



## **SRU RFU Council Member Election Candidate Mike Bezus**



### **About me**

I'm currently President and Chairman of Staffordshire RFU. Living just outside Stoke-on-Trent with my wife Dawn, youngest son Joel, and Bilbo the dog. My stepson Aaron lives in Bristol with his wife Rhiannon and our grandchildren, Finley and Louis. Both sons played rugby for Staffordshire at age grade and senior level, and both remain involved in the game through playing and coaching.

I've worked in construction all my life, including for large companies such as Balfour Beatty, and I have run my own construction business for over 25 years. I'm aiming to semi-retire within the next 12 months, giving me more time to dedicate to rugby and other interests.

I'm also a qualified pilot and used to fly regularly, until rugby became my main passion.

### **Why I am standing**

I have been involved in Rugby, every year for the last 53, my passion for the game is unwavering. Through my various roles at club and CB level I have experienced most aspects of the community game and through my work on the pathway the workings of the professional game. I see the role of Council Member as the next logical step on my rugby volunteering pathway.

I believe that the Council provides a vital platform to ensure the voices of our clubs/CB are heard and their needs addressed. I am passionate about building stronger connections between the RFU and its members, promoting transparency, and encouraging open two-way dialogue. If selected, I would ensure that the interests of both the Clubs/CB and the RFU are effectively communicated and balanced for the good of the game.

My recent involvement in the RFU 'CB of the future', working group, working with Council Members and RFU staff, gave me great insight into how the RFU currently works and how it will work in the future with the planned regionalisation. I want to continue to help shape that future for the good of the community game and being on Council would allow me to do that.

My hope is to shape policies that reflect the real challenges faced by our communities, ensuring rugby continues to thrive and inspire future generations. This role would enable me to make a meaningful difference and contribute positively to the sport I care deeply about.

### **Rugby Experience**

My rugby career began age 11 at Wolstanton Grammar School running through Upper 6<sup>th</sup>, Playing Trentham Colts on Saturdays alongside school fixtures. I captained the club for four seasons playing for over 30 years in total.

At Trentham RFC I've served as Fixture Secretary, Coach/Coach Coordinator, Discipline Secretary, Club Referee and Safeguarding Lead. Founding the junior section, became Mini & Junior Chair, then Club Chairman, and I'm now Club President. I coached junior rugby at Stoke RUFC.

My work with SRU spans 12 years, including Coaching Society Chair, Youth & Education Chair, Vice President/Chairman and President/Chairman.

I'm an RFU Leadership in Union graduate and have served on the Regional Player Pathway Group and the Midlands Age Grade Club Advisory Group, and was recently one of only two CB Chairs co-opted onto the RFU "CB of the Future" working group, I've managed and overseen Staffordshire age grade and adult representative teams.

## **Relevant Professional or Voluntary Experience**

In my late teens and early 20s, I helped run a summer camp for the Ukrainian Youth Association of Great Britain, managing accommodation and delivering educational and sporting programmes.

I'm currently a director of 3 companies and Trentham RUFC, giving me hands on experience of governance, succession planning, budgeting, finance, HR, health and safety, contract law, training, quality, environmental and risk management.

I regularly chair meetings, set priorities, and report on performance and compliance. I also mentor partner businesses, including start-ups, on a voluntary basis, sharing practical advice on operations and leadership because when they are more effective, everyone benefits.

## **My Key Priorities**

### **1. Effective Communication**

Effective two-way communication between the Clubs/CB and the RFU is something that I would focus on ensuring that interests of both the CB and its clubs are communicated to the RFU. I would provide regular reports to the CB and its clubs on relevant RFU business in a timely manner to ensure they are fully briefed and up to date on any policies and procedures being implemented. Clubs would be able to contact me to discuss relevant issues they would like to raise with the RFU, and I would be the focal point for guidance and connecting them with specialist contacts at the RFU.

### **2. Shaping the future**

Through my work on the CB of the Future working group and the various RFU meetings and briefings on the planned regionalisation of the game I have gained considerable insight and experience into what is being planned and how it is to be implemented. This will be a major change to how the RFU works with CBs and how the community game will be managed and funded. I plan to ensure that the CBs and the community game continue to be represented during this transition and to hold council and the board accountable for the decisions they take.

### **3. Representing Staffordshire Clubs and the CB**

Whilst the role description suggests that council members should, whilst voting, only consider the interests of the RFU and the game as a whole and not those of the clubs or CB they represent, one of my priorities is to push the boundaries here to ensure the needs of the clubs and CB are balanced in any such situation. Representing the clubs and the CB is an absolute priority as is acting as an ambassador for CB and club and I would plan to check and challenge both the council and the board on anything that will impact upon the CB/Clubs.

#### **4. Inclusion and Diversity**

During my time as president/chair of SRU we have increased the profile of Inclusion and Diversity within the organisation appointing a new I&D lead onto the management team, appointing committee members from diverse backgrounds and supporting them to attend meetings/clubs and supported I&D initiatives across the CB. A priority will be to continue to Champion I&D both across the CB and its clubs as well as within council and the RFU to promote greater participation across all backgrounds, addressing barriers for women, ethnic minorities, and underrepresented groups.

#### **5. Player welfare and development**

The welfare and development of players is the lifeblood of our game. I will strive to impress upon Council and the RFU the importance of support for local grassroots clubs and youth rugby programs to ensure the sport's long-term sustainability and inclusivity. I will also work hard to ensure the RFU prioritise player safety, including mental health initiatives, injury prevention strategies, and clear concussion protocols and encourage the RFU to better plan leagues and competitions to ensure a more balanced playing offering relevant to the playing level.

#### **Final Words**

I would like to thank all Staffordshire Rugby Clubs and their committees for considering me for the position of RFU council member. My unwavering commitment and considered approach to the growth and integrity of our sport, combined with my experience at both club and county level, places me in a unique position to effectively represent your interests.

I am committed to fostering a positive environment where every club, player, and volunteer irrespective of age, gender or ability has a voice, and to working collaboratively to ensure the continued success and development of rugby across Staffordshire.

Your support would allow me to continue my mission to champion our shared values and bring about meaningful progress for both our rugby community and the game in general.

