

Questions over steel plant sale

Tycoon Sanjeev Gupta plans to sell a steel plant he acquired with millions of pounds of financial help received from the Scottish Government.

The businessman's GFG Alliance group took over the Clydebridge mill in Cambuslang and its sister plant at Dalzell in Motherwell, Lanarkshire, in 2016.

But no new jobs have been created and the entrepreneur's business is under investigation



Sanjeev Gupta.

by authorities in the UK and France. GFG has denied any wrongdoing. Gupta's company received a £7 million publicly funded loan when it purchased the plants.

Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative spokesman, has insisted that the Scottish Government seek repayment of the outstanding loan in the event of a sale.

The Scottish Government said: "The sale of the Clydebridge site is a matter for the business to consider."

'Rescue deal' for Mini in UK

The future of Mini production in Britain is poised to be rescued with a deal to build a new generation of electric cars.

Parent company BMW is expected to make the announcement within weeks, ending months of uncertainty over the fate of the factory at Cowley, Oxfordshire, and securing thousands of jobs beyond 2030.

The electric Cooper hatchback is currently manufactured in China in a joint venture with carmaker Great Wall, while the Countryman is built at BMW's "green" plant in Leipzig, Germany – making it the first German-made Mini.

BMW makes around 40,000 electric Minis annually in Oxford but production is set to end this year.

Now bosses have hinted that a deal is close to secure production there beyond 2030.

BMW's Stefanie Wurst said that, like Rolls-Royces, the cars "must be built in Britain".

She added: "Mini in the UK is regarded as your baby. Mini is special to Britain. It is precious."

'We had 90 days to save Rugby World Cup. It was amazing to actually do it'



Women's team tournament triumph set to become a play

By Laura Smith
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Like many brilliant yet ambitious ideas, the plan to save the 1994 Women's Rugby World Cup started in a pub.

Sandra Colamartino remembers listening in stunned silence as her teammate Sue Brodie explained her ambitious plan to stage an international rugby tournament in Edinburgh. Without any funding, experience or logistical support – and in just 90 days.

"We'd all been working towards the World Cup so when we found out by fax that it had been cancelled we were devastated," recalled the former scrum-half from Edinburgh.

"Sue called us all to a meeting at a pub in Leith and said we should host it. We all sat there thinking it was ridiculous but then she started listing all the reasons it would work. It was only an hour's flight from Holland to Edinburgh so we thought it wouldn't be too hard for the international teams to come here instead. We started to think we could actually do it."

The tournament had been scheduled to take place in The Netherlands but was cancelled just months before. Scotland



Sandra Colamartino, top, the Scotland team that came fourth in the World Cup and a ticket for the game with Canada.

Main picture
Lesley Martin

had only just formed a women's side and played their first game 18 months earlier. Sandra was

the captain and scored their opening try as they defeated Ireland at Raeburn Place.

Desperate for the chance to represent Scotland at the highest level, the players put in £400 each and called in favours from the tightknit rugby community, and beyond, to revive the tournament.

Sandra, who was 26 and a graphic designer at Heriot-Watt University at the time, created posters, logos and a programme.

She said: "We had to work quickly as we had just 90 days to pull it together. We phoned all the local rugby clubs and the whole community came together to offer their grounds for nothing, referees gave up their time to do it for free and people volunteered to help

transport and feed the players. We weren't sure until the last minute how many countries would come so that was a challenge. We had to form an extra team from players at Scottish universities to make up even numbers."

The organising committee had to rely on landline calls and faxes and hope the international teams would make the event.

"When I look back now, I can't quite believe how we did it. We had no mobiles, email or social media so it was all done via phone calls. We met in the pub once a week for updates and asked for help via the radio and papers," said Sandra, 54.

They hit a few snags along the way. She said: "We were shocked to hear the Russian team had arrived in Manchester with no money, accommodation or transport to Edinburgh, just Russian dolls and bottles of vodka brought as

gifts. We put an appeal out on the radio and a bus company gave them a lift, a university put them up in empty halls, and Pizza Hut delivered pizza."

Against all odds, the fledgling Scottish women's side became the unlikely saviours of the 1994 Rugby World Cup. Twelve teams competed in the capital, cheered on by record crowds. Around 6,000 people watched England beat the USA in the final at Raeburn Place, which was filmed by the BBC.

"We were so stressed out that it was a relief when we could actually just play rugby, although we were exhausted, Sue most of all as she was central to pulling it all together," said Sandra.

"In the end we came fourth with a win over Canada, which was a real bonus. Watching the packed-out final was just incredible. It felt amazing and emotional to watch that game and realise we'd actually done it. We had to hire extra stands to accommodate extra crowds at the final."

It also remains the most profitable Women's World Cup. "To date, it's the only Women's World Cup that made a profit – we charged £5 a ticket for the final," Sandra said.

As 2024 marks the 30th anniversary of the World Cup, Sandra and Sue have written a play about the extraordinary tournament called 90 Days.

They are now crowdfunding to raise the £10,000 required to stage it professionally, including a premiere at Murrayfield next April.

"It's an opportunity for us to give back to the sport we love and show how far it's come in three decades. The hope is to take the show to the Edinburgh Festival and maybe rugby clubs around Scotland," she added.

Sandra, who now runs her own chocolate company, Quirky Chocolate, remains a passionate Scottish rugby supporter. She regularly attends Scotland Women matches in Edinburgh and believes the current squad, ranked ninth in the world, is due an exciting run of form to match Scotland men's side.

Scotland Women will face Spain in Edinburgh for a warm-up match ahead of World Rugby's new global competition, WXV, in Cape Town in October.

"In Scotland, women's rugby is becoming its own entity now, which is wonderful," Sandra said. "They come close to selling out the Hive stadium near Murrayfield and there's always a good atmosphere."

"There's something very exciting happening in the team right now. They are really starting to peak and build momentum so I can't wait to see what they do next season."

Support 90 Days at
crowdfunder.co.uk/pl/crowdfunding-for-1994-womens-rugby-world-cup-show-1