

## **Executive Summary**

RLWC21 was an ambitious event for Warrington and for the RLWC21 tournament organisers. Postponed due to COVID, the tournament eventually took place in October – November 2022.

Warrington's contribution to the tournament itself saw the Halliwell Jones Stadium host three of the men's group games and a quarter final game on 6th November. Despite disappointing numbers for the opening game on 16 October 2022, we saw attendance numbers rise to 12,600 for the quarter final game, making spectators and viewers feel like this was an event not to be missed.

Warrington was host to the Papua New Guinea men's team. During their stay, we engaged them in a 'double header' civic and community welcome event at the Town Hall and Halliwell Jones Stadium, and enabled community engagements via school visits, community club training sessions and open training sessions which were attended by a number of local people such as sports students at the college.

Throughout the tournament, Warrington provided training facilities for the men's Samoa team, and the Village Hotel accommodated the team during their quarter final stage at the Halliwell Jones Stadium.

RLWC21 also saw Warrington host the first ever Physical Disability Rugby League World Cup. The showcase tournament was held at Victoria Park, following strong partnership working between Warrington Borough Council, Wolves Foundation, Rugby Football League and the Rugby League World Cup. The very successful tournament featured four nations (England, Wales, New Zealand & Australia), with the final being played at the Halliwell Jones Stadium, where England were crowned champions! The PDRL World Cup was a particular highlight for Warrington, strengthening our credentials as a beacon of disability sporting excellence.





In addition to the RLWC21 tournament games, Warrington successfully delivered a significant programme of events locally to support the build-up and promotion of the RLWC21. Key highlights include:

- A Comedy and Curry Fundraiser night with Adam Hills at Walton Hall and Gardens as part of DAD Week
- Two successful trophy tours and engagement days, including a business breakfast event in June 2022
- Celebration of women in rugby league, including a heritage programme launch featuring local women who are former of current England Lionesses
- Delivery of RLWC21 themed activities in schools and communities via partners such as the Warrington Wolves Foundation and School Sports partners as well as Holiday Activity Fund providers
- Delivery of a programme of events in libraries across the town ranging from arts and crafts activities, to selfie with a player mornings, to creation of rugby league heritage walls
- Opening weekend activity on 15th and 16th October, featuring an Actual Reality

- Arcade which was hugely well received by the public and the EKO giant puppet and dance event, which drew large numbers of people into the town centre during the day on Sunday 16th which was also very positively received
- TRY Sports Day in the town centre on 29th October, featuring diverse activities such as tots and walking rugby led by the Wolves Foundation, basketball and boxing from WYZ, Circus skills workshop and demonstration, roller skating, crazy golf and information stands from Priestley college and public health
- Special screening of "Take His Legs" at Warrington Cineworld, hosted by Adam Hills and featuring players and coaches from all 4 competing nations in the PDRL World Cup
- Art installations within the market and around the town centre, based on the RLWC theme of "Power of Together" and featuring artwork from local students (in the market) and local community groups and artists around town in the form of a PNG Bird of Paradise trail

Overall the event has been successful and has led to some really excellent partnership and joint working relationships, a lot of learning across a number of areas and organisations in the town, which hopefully both Warrington Borough Council and local partners can build on and develop into the future.



# Introduction/Background

Warrington bid to become a Host Town and Host Venue for the Rugby League World Cup, October 2021 in July 2018. The bid was led by Warrington Borough Council, who committed to a host rights fees of £100K plus ticket purchases, but was supported by a consortium of partners from across the town, including the Wolves Rugby League Club (match venue), the University of Chester (Training Venue) and the Village Hotel (Team Base) along with a range of other partners who committed to supporting the event by in kind activity around Marcoms, volunteering and community engagement.

