



Department for  
Digital, Culture,  
Media & Sport

5 August 2021

## RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP TO BE STAGED IN 2022

- *Rugby League World Cup 2021 organisers and UK Government announce that the trailblazing tournament to be staged in 2022*
- *Press conference with RLWC2021 CEO Jon Dutton, RLWC2021 Chair Chris Brindley, IRL Chairman Troy Grant will be held at 8am BST on Thursday 5 August. For access, please email: [media@rlwc2021.com](mailto:media@rlwc2021.com)*

Rugby League World Cup 2021 (RLWC2021) and the UK Government have today announced their intention to stage the flagship event in the international Rugby League calendar in 2022.

The extremely difficult decision was taken by the RLWC2021 Board, which includes representation from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and the International Rugby League (IRL) Board.

This follows extensive and urgent consultation conducted by RLWC2021 Chief Executive Officer Jon Dutton and his team, which engaged players, competing nations, the Rugby League Players Association (Australia), UK Government, hosts, commercial and broadcast partners.

Tournament organisers faced several unique and complex challenges with the most significant being the non-release of up to 400 players, match officials and staff members from the NRL competition in Australia. This is despite all requests from international rugby league federations having been met which included the rigorous health measures that have been keeping thousands of elite athletes from around the world safe whilst competing in major sporting events across the UK over the last year.

Ultimately this decision has been detrimental to the plans and ambitions of many of the competing nations and potential replacement teams. A key factor was ensuring that fans of Rugby League are able to enjoy the best possible tournament, which was not possible under these circumstances.

**Jon Dutton, RLWC2021 Chief Executive Officer, said:**

*“Today is a challenging moment for everyone involved in Rugby League, but most importantly the players and fans of the competing nations.*

*“Ultimately, time and competing priorities from others forced us to make the most difficult decision in our six-year history. However, we and the sport of Rugby League are resilient, and next year we will deliver our vision of the biggest and best Rugby League World Cup ever.*



*“We have always prioritised player voice and player choice. We have established a player working group, met with senior players and in the last few days commissioned a player survey to domestic players in Australia and New Zealand that showed more than 85% wanted to compete at RLWC2021 this year. However, following the disappointing decision of the ARLC and NZRL to withdraw, and the subsequent impact on player availability for other competing nations, it is apparent that delivering the tournament this year would not be feasible.*”

*“The wellbeing of all those involved in the tournament, particularly players and team officials, has been our priority. I would like to thank the RLWC2021 Board and my team for the relentless hard work and extraordinary measures that had been undertaken to create a safe and secure environment in line with other major sports events that have been successfully hosted in the UK this year.*”

*“I would also like to thank all our committed partners as well as the Rugby League community at large who have been so supportive of our trailblazing event. We appreciate the continued and unequivocal support of the UK Government, as well as the understanding of our competing nations.”*

**Chris Brindley, RLWC2021 Chair, added:**

*“This process has shown that the RLWC Board are responsible leaders who have put the solidarity and unity of the sport first. The Board will now seek the commitment and alignment of all key partners immediately to deliver a clear timetable for the tournament next year.*”

*“Now is the time for everyone who loves our game to come together, to show that Rugby League deserves its place on the international stage, and that the RLWC is a tournament we can all be proud of.”*

**Troy Grant, IRL Chair, said:**

*“On behalf of the whole international Rugby League community, I must thank Jon Dutton, Chris Brindley and their team for their unstinting efforts. I know that their focus is now on 2022. I also place on record our thanks to the UK Government, our sponsors and partners for their support throughout this whole process. They have been outstanding and understanding friends and we look forward to continuing the journey with them.*”

*“We must now move forward quickly from this point to build confidence in our sport internationally and to seize the opportunity which still presents itself; to deliver the best Rugby League World Cup ever. I look forward to 2022 and the future with optimism and a renewed focus on the importance of international Rugby League for all our members large and small.*”



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*"We have seen the success that the Olympic Games and the Euro 2020 championship experienced after their postponements, and we are all determined to deliver the best Rugby League World Cup ever in 2022."*

**Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:**

*"I am disappointed that we've needed to take the decision to delay the Rugby League World Cup. Despite working tirelessly to explore solutions that would allow us to go ahead as planned, circumstances beyond our control have meant that postponing the Rugby League World Cup until next year is the strongest option for staging a successful tournament."*

*"In the best interests of the sport and its millions of supporters around the world, I look forward to the Rugby League authorities in all competing nations accommodating a rearranged tournament in 2022, so we can put on the spectacle the fans deserve."*

Information on the rescheduling of the tournament and new dates will be released by organisers in due course. For the latest news and ticketing updates sign-up via [rlwc2021.com/signup](http://rlwc2021.com/signup).

For existing ticket holders details regarding the next steps for ticket transfers and refunds will be provided directly by no later than 12 August 2021.

**Ends**

**For more information, contact:**

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