governance, with the aim of maximising the efforts of everyone involved. A new group of independent Trustees will be established to review and monitor specific aspects, including, charitable compliance, legal and regulatory management. I would like to thank all current trustees who have contributed so diligently and supportively over this past year.

Secondly. Howe Management Group will be responsible for the activities necessary to support rugby and running the club.

Thirdly, the most difficult step. To establish working groups within the club, covering Rugby, Admin, Finance, Trading, Facility, Club Development. Like Rugby we require a team, a squad 'Playing To Our Strengths'. The more people who invest their time the easier it becomes and greater the dividend.

On the rugby front, our President will expand in his report. I wish to thank all players, coaches, helpers and supporters across the club for their enthusiasm, energy and commitment in growing the game of rugby, making the Howe such an enjoyable and vibrant community.

Our aim is to provide rugby for all, developing the skills and aptitude to enjoy the game.

Rugby remains the focus of all activities, yet many challenges remain in operating and funding the future of the game we invest our time in

Appendix 2

## President's Report

Good evening everyone and welcome to the 2024 AGM.

As a Rugby Club we punch way above what we should..the Facilities we have are on par with some Semi Pro teams and the envy of others....

The Coaching through out all the age grades are welcoming to anyone who wants to try rugby...

The pitches at Duffus when newly cut and lined gets complemented every time from everyone who walks by..there's no better place...it's our place...its our Club.

The points that the Chair has made in his report are becoming necessary and long over due in taking the club forward and is important and integral to the growth of the Club.

Whilst this may all sound harrowing it will take the pressure and the "burn out" effect from a small group of people..

This season again we have enjoyed some of the best Rugby at Duffus and beyond..

Game day Luncheons..

Past President's Day

Ladies Day

Sponsors Day and Farmers Day were a massive success again..out shining last seasons events.

Howe 7's this year at Duffus became a 7's weekend festival of Rugby..Friday night U18's, Saturday Senior Men & Women and Sunday U16's.

The night before the 7's...a concept became a reality with the Howe 50th Win Anniversery Dinner..supported by guest speakers Scottish International and British Lion Iain Paxton and Scottish International and Glasgow Warrior Chris Fusaro with Kevin Ferrie kindly holding court...the full house spilled out into the stand to watch the U18's 7's final..what a noise..not to be a spoiler..

(See Alan Hendry's report and Senior report for the results)

Watching the Mini Tournament for my 4th season running wondering when it will plateau..it just gets better every year..every bit of the Astro, Duffus and the cricket pitches with the future of Howe on it..quite a spectacle.

The Youth U18's and U16's annual trip up to Aberdeen for the finals...(See Alan Hendry's report for the result)

Helping out at the Fife Show and supporting the Ceres Games again this year..

Again as always we have to try and stay ahead of the financial game and keep what we have going...it means a lot.

Finally I would like to personally thank Lynsey Maxwell Mini Coordinator, Alan Hendry and Gavin Anderson Youth Division, Stewart Lathangie and Lisa Croniken Senior division and their time and support to the club...

To Chris Reekie, to all our trustees, sponsors, partners, members, benefactors, coaches, players, parents, bar staff and the incredible group of volunteers..without all your unconditional help, support and contributions the club could not function.

Thank you..

Appendix 3

### Senior Rugby Report

We have managed to secure the services again of Howe Head Coach Stewart Lathangie and his full Senior coaching team for the 2024/25 season..

The Senior Men 1XV had 5 National 2 teams join the National 3 league through league reconstruction...it was always going to be a challenge. However the Senior 1XV finished a tight 5th with 8 points separating 5th place to 2nd.

The National League Cup was reinstated this season..notable wins were 36-8 against Hillhead at home, then a "best game of the season" 17-19 winning performance..not away to National 2 Kirkcaldy..losing out away to Allan Glen's in the Quarter finals 29-21.

The Howe Crusaders were promoted into Division 1 leapfrogging division 2 on merit with their strong performance in winning Division 3 last season.