Key objectives set out in the initial application were as follows:

- To host three men's games and the women's final, and provide a men's team base camp, supported by a Warringtonwide festival of events and initiatives
- To increase and broaden participation in Rugby League across Warrington and the wider sub-region
- To grow the women's and disabled Rugby League games, improve coaching at all levels and enable Warrington to become an all-round Rugby League community hub and centre of excellence
- To use RLWC21 as a driver to boost social inclusivity, wellbeing, business engagement, community cohesion and civic pride, through:
  - Cultural and learning opportunities
  - Health and wellbeing initiatives
  - Community and neighbourhoodbased activities
- To increase volunteering during and beyond the tournament
- To maximise the longer term impact of the World Cup through a suite of legacy projects

These objectives reflected at the time the priorities of some of the key partners involved such as the Council, the Club and the Wolves Foundation, and recognised the opportunities

provided by the upcoming RLWC21"Created By" fund for investment into local facilities and community clubs.

After a successful application, Warrington geared up to host the Papua New Guinea Team, as well as three of the tournament's men's group fixtures at the stadium and the first ever Physical Disability Rugby League (PDRL) World Cup Tournament to be played at Victoria Park.

Following the Covid pandemic, the RLWC21 made the decision to postpone the tournament by 12 months to October and November 2022. Due to issues at other venues, this led to Warrington being asked to host a further game during the quarter final stages.

It was also confirmed that 4 nations would participate in the PDRL event, these nations being England, Australia, New Zealand and Wales.

The Papua New Guinea men's team arrived in town on Saturday 8 October and the RLWC21 finally kicked off on in Newcastle on Saturday 15 October 2022, with Warrington's first match on Sunday 16 October being New Zealand v Lebanon.

During this opening weekend, the town's schedule of events was launched, with 'The Actual Reality Arcade' and a performance from 'Out of the Deep Blue'.

Despite some significant challenges, relating to impacts of Covid on both staffing capacity and funding availability for certain projects, partners in Warrington came together to create a programme of activity supporting delivery of the RLWC21 in the town and to successfully access a significant amount of funding to go into the game locally.

This report provides an overview of key activity undertaken and a snapshot of impact identified to date. It also highlights key areas where some of the initial targets have not been met or were superseded by other targets during the delivery period.

#### **Pre Event Planning**

Warrington's bid for the Rugby League World Cup 2021 was submitted in July 2018 and the announcement of our successful application was announced later that year in December 2018. Led by officers at Warrington Borough Council, a partnership team was pulled together to ensure Warrington could deliver the outlined vision and primary objectives detailed within our application.

Partner organisations supported the World Cup from design, communication and marketing to hosting wrap around events, and delivering stadium filled fixtures. Warrington's contribution to the RLWC21 and the first ever PDRL RLWC21 would not have been a success without the strong partnerships which were developed throughout the process, especially between the following organisations/partners:

#### **Partners**

- Warrington Wolves & Warrington Wolves Foundation
- Warrington BID
- Golden Square
- Culture Warrington
- LiveWire Warrington
- Warrington Disability Partnership
- Warrington Youth Zone
- Warrington Voluntary Action
- Warrington & Vale Royal College
- Priestley College
- University of Chester

Throughout the planning process, communication and cross working was fundamental. Partners engaged in a number of delivery groups to ensure individual events and projects were achieved successfully and on time.





# **Communications and marketing outcomes**

Communications were managed throughout the process of planning and event delivery by Warrington Council's communications team, and supported by a number of our key partners e.g. Warrington Wolves, Warrington Wolves Foundation and Warrington Business Improvement District.

The communication team conducted a full evaluation report report with all partners, with a specific focus on the success and learning points of design, communication and marketing throughout the process of planning and delivery of the RLWC21. The full evaluation report is detailed within Appendix 4 of this report. The key highlights of this report include:

- Media relations and press releases more than 30 news releases issued to local, regional and national media
- More than 2.2 million impressions across social media, with more than 550 posts scheduled
- 12,000 unique visitors to the council's RLWC web page, with a further 3,500 views of a dedicated Marketing Cheshire page
- £20,000 spent on town centre dressing

