



DECISION HOPES: Bob Calleja with Penny Brunton, right, and Bath Rugby fans. PICTURE: Sam Farr



Hoping to kick off new year with Rec boost

Hopes are high that the future of Bath Rugby will be secured at its historic home at The Rec in the new year.

Crucial decisions are due to be made next month which will determine whether the club has a long-term future at its city centre ground after years of uncertainty.

Chief executive Bob Calleja hopes that 2008 will be the year that legal wrangles over its future will finally be sorted out and the club will be able to make progress on developing the ground.

He said: "We cannot continue in this state of limbo for much longer. We are hoping next year is going to be a good year for us."

Although the club has a long-term lease for The Rec, it has become frustrated at the bureaucratic hurdles it has to clear to put up its temporary stand each year.

EXCLUSIVE
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It has also been operating under a cloud of uncertainty as the current trustees who look after the site liaise with Government watchdogs over the land, which is subject to a charitable trust and the terms of a 1956 covenant.

Officials from the Charity Commission are expected to say next month whether a move by the trustees to change those terms following an independent strategic review is legitimate.

The review was conducted by the Recreation Ground Trust and looked at three options: to remove Bath Rugby and the sports and leisure centre and turn The Rec into an open playing field, to allow

Bath Rugby to improve its facilities, or to pursue a major new development.

It included a wide-ranging public consultation exercise and independent financial reports and prompted fans to raise a 22,000-signature petition calling for the club to be allowed to stay at The Rec.

In June, the trust board - made up of Bath and north east Somerset councillors Chris Watt, David Hawkins and Vic Pritchard - voted to pursue the second option, which would allow Bath Rugby to create a 15,000-seat stadium required under Guinness Premiership rules.

That option was backed by the biggest number of people taking part in the consultation exercise.

Since its June decision, the trust board has held a number of meetings with officials from the commission to find a way of re-writing

The Rec's terms of use.

Board chairman Cllr Watt (Con, Midsomer Norton Redfield) said he was confident a decision would be made in January.

He added they hoped the commission would support their view that Bath Rugby should remain at The Rec.

Mr Calleja added: "A decision should be forthcoming in the early part of the year, hopefully January."

"The Charity Commission is trying to find a way forward. They have been asking lots of questions, the trustees have been very active and I can't fault them."

"We need to know where we stand so we can start planning the future. It is a very important new year for us."

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10:00 - 27 December 2007

Traditionally young women have been sent to Swiss finishing schools to be turned into ladies. Now an expert from Switzerland, the nation renowned for its traditional values and polite diligence, is coming to Bath next year to teach etiquette.

Coach Claudia Isolda will be holding classes in the city from March to June, and hopes they will help people in Bath to learn social niceties.

The day-long etiquette coaching sessions will cover correct dress code, table etiquette, how to make small talk, and how to get in and out of cars elegantly.

"Having worked a large part of my life in a sophisticated, international environment, I am able to cover international aspects of etiquette, especially business etiquette," she said.

"The seminar is designed for private and business people.

"I will be looking at both the private aspects of etiquette and at business issues as well.

"Bath lends itself perfectly to etiquette training."

People will learn the correct mobile and email etiquette, as well as how to respond to invitations, with Ms Isolda saying people attending her courses are now more confident in social situations.

She has spent many years working as an exhibitions manager in a luxury hotel in the Swiss Alps and is fluent in several languages.

Classes cost £275, which includes lunch and a champagne reception.

People registering before January 31 will receive a £25 reduction while students will pay a concessionary rate of £220.

For more information contact Ms Isolda on +41 (0) 797 261668 or email her at etiquette-coach@hotmail.com.