Crusaders had a difficult season up against 1XV teams and only three 2nd XV teams..managed in the long to give a good account but fell on the wrong side of results too many time.. They play in division 2 next season and will be stronger for having the experience of playing at a higher level..

Howe Senior Harliquins finished the league in a strong 3rd place winning 7 with 5 losses..In the National Shield they finished a strong 2nd in the pool section just missing out to progress to the play off's.

Notable game was a mini tour for the Quins away to Orkney in the National Shield winning 50 points to 5.

The Howe 7's was staged over 3 days this year and was called the Howe 7's Festival Weekend...Friday night U18, Saturday Senior Men & Women with U16s on the Sunday.

The Friday night 50th Anniversary Dinner kicked off a weekend festival of rugby before the 18s played and were supported by a rather louder than usual crowd for the Drummond Cup...(See Alan Hendry's report of result)...

A strong showing of Senior Men's 7's had entered including a selection from Howe.. the Star Studded Seabass, President's 7, Crusaders and the 2004 were all in action..

With Howe 1XV senior team winning the JR Gray Trophy defeating Dundee 21-7 in the final on the Howe 50th Anniversary weekend

The Senior Quins have made quite a name for themselves on the 7's circuit in recent seasons..kicking off winning the Kirkcaldy 7s ealier in the season..

Saturday saw the Quins progress to the final playing a Pigbairns select..just losing out to a stronger side for the Delia Manson Cup.

With the cancellation of the SRU Super Six franchise...there will be another reconstruction within National 2 and 3 leagues...going from a 10 team league to a 9 with a Cup tournament to fill..

National 3 have Garnock being promoted from National 4 and Aberdeen Grammar dropping down from National 2.

Aberdeen Grammar's Past President Jim Rae past away at the start of this year and in his honor the Rae family have put up a trophy to be played between the 2 clubs over the 2 league games..with an aggregate score determining the winner.

We thank our Senior outgoing Captain's Team's for their commitment to the club over the season.

1XV.. Fraser Allan, Andy Harley/ Brad O'Hanlon

Crusaders..Ian Stevenson, Lee Croston/ Ed Dingle

Harlequins..Victoria Nicoll & Lisa Croniken

Appendix 4

### Youth's Rugby Report

The first half of the season was taken up playing in the School's Conference with the U18, U16 and U15 squads now being the only ones counting as "competitive" fixtures. The U13 & 14s played the same schools but their matches didn't count towards the conference itself.

The U18 squad made it to the quarter finals of the Schools cup, narrowly losing out to Edinburgh Academy.

In the second half of the season our U18, U16 and U15 squads took part in the Caledonia Cup competition. This starts with pool matches with teams qualifying for the later stages based on their performance.

The U14's took part in a new Caledonia Red development series which was organised by SRU but unfortunately this was more aimed at teams who were either struggling to field teams or having to field composite teams.

Our U13 squad, who were due to play in the Caledonia Red development series, ended up having to arrange friendly fixtures at short notice and didn't have as many as they may have liked.

Our U18 and U16's both progressed from the group stages of the Caledonia Cup, the U18's won their way through to the Cup final beating Robert Gordon in the final 53-10. With the U18 Caledonia cup coming back to Duffus park for the first time!

The U16's played Highland RFC in the final of the Caledonia Bowl, They battled all the way to the final whistle & were so close to winning, but unfortunately lost by a try. A great effort from the squad

U15's just missed out on qualification on the final day of the group games having had some quality games & grown in confidence over the season.

Our U18's took part in the Kirkcaldy 7's beating Stirling County in the final to bring home some more silverware. At the Howe 7's weekend our U18's split into an U18 and U17 squad to take part in the U18 7's competition on the Friday evening. The U17's were victorious in the Allan Booth Memorial Plate (which was introduced this season having been donated by the current U18 squad) beating North Berwick in the final. The U18 squad posted a resounding victory against Strathmore in the final of the Drummond Cup.

