Press Release

22 October 2026

Fethard & District awarded more than €11k funding from Royal London's Women & Girls Rugby Award in partnership with the British & Irish Lions

Fethard & District Rugby Football Club (RFC) has been selected as the Irish winner of Royal London's Championing Women and Girls' Rugby Award, in partnership with The British & Irish Lions. This €11,689* (£10k) funding will enable the club to develop its first-ever women's team and build an enduring pathway that will allow girls to continue their rugby journey in the region as senior women's players.

To mark their award, Brendan Cummins, Senior Broker Consultant at Royal London Ireland, formerly a GAA All Star hurler, presented the club with a trophy earlier this month.

Having grown from 20 to over 120 players since the club's first girls' team was formed in 2011, Fethard & District RFC has built a strong girls rugby pathway. To support further expansion the club's focus is to establish a clear transition from youth to adult rugby through the development of the club's first-ever women's team. This award will support this ambition by helping to strengthen player retention beyond U18 level, developing young female leaders through coaching and refereeing, supporting player welfare and athlete development, and creating stronger links between the youth section and adult women's rugby.

The philosophy at Fethard & District RFC means that every girl is welcome, every girl matters and every girl should have the opportunity to progress in whatever way is right for her. With around 85-90% of the club's current female players coming from families with no previous

rugby background, this demonstrates the club's success in making rugby accessible to new communities and creating new rugby families.

Women play a central role in the leadership, governance and future direction of Fethard & District RFC and female leadership is embedded throughout the club, ensuring girls have visible role models on and off the pitch and demonstrating that rugby offers opportunities far beyond playing. This focus on increasing the number of women in roles across the club will also be key in supporting the club's ambition to develop its first women's team.

Mary Gorey, Club Registrar at Fethard & District RFC, said: "This funding gives us the opportunity to build something much bigger than a programme for one team or one season. Our aim is to create a clear pathway for girls within Fethard & District RFC, from their first experience of rugby right through the youth age grades and ultimately into a sustainable senior women's team. We want our girls to see that there is a place for them in our club not just now, but for years to come.

"For us, the grant is about building the bridge between a thriving girls' section and senior women's rugby. It will allow us to actively recruit and introduce new and returning women to rugby, provide dedicated coaching and training opportunities, and support our older youth players as they progress towards adult rugby. Most importantly, it gives us the resources to start building that senior environment now so that when our girls finish youth rugby, their journey with Fethard doesn't have to finish. Our ambition is that the girls coming through the club today will become the foundation of Fethard's first sustainable senior women's team."

Brendan Cummins, Senior Broker Consultant at Royal London Ireland, winner of five GAA GPA All Stars Awards for hurling**:**

"The development by Fethard & District Rugby Football Club of its first-ever women's rugby team will encourage more young Irish women into the sport and in turn see more women enjoy the lifelong benefits that come with playing as part of a team - including greater confidence, resilience, improved social skills, and improved physical and mental health. It will also inspire younger players to take up the sport. Seeing is believing when it comes to sport, particularly for Irish women, where there have been great strides in a variety of sports in recent years – including in rugby. Through this award, Royal London Ireland is delighted to support Fethard & District Rugby Football Club in its transition from youth to adult rugby. As well as supporting player welfare and athlete development, we believe this award will

help the club strengthen player retention beyond U18 level and develop young female leaders through coaching and refereeing."

Aoibheann Reilly, Rugby Ambassador for Royal London and award judge, comments: "It's amazing to see the incredible work Fethard & District RFC is doing to open the door to a new generation of women and girls in rugby. This grant will support their ambition to build a strong women's pathway and create even more opportunities to play, lead and thrive in the sport, building on the fantastic work already happening at the club."

The Championing Women & Girls' Rugby Award is a flagship element of Royal London's sponsorship as Founding Partner of the first ever British & Irish Lions Women's Team. One winning club in each home union receives a trophy and €11,689* (£10k) to invest in their women's and girls' rugby programmes. Royal London is also investing £3 million into elite women's rugby across the four home unions through the 'Levelling the Playing Field Grant' to drive positive, long-term change for women's rugby through development that supports women's player and coach pathways.

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

*Approximate figure based on 25 August 2026 exchange rate **GBP 1 = EUR 1.1689**

Source:

https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/index.en.html

About Fethard & District RFC:

- Fethard & District Rugby Football Club was reformed in 2001 with the girls division created in 2011. We provide training to senior, underage, minis and tag rugby for boys and girls at all ages.
- We believe community outreach is not simply about recruiting players. It is about creating opportunities, building confidence and ensuring every girl knows there is a place where she belongs within Fethard & District RFC.
- Our impact extends far beyond Fethard. Players currently represent more than 15 primary schools and numerous secondary schools across Tipperary and neighbouring counties, demonstrating our commitment to growing girls' rugby throughout the region.
- Our ambition is to create the conditions for a sustainable senior women's team within the next three to five years.
- Our aim is that every girl who starts her rugby journey with Fethard & District RFC can see a future for herself in the game, whether as a player, coach, referee, volunteer or future club leader.

For more information about the Championing Women and Girls' Rugby Award and Royal London's commitment to women's sport, visit: Our partnerships - Royal London

About Royal London Ireland:

Royal London Ireland has a history of protecting its policyholders and their families, and it is committed to continue to do so for a long time to come. Our heritage in Ireland is 190 years starting when the Caledonian Insurance Company's first office opened on York Street, Dublin 2 in 1834. Today, Royal London Ireland is owned by The Royal London Mutual Insurance Society Limited – the UK's largest mutual life insurance, pensions and investment company, and in the top 30 mutuals globally^, with assets under management of €228 billion, 8.5 million policies in force, and over 5,000 employees. Figures quoted are as at 31 December 2025.

Royal London Ireland's office is based at 47-49 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.

^Based on total 2024 premium income. International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation Global data, 2026.

Caption for Photo:
Brendan Cummins, Senior Broker Consultant at Royal London Ireland, (also winner of five GAA GPA All Stars Awards for hurling) presenting a trophy to Fethard & District Rugby Football Club (RFC), the Irish winner of Royal London's Championing Women and Girls' Rugby Award. Also in the photo are Mary Gorey, Club Registrar at Fethard & District RFC (on the left in blue) and Sarah Johnston, who is the Honorary Secretary of the club (on the right).