

**24 July 2008**  
**For Immediate Release**

## Local rugby teams back in the game due to 'Scottish Rugby Champions' scheme

- **Central region pilot success triggers 'Scottish Rugby Champions' roll out**
- **Scottish Widows Bank partnership first helps grass-roots rugby flourish across Scotland**

Following a successful pilot scheme across Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Falkirk last year, which saw Stirling High School rugby team being resurrected, Scottish Widows Bank has joined forces with Scottish Rugby in order to bolster grass-roots rugby in Scotland.

The 'Scottish Rugby Champions' scheme was launched to help increase the amount of rugby played in state secondary schools. When the scheme was piloted in the Central Belt, the number of affiliated rugby schools rose from 7 to 17, and the number of school teams has risen from 39 to 48 in an academic year.

Only two months later and in the first venture of its kind, Scottish Widows Bank has gone into partnership with Scottish Rugby to launch a savings scheme that not only offers a competitive rate, but when opened has the ability to give children greater access to the sport.

The Scotland Rugby Savings Account offers a competitive interest rate of 5.25% for 6 months, easy access, internet banking, and can be opened with as small an amount as £100. Scottish Widows Bank will be making an annual donation equivalent to 0.4% of the total account holder's balance to the Rugby Champions' programme.

Through the partnership, Scottish Widows Bank will help each school's Rugby Champion to buy personal coaching kits, provide specialist rugby equipment and expertise should the school reach levels of advanced participation.

The 'Scottish Rugby Champions' scheme has planned its progress for the next 3 years, hoping to raise the number of state schools who offer extra curricular rugby. Currently the number stands at 49%, with Rugby Champions hoping to increase this to 67% in year 1, 73% in year 2, and 80% in year 3.

Rugby Champions' Ambassador and Scotland back-row forward, Ally Hogg, embraced the new account: "It is vital, for the future of Scottish rugby, that we support rugby at all levels and all ages to create more rugby opportunities for Scotland's state school children.

"The Scotland Rugby Savings Account is a fantastic way for Scottish rugby fans to save money, earn interest and play their part in providing rugby opportunities for Scotland's state school children through a scheme that will not only benefit Scottish rugby but the whole of Scotland by encouraging more young people to be fit and active."

Graeme Hartop, Managing Director at Scottish Widows Bank said: "Linking up with Scottish Rugby for the launch of the Scotland Rugby Savings Account is a way to further develop Scottish Widows Bank's business but additionally help Scottish Rugby to develop grass-roots rugby in Scotland, whilst paying Scottish rugby supporters a competitive rate of interest on their savings."

For more information on the Scotland Rugby Savings Account please visit <http://www.scottishwidows.co.uk/rugby/>

For further information on Scottish Rugby please visit [www.scottishrugby.org](http://www.scottishrugby.org)

- Ends -

### Notes to editors

- Rugby Champions will receive some branded Scottish Rugby Kit.
- Rugby Champions will progress their schools through an awards system – Gold, Silver & Bronze which is linked to the amount of rugby on offer at their school.
- The successful central pilot was funded by sportscotland.
- The Scotland Rugby Savings Account has an interest rate of 5.25% gross (4.75% AER) for 6 months, followed by 4.25% gross/AER.

For further information on the Rugby Champions' Programme please contact Michael James, Scottish Rugby Communications Department 0131 346 5008, 07814615553, [michael.james@sru.org.uk](mailto:michael.james@sru.org.uk)

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