# Schedule of Events - pre, post and during

#### **Table of Events & Fixtures**

Event/Fixture	Date
Trophy Tour	
Match day activation day at Halliwell Jones Stadium during Warrington Wolves home fixtures against Huddersfield - Provided a good opportunity to gather some interest, however engagement only picked up following the end of the Super League season in September	23rd April 2022
<ul> <li>Host Impact Day</li> <li>Trophies at full council meeting evening of 20th June</li> <li>Business breakfast at HJS 21st</li> <li>Walking rugby on TH lawn</li> <li>Trophy visit to Victoria park schools 9s event</li> <li>Trophy Visit to Orford Jubilee Hub</li> <li>Trophy visit to Warrington Youth Zone</li> </ul>	21st June 2022
Comedy & Curry Night Fundraiser as part of the Disability Awareness Week - Hosted by Adam Hills - Raise awareness of the PDRL game - Raise funds for the PDRL RLWC Tournament 2021 - Over 200 attended - Over £3k raised	12th July 2022
LiveWire Saturday Programme	16th July 2022 – 16th October 2022
LiveWire and& the school sports partnership, RLWC experience days for schools	15th October 2022 – 19th November 2022

Event/Fixture	Date	
Warrington Disability Awareness Day - Trophies were in attendance - Warrington Wolves Foundation ran Rugby League focussed activities	17th July 2022	
Warrington Wolves Foundation RLWC themed activities and bespoke sessions for schools and community clubs - RLWC themed school assemblies-	Ongoing throughout the build up to and during the tournament	
Summer Holidays – Holiday Activity Fund  - Providers were encouraged to deliver RLWC themed activity and make use of free RLWC education resources  - Providers were invited to nominate young people for family sets of tickets		
National Trail Orienteering & Cycling Routes	30th July 2022 – September 2022	
School Engagement Programme – delivered by WBC & Warrington Wolves	September 2022 – 19th November 2022	
Warrington Libraries TRY Programme & Activities - See schedule, detail and photo's with Appendix 2	15th September 2022 – 19th November 2022	
Launch of Women in Rugby League Heritage Project – 'Life with the Lionesses'	17th September 2022	
Life with the Lionesses Exhibition	17th September 2022 – 22nd September 2022	
Bird of Paradise Trail	17th September 2022 – 19th November 2022	
Trophy Tour  WVR college  Burtonwood library silver foxes group  Burtonwood community coffee morning  Penketh High School  Town centre Golden Square  Victoria Park community clubs event run by Foundation	20th September 2022	
Warrington Wolves – 'Three Lions Week'	23rd September 2022 – 30th September 2022	
Warrington Vale Royal & Priestley College – 'Power of Together' Art Exhibition	1st October 2022 – 19th November 2022	
PNG Team Arrive in Warrington	7th October 2022	
PNG Civic & Community Welcome	12th October 2022	
Golden Square Fanzone	15th October 2022 – 19th November 2022	
Opening Weekend – Family Activity Weekend – 'Actual Reality Arcades' & 'Out of the Deep Blue'	15th & 16th October 2022	
New Zealand v Lebanon at the Halliwell Jones Stadium	16th October 2022	
PDRL Welcome Event	22nd October 2022	
PDRL Opening Game at Victoria Park	23rd October 2022	
PNG v Cook Islands at Halliwell Jones Stadium	25th October 2022	

Event/Fixture	Date
'Take His Legs' Screening and Q&A at Cineworld, Time Square	24th October 2022
PDRL Group Games at Victoria Park	25th October 2022
PDRL Group Games at Victoria Park	28th October 2022
TRY Sports Day at Time Square	29th October 2022
PDRL Closing Event at the Cook House	29th October 2022
Samoa v France at the Halliwell Jones Stadium	30th October 2022
PDRL 3rd & 4th Playoffs at Victoria Park – Wales v Australia	30th October 2022
PDRL Final at Halliwell Jones Stadium – England v New Zealand	30th October 2022
Quarter Final at the Halliwell Jones Stadium – Samoa v Tonga	6th November 2022

#### **RLWC Fixtures - Halliwell Jones Stadium**

**Sunday 16 October 2022 - New Zealand v Lebanon** Attendance – 5,453

**Tuesday 25 October 2022 - PNG v Cook Islands** Attendance - 6,276

**Sunday 30 October 2022 - Samoa v France** Attendance – 6,756

**Sunday 6 November 2022 - Quarter Finals - Tonga v Samoa** Attendance – 12,674



# **Event Highlights**

Saturday 17 September - Friday 23 September 2022 Women in Rugby League Heritage Project 'Life with the Lionesses'

#### **Exhibition**

Warrington Borough Council and Warrington Wolves Foundation worked in partnership with Common Sense Initiative (CSI) and Rugby League Cares to bring a touring exhibition to celebrate the history of women in rugby league called 'Life with the Lionesses'. This was displayed in the mall of Golden Square Shopping Centre and received a total of 247 visitors over 4.5 days and had 5 volunteers assisting.







