



**Banbridge RFC**  
**Rifle Park**  
**Ardery's Lane**  
**Banbridge**  
**BT32 3RH**

[www.banbridgerfc.com](http://www.banbridgerfc.com)



## *Clubs in Focus*

# **Banbridge RFC: Club Steward**

### ***Background to Banbridge RFC***

Banbridge RFC was founded in 1926, and has since grown to field five adult men's teams, four youth teams at U18, U16 and U14 (x2), and a mini rugby section with 190 children aged 6-12. Beyond their traditional rugby provision, the club also has a growing presence in the area as a hub for community activity, hosting exercise classes, mums and tots, and various other groups, meetings and charity events. Growth in this form of provision is closely linked their recent investment of funds to improve their facilities as well as recognition that the accommodation at Rifle Park could be put to much wider usage.

### ***Employment of a Club Steward – Mark Fisher***

In line with the growing volume of activity taking place at Rifle Park, the club's Executive Committee took the decision in December 2018 to appoint a Club Steward. Mark Fisher, a former Bar Convenor who knows the club well, is now employed for 25 hours a week to perform a range of functions that are vital to the smooth day to day operation of the club. Working in partnership with volunteers and bar staff, Mark's role focusses on providing members and external users alike with consistently good experiences by achieving and maintaining excellent standards of hospitality. Mark also has a key role to play in growing Banbridge RFC as a business, helping to maximise the income generated via the rental of the facilities to outside groups or for private functions.



## ***Benefits and Impacts***

Although the post is still in its infancy, the club have already witnessed growth in the 'out of season' usage of their facilities. Bookings for private functions are made more regularly, and the clubhouse is now used weekly by various different groups for their own activities. While the club would have traditionally been closed or experienced quiet periods outside of their normal rugby schedule, they now have new activities running during the week and across the year. This has had a positive impact on their income, supporting the generation of funds which the club can subsequently reinvest. However, the club have also outlined that the decision to employ a Club Steward was not solely related to income generation and enhanced profitability. The decision was also influenced by the club's desire to provide their members and user groups with the best possible experiences, and again referenced the importance of ensuring quality hospitality.

A second benefit relates to improved communication internally. Mark has become the central point of contact for activities at Banbridge RFC beyond the rugby pitch, and holds responsibility for mapping everything out on the club calendar. Centralising this responsibility has subsequently improved the club's ability to keep everyone up to date with goings on. Mark commented:

***“My role as Club Steward focuses on providing a quality service and hospitality with a smile. This ranges from ensuring the cleanliness of the building, to supervision of our bar staff. In essence I’m the front of house for Banbridge RFC, and the central contact point for all bookings. All of these things previously lay with different volunteers, but were becoming a major challenge and burden due to the volume of activity we had running. The role also continues to evolve, and I’m now more involved in the club’s marketing and PR. Good communication is so important to us, as we want to ensure everyone associated with the club is aware of what’s happening. This ensures good attendance and prevents clashes. On top of this, I’m now also involved in the usage of our various social media channels and the administrative side of our club app to create a collective awareness of everything that is scheduled. All of this has helped raise our reputation in the community as a ‘club for all’.*”**



## Next steps

The club have recently unveiled ambitious plans for the re-development of the clubhouse building and player facilities. Divided into 3 phases, their plans include: (1) Extension of the changing room, toilet block and gym; (2) Expansion of their social / function room; and (3) Addition of a canopied viewing area which extends from their bar and overlooks their 1<sup>st</sup> XV pitch. This will not only be of benefit to their rugby related activities (e.g. development of women's rugby with additional changing rooms), but also help create top class facilities which the entire Banbridge community can use and enjoy. The club are currently developing a strategy to finance the work and will initially rely on their own fundraising efforts complemented by any available grant programmes.



## Some Key lessons

The club have reflected on some of their key learnings:

1. Becoming more business minded, both in terms of the quality of the service offered and in realising the potential which their facility offers to generate additional income i.e. *'sweat the asset'*
2. The implementation of better internal communication methods and structures has improved awareness around the various activities and events taking place and boosted numbers
3. Think outside the box and beyond rugby. A wealth of opportunities exist to link with the local community and become appealing to a wider audience, both of which can bring long term benefits

## Key Contacts

For help and support with grants, funding and fundraising, and development planning please contact one of our club services staff:



**David Johnston (Funding Manager)**

Email: [David.Johnston@ulsterrugby.com](mailto:David.Johnston@ulsterrugby.com)

Telephone: 07767168981



**Matthew Holmes (Club Services Officer)**

Email: [Matthew.Holmes@ulsterrugby.com](mailto:Matthew.Holmes@ulsterrugby.com)

Telephone: 07442490460