On the Sunday of the same weekend our first ever U16 7's tournament took place with our U16's winning in the plate final v Kinross.

Our U15, U14 and U13 squads took part in the inaugural West Sands 7's organised by SLM Blues. All teams had a great time at the event, helped massively by the weather and it is hoped that we will get the opportunity to take part again next season.

Our U18's and U16's went on tour this season. They travelled down to Wales and played matches against Rhyl RFC and Abergele RFC. Posting wins (2 from 2) at U18 and a narrow loss v Rhyl RFC at U16. A great trip and some great memories for everyone!

Mini Quins - it was a real step forward for the MQs when they fielded a 7s team at our U16s 7s event held the day after the main 7s. They combined with Glenrothes (who some girls have played with on occasion through the season) & seemed to really enjoy the occasion. A first for the club being able to field a girls team in any way, shape or form. The MQs highlight however was having a training session at Murrayfield being coached by no less than Pierre Schoeman. The girls had a great time working with him. Hopefully Victoria will be able to continue to grow their numbers going forward having gone from a handful to mid 20s now

We were fortunate to have a probationary teacher from Bell Baxter join our U14 coaching group at the start of the season & Ronan proved a great asset in helping us reconnect with BB & promote rugby there. Unfortunately at the end of his year he wasn't offered a position so sadly he has returned to Edinburgh but our Development Officer,

Jack Sinclair, shall continue to work with BB & all primary schools in the catchment area to promote rugby & the Howe.

Congratulations must go to Ben Curtis, Kieran Todd and Logan Williams who debuted for the 1<sup>st</sup> XV but more importantly also trained with the Scotland U18 squad with Ben earning his international cap during the Scotland U18 six nations with Ben playing in games against Georgia, England and Italy. Mention should also go to Adam Williamson who was invited to play for U18 Barbarians & U18 Scottish Schools. Huge congratulations to all of them.

A massive thank you must go to Aaron Anderson and Jamie Barr who have taken their squad through their last season in youth rugby. The time all coaches put into the club is phenomenal but to take a squad through from the start on minis to U18 entails a huge dedication so many thanks to Aaron, Jamie (& all our coaches) for everything they do for their squads & the club as a whole.

Lastly I'd like to give a massive thanks to Gav Anderson for all the help he's given working alongside me last season. He's made my life much easier & I much appreciate his time & effort he puts in for the youth section especially (but not only) for the club

Appendix 5

### Mini Rugby Report

Mini Report – 2023/24 Season

Fixtures played – 5

Fixtures cancelled - 4

Tournaments/Festivals attended – 5

Fundraising & Raising awareness – Tesco Collection, Halloween cancelled, Cupar Fireworks, Raffle and cake stall at tournament and cake stall at Howe 7's- just over £1400

Events – Guard of honour/Ball Team for senior team, Mini Christmas Party, P6&7 squads trip to Scotstoun GW with P7 winning the final match against Mackie which was played on the main pitch at half-time. George Horne came to meet the squads and get pics taken.

Squad Sizes –

P1/2 - 20 – with continuous enquiries

P3 – 12 – with 2 new players

P4 – 15 – with 5 new players

P5 – 14 – with 1 return player

P6 – 15 – lost 2 but gained 2

P7 – 16 – with 5 new players

Biggest Challenges – weather and cancellation of training and fixtures. I will be looking into alternatives for winter training with coaches input (as in more indoor training, Astro turf, focused strength training) and I plan to reduce the amount of winter fixtures in the hope that we will have less disappointment at cancellations due to weather. We also need to be more flexible with cancellation process and look at alternatives, Kirkcaldy were able to host us when our pitches were too frozen but theirs were fine.

Our P3 squad for next season does not have a coach. We are hoping a parent will volunteer but in the meantime, we will have to mix P1/2 & 3

Highlights –



Prior to the café being run by youth parents we used upstairs to cook breakfast rolls and we had a selection of cakes to sell at one of our home fixtures and it was a success. Having the youth parents run the café for our tournament and fixtures has also been a great help and very positive feedback from spectators.

