

The biggest and best ever Rugby League World Cup kicks off this weekend in Newcastle with the England men taking on Samoa, and in the coming weeks up to the finals on 18th and 19th November we're going to be treated to the very best of men's, women's and wheelchair rugby league.

There are three men's games being held at the Totally Wicked Stadium featuring Wales, Italy, Papua New Guinea, Australia, and Kristian Woolf's Tonga, and there are still tickets available at www.rlwc2021.com/tickets.

St Helens is proud to host the men's Italian and Tongan squads. They've been training at Ruskin and Newton sports centre, and the players have also been visiting schools in the borough.

On Tuesday this week we officially welcomed Tonga with a civic reception at the Town Hall to which every rugby league club in the borough and our local referee's society were invited.

With any tournament of this kind the hope of everyone involved is that there is a lasting legacy, and over the last couple of years a lot of hard work has gone into making sure that's the case here.

In total the world cup has delivered over £1.6m of investment into the amateur game in the borough, with examples including Blackbrook who received £15,000 towards changing room improvements; Haydock KGV Playing Fields getting £160,000 investment to upgrade Rugby League facilities on the site; £580,000 to rebuild the club house at Portico Vine; £132,000 towards club house and pitch improvements at Haresfinch; £570,000 to install a hybrid pitch at Thatto Heath; and £15,000 towards pavilion improvements at Clock Face Miners.

Thousands more has been given to clubs including Pilks Recs, Garswood Stags, and Haydock for new kit and equipment.

Sport in general is a key part of so many of our lives – and here in St Helens rugby league runs in our veins. I'm very proud we're hosting three massive games, and even more delighted that so many children and young people right across the borough will benefit for years to come from the tournament.

Get your tickets now, and find out more about what's on in the borough to mark the tournament at www.sthelens.gov.uk/rlwc.

Best wishes to all Star readers.

If you would like advice or support with your energy bills, council tax or other household finances, visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether for all the latest information.