#### **Launch Event - Saturday 17 September 2022**

The exhibition launched on Saturday 17
September, with an exciting programme of entertainment in The Old Market Place,
Golden Square, which was hosted by Giulia
Bould, Broadcast Journalist from Radio
Merseyside. The programme included
interviews and talks from ex-Lionesses, dance
and music. The day was rounded off with an
exclusive showing of the award-winning
documentary, 'Power Meri' which follows
Papua New Guinea's first national women's
rugby league team, the PNG Orchids, on their
way to competing in the 2017 World Cup in
Australia.

The film documents the fascinating journey these inspirational women take from their home towns to the world stage. Power Meri explores how the women playing this male-dominated sport in the public eye for the first time could change mind-sets in a country where the status of women is one of the most troubling in the world.

Engagement with this event came mostly from past Rugby League women players and girls involved in the game.





#### Saturday 17 September - 19 November 2022 Birds of Paradise Trail

Artists and local community groups came together to celebrate the arrival of the Papua New Guinea men's team, hosted in Warrington, by creating an art trail displaying the Raggiana Bird of Paradise (the national emblem of PNG).

Human sized interactive public art wings were created across locations in the town centre, making the spaces more attractive and providing photo opportunities for the public.

The ideas for the artwork were developed in workshops with five different groups from Warrington's communities, contributing to the final designs which became large scale works of art, creating a trail across the town centre.





#### Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 October 2022 Opening Weekend

#### Actual Reality Arcade - Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 October 2022

'The Actual Reality Arcade' was located in Time Square, outside of the Cook House on both Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 October 2022, to kick-start the RLWC tournament, attracting families into the centre of town and encouraging them to stay and watch the matches in Golden Square.

Actual Reality Arcade is a life-sized interactive zone inspired by classic arcade games where you play for real, a highly engaging mix of fun, laughter and physical play. The nostalgic games included Kong, Laser Run, Tetris, Whack, Invaders and Break Out.

Both days across the weekend seen great engagement from the community, with footfall for the arcade being recorded as an estimated 1000 for Saturday 15 and an actual of 2,867 for Sunday 16.





#### Sunday 16 October 2022 Out of the Deep Blue

Sunday 16 October saw the arrival of EKO the Sea Giant in Warrington Town Centre. Autin Dance Theatre brought a large-scale outdoor performance, Out of the Deep Blue, featuring a 13-foot-tall puppet operated by 5 world-class puppeteers and contemporary dancers.

Inspired by the themes of the climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis, the spectacle attracted over 2,500 people to the town centre. The two performances, which took audiences on a journey from Time Square to Golden Square's Old Market Place, delighted the many families who had come to watch.

There were two shows, beginning at 10.30am and 1pm, both split into two-parts. A 20 minute promenade of the giant puppet, interacting with the location, environment and the audience, started in Time Square,



progressed along Dolman's Lane, up Bridge Street and into Golden Square after interacting with the audiences around the fountain at Market Gate.

Footfall numbers in Golden Square over the weekend saw a significant increase on previous footfall numbers for the year to date.

On Saturday 15 October, footfall was up by 12.5% compared to 2019, and Sunday 16 was up by 10% compared to 2019. This is not only bucking the trends for the whole year here in Warrington, but both across the region and the country for Shopping Centres.





The footfall data from Warrington Market, when compared to the opening weekend to a typical weekend, with no Makers' Market, footfall across the two days was up by 12.5%, which equates to just over 1,000 people.