Howe mini tournament was a great success this year. It helped that we had a good amount of volunteers helping on the day and great support from all sections of the club. I would like to thank everyone who came down to help in whatever way they could and thank all of our sponsors for their support. It really was amazing to see Duffus park so full of rugby and the day went without a hitch!

Seeing our P7 squad go from strength to strength throughout the season and win the match at Scotstoun against Mackie and come second in the final against Dundee Eagles at the Perthshire Festival. Our P5 squad also had two wins, one at Perthshire and the other at the F&F Cup.

Recruitment has been steady all season and we continue to get email enquiries and through social media. This season recruitment has been driven mainly by the work of our DO Jack. This is proven through the comments made in the enquiries as they mention the taster sessions at their child's school being the reason their child has asked to play rugby.

We held our P7 squad graduation on the last day of training and they were piped out of the tunnel with a guard of honour from the mini squads. Gordon Thomson presented them with Howe ties.

Team building for end of season – P3 and P7 went bowling and P4-6 had a swimming party at the sports centre. All feedback was very positive about how it helped them bond and celebrate the end of season having fun with their squads.

## Appendix 6

### Treasurers Report for Financial Year ended 31 March 2024

I had hoped that we would have settled into a new pattern of financial operations but circumstances seem to mitigate against this. The journey we have been on since 2016, when we moved into the new clubhouse seems to throw up different financial challenges each year.

The headline is that the club has a deficit of £42149 compared with a deficit of £23883 last year. Excluding Depreciation the operating deficit is £18711 compared with only £177 last year. That has given the Trustees cause for concern and rightly so and steps are being taken to address the causes of this shortfall.

Trading –The bar and catering operations etc have resulted in a surplus of only £1054 from operations for the year c.f. £8898 in the previous year. I had intimated last year that the challenge would be with the reduction in home games from 11 to 9 sales would be impacted. Trading is faced with the loss of another league game in the coming season which coupled with the not insignificant rise in the minimum wage rates both will put pressure on the bottom line.

Any surplus is automatically transferred to the Charity.

Margins continue to be under pressure and increases in the brewery's prices have meant we will once again have to increase bar prices to reflect these increases and also cover wage costs.

Charity – We continue to benefit from the generosity of our members and friends giving donations, and subscriptions and sponsorship of both club and players.

Subscriptions - at £48082 were up approx. 6.6% on last year a very positive outcome the result of the sterling efforts of our membership secretary. We are investigating online solutions to meet the challenge of recording and controlling subscriptions and maintain membership details,

The price of energy. Electricity cost £31677 c.f £19,636 Gas £6617. Repairs cost a total of £8574

Cash & Bank - our bank balances, excluding funds raised for the solar installation fell from £35550 to £22968 a reduction of £12582. This reflects the combined operating deficit of both the Charity and Trading.

Looking Forward – we have to be aware that every pound is a prisoner because our cash reserves are limited and we need to return the club to operating at a surplus and anything that you as the members can assist in this will be appreciated.

As I step down from my role as Treasurer I would like to express my thanks to the help I have received over the years from Barbara Wardlaw our book keeper and to Hairs and Henderson Black for their professional services and advice.

Russell Cockburn, Treasurer

Appendix 7

#### Cellar's Trophy Award

Each year we award the Cellars trophy to someone who has shown endeavour and commitment to the Club.

There is no doubting this person's endeavour or commitment to the club over the years.

The recipient this year does most of their work under the radar like a magic wand was waved and all is fixed....

They spent most of their years at Howe being an age grade coach coming through from minis to Colts U18s

They've stood as a trustee when needed and is quite calming in some situations where I'm involved..now spends most of their time fixing things given to them by the Senior Children..sorry Senior players.

So it gives me great pleasure in awarding the Cellars Trophy to Innes Petrie for season 2023/24...

As Innes can't be here tonight I ask Alan Hendry to receive the trophy on his behalf..