#### Wednesday 12 October 2022 PNG Civic & Community Welcome

Warrington welcomed the PNG team into our community on Wednesday 12 October 2022. The event started at the Town Hall where a formal Civic welcome was conducted by our Mayor, Cllr Jean Flaherty, and was attended by a number of our dignitaries, before moving across to the Halliwell Jones Stadium for a large community welcome. Over 500 people were in attendance to welcome PNG to our town and we enjoyed performances from a number of local bands and choirs.

The event was a great success and received well by both the PNG team and Warrington community, with tickets selling out within a number of days and numerous emails received requesting access to more!

Images and footage of the game were posted across all social media channels and the response from the Papua New Guinea community was amazing, with over 400 likes and 200 shares, including comments such as:

"Thank you Warrington for your warmly reception for our team PNG KAMULS" – Nor Madian

"Thank you Warrington for making the Kumuls feel welcomed" - Barry Sope

"Thank you for accepting the Kumuls and making them feel at home. Warrington with your fan base behind Kumuls I am sure our boys will go another mile. PNG appreciate Warrington's support. Thank you" – Peter Tombo







#### Monday 24 October 2022 Take His Legs Screening & PDRL Q&A

Warrington have been the proud host of the first ever PDRL Rugby League World Cup tournament, and to celebrate this we hosted a live screening of Adam Hills 'Take His Legs' and Q&A with a number of the PDRL players and coaches from the four competing team, hosted by Adam Hills himself. The event highlighted the importance of inclusivity in sports, the determination and passion each one of these players embody.

The evening was a great success with over 100 tickets to the public being sold, with all profits being donated back into Grass Roots Disability programme.







#### Saturday 29 October 2022 TRY Sports Day

Saturday 29 October, Time Square hosted the first TRY Sports Day. The event was aimed at encouraging the community to get active, involved in sport and to try something new. Warrington Borough Council, partners and locals clubs pulled together to deliver a day full of activities including, crazy golf, skating, circus skills, rugby, netball and boxing. For those who sport wasn't there thing, we also had Public Health offering advice and Priestly College delivering information on their sports course and pathways to achieve a career in sport.

The weather was against us, however by the afternoon, the rain cleared and there was a buzz around Time Square with people of all ages and abilities getting involved and trying something new. Radio Warrington was onsite all day delivering a live broadcast and providing music throughout the day.

Over 400 people were in attendance across the day and great feedback was received:

"This is great, the kids have absolutely loved it"

"Thank you for getting my little boy involved, I never thought he would try boxing, but he has and he loved it"

"It's great to come into town and see activities such as this, we come into the market most Saturdays and recently there has been so much to get involved with"













# Rugby League and PDRL coverage



### **PDRL Tournament -**

#### **Victoria Park - Warrington Borough Council**

The Physical Disability Rugby League (PDRL) World Cup showcase event was the first ever event of its kind and celebrated the huge progress that has been made in the PD and inclusive game over recent years. We were particularly keen to host this event given the pioneering work done on this agenda by the Warrington Wolves Foundation.

The event was a Festival of World Cups branded event with key delivery partners being the RLWC21, the RFL, Warrington BC and Wolves Foundation.

4 nations competed and were in Warrington from 22 – 31 October, with their Civic welcome event being held at the stadium on Saturday 22 October. The opening games were held on Sunday 23 October with subsequent round robin fixtures on 25 and 28 October.

The event gave a fantastic opportunity to raise the profile of both the PD game and of Warrington's facilities as it was broadcast on the BBC and benefitted from the support of comedian Adam Hills, who played for the Australian team and was also RLWC's PDRL ambassador. It was extremely well supported by local fans who filled the Victoria Park stadium on all match days, with estimated attendance of between 500-700 spectators at each game.

Several activities were included for the teams, including welcome and closing events, a day trip to Manchester, a hosted screening of Take His Legs documentary, a community visit to the Warrington Youth Zone and participation in the TRY Sport day in the town centre.

The final, which ultimately saw England crowned winners took place as a double header game with the men's group game Samoa/France at the stadium on 30 October. An estimated 2,500 people stayed after the main men's game to watch and support the PDRL teams.

There was a significant amount of learning from the event for both RFL and Festival of World Cups and the international PD game generally in terms of how future events might be run. This did provide some challenges day to day and it is a huge credit to all involved that some of the backroom challenges did not come across at all on public viewings. However, from the Warrington-side, both the facilities at Victoria Park and the Civic Welcome, closing event and Take His Legs cinema showing during the week were very successful and appreciated by the teams. The support from the foundation and their volunteers was also exemplary.

In December 2022, Professor Steven Broomhead spoke with The MJ who published an article on Warrington as the host town for the first ever PDRL World Cup and 'Putting sport on the global stage'. The full article is detailed within Appendix 3 of this report.

#### **Sunday 23 October 2022 - opening games** New Zealand v Wales England v Australia

**Tuesday 25 October 2022 - group stages** Wales v England Australia v New Zealand

## Friday 28 October 2022 - group stages

England v New Zealand Australia v Wales

#### Sunday 30 October 2022 - Third and fourth

place play-offs (Victoria Park) Australia v Wales

# Sunday 30 October 2022 - PDRL Final (Halliwell Jones Stadium)

England v New Zealand Attendance – Est. 2500

## **PNG & PDRL Player Engagement**

The PNG and PDRL teams, all committed to a number of community engagement activities throughout the tournament. Events included attendance at number of local primary and secondary schools, Warrington Youth Zone, Warrington Libraries and open training sessions. Their full schedule of commitments are detailed within Appendix 1.

#### **Community Engagement including non RL groups**

As part of Warrington Borough Council's agreement with RLWC21 we were required to purchase a large number of tickets for local games, which we used to provide opportunities for local groups for pitch performance, game attendance etc. including negotiating sponsorship for the Warrington Youth Zone to do a dance performance/ teams mascot activity and flag bearing on Tue 25th October and opportunities for local learning disability, girls and U8s teams to play pre-match games on the pitch at the Halliwell Jones Stadium.

Tickets were also given out via schools as prizes, to rugby league community heroes, via holiday activity fund (HAF) camps, to local volunteers and community groups.

A nations orienteering trail was set up in Victoria Park and Great Sankey park as a walking and cycling trail with tickets as prizes for those who shared completion photos. Unfortunately there was limited success with this due to vandalism.



## Rugby League World Cup Legacy Input

In 2020, Warrington Borough Council worked with the Wolves Foundation to successfully secure £600,000 from the RLWC21 "CreatedBy" legacy fund, to support the development of a rugby league centre of excellence at Victoria Park.

The council matched this funding to deliver a £1.2m project - delivering a new, state-of-the art 3G pitch aimed at increasing participation in local rugby league by players of all ages and abilities, including growing Physical Disability Rugby League (PDRL), Learning Disability Rugby League (LDRL) and women's and girl's Rugby League. Now, it is giving a diverse mix of local players the opportunity to use high quality facilities, both for training and competitive match play.

This set the scene for the newly developed Victoria Park to become the host venue for the first ever PDRL World Cup, as well as serving as an additional training base for RLWC21 visiting teams.

In addition to the 3G pitch, there were 13 smaller community projects carried out across local rugby league clubs, including:

- Improvements to changing rooms and social spaces
- Installation of a kitchen within the community space
- Pitch improvement works to enable training
- New kit and equipment to support the creating of new teams



Associated project costs and investments:

	Small Scale Programmes	Large Scale Programmes	Total
Number of Projects	13	1	14
'CreatedBy' Investment	£100,489	£600,000	£700,489
Total Project Value	£163,303	£1,200,000	£1,363,303

As a result of the investment from both RLWC21 and Warrington Borough Council, the following feedback has been received from local clubs:

- The project has improved our local community with giving food parcels to those that need them
- We now have external organisations using our facilities that include many from the local community, along with the Warrington Wolves Foundation Learning Disability teams who train at the club
- We have increased involvement in festivals. We have better equipment to train with and the students really enjoy wearing the kit with pride
- The kit and equipment have meant that more girls are interested in the game and playing it
- The RLWC21 grants program has seen a significant investment in the town, with the 3G at Victoria Park providing much needed winter training facilities for our PDRL, LDRL, Women, Girls and Community Clubs in our local area. With all Community Clubs and some High Schools successfully receiving small grants. All of which have supported the growth and improvement of RL delivery in the town.

