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LondonFA

Introduction

Welcome to the 2022 London FA AGM.

I am absolutely delighted that we are now able to host this meeting face-to-face, for the first time in over two years. I am equally pleased that for the first time since I took up this position, we do not have to take up part of this meeting agreeing changes to our Articles of Association and can instead focus on football matters and spending more time socialising and networking as a group.

This is a testament to the enormous governance progress we have made over the past few years and we are indebted to the outstanding work led by our former Senior Independent Director – Sir Simon Hughes. I would like to place on record my personal thanks to Sir Simon for the tireless contribution he has made to the Association in this area.

I write this report cautiously optimistic that the significant challenges we have all faced over the past couple of seasons will not be repeated. None of us can predict the future of course but with the success of the COVID-19 vaccination programme and a full season behind us, we have every reason to feel optimistic for the future. I do want to again highlight the resilience of this great game and the indefatigable work of the army of volunteers that make it happen. We have all been inspired by the amazing work that has been carried out by our clubs and leagues to ensure that grassroots football has continued and has been played in as safe an environment as possible throughout the pandemic.

2021-22 Season Summary

I'm very pleased to report that for the 2021-22 season, we were finally able to complete a full season without the significant interruptions brought on by enforced lockdowns. We were also blessed with better than average weather over the course of the season, which further contributed to the significant amount of affiliated football played this season.

Even more encouragingly, the grassroots game in London has rebounded positively from the pandemic and we have seen further impressive levels of growth. We affiliated well over 1,000 clubs and passed 5,000+ teams mark for the first time ever, quite a change from three years ago, when we were registering just over 3,000 teams and were concerned about the long-term decline in male affiliated football. The growth over that time is represented across both the male and the female game and disability participation has also recovered strongly. This is a testament to the outstanding work carried out by football's professional and volunteer workforce in London.

Plans to maximise the growth of Women & Girls football, capitalising on the profile of the game in the lead up to Euro 2022, have been particularly successful. This season has seen further impressive growth because of our Women & Girls development work. 447 teams have affiliated to us for the 2021-22 season, an increase of 32% from the previous season. This equates to 5,717 players, above our target of 5,700. 3 new league divisions have been created, 1 new league has been sanctioned and 4 new Women & Girls county cup competitions created.

However, we are very aware that the levels of growth across the game in London puts increased pressure on the game's infrastructure – pitch availability, referee coverage, coaching provision and volunteer capacity and time. Tackling these challenges have been central to our plans this season.

A detailed facility plan has been drawn up this year, focusing on four key areas. The first of these is ensuring that the quality of existing grass pitches improve, and this is done through the Pitch Power app and related funding to clubs to them make the necessary pitch improvements. To date we have funded 115 pitches through this programme. The second part of the facilities plan has been to accelerate investment in new 3G sites and small sided facilities across London, and we have selected four key sites for this: Clapham Common, Whitefoot Lane, Charlton Park and Meath Gardens. The third part of the plan involves us exploring with the Football Foundation the possibility of expanding the hybrid pitch technology, following the successful pilot at Regents Park. Finally, we are also working with the Football Foundation to increase investment in less traditional, recreational sites such as 9vs9 and 7vs7 artificial grass surfaces.

The shortage of referees has also been a significant issue and in response to this we have turbo-charged our referee recruitment. One of the reasons for this shortage has been our inability to run referee courses throughout the pandemic and so this season we have delivered an unprecedented number of courses to respond to demand. To date we have registered 1,051 referees, which is a 14% increase in the number of referees registered for the 2020-21 season. This is not yet keeping up with the demand from the growth in the game though, and so we are now also carefully tracking conversion of referees from training to matches and the retention of existing referees.

This season we launched our new coach membership programme, which offers face-to-face CPD to complement the FA's education programme and have offered a wide variety of high-quality sessions through this programme over the course of the season. This has resulted in us recording 655 CPD instances over the course of the season, engaging 395 individual coaches. Further detail on this programme and membership opportunities are available at the link below:

[Coach Membership - Season 2021-22 \(londonfa.com\)](https://londonfa.com/coach-membership-season-2021-22)

Our plans for affiliation for the 2022-23 affiliation process are on track, with affiliation opening on 16th May 2022. We are hopeful that the significant issues that our members experienced with player registration last season are not repeated and have worked closely with The FA to feedback your concerns. The FA have set out a clear plan to tackle these issues, to include postponing any move to a new affiliation platform for a further year, to allow the changes to bed in. Progress against this plan has been reported back regularly to the London FA Council.

Finally, the 2021-22 season saw us launch our comprehensive racial equality action plan. This was in response to the extensive consultation that we undertook with our members over the summer, and I would like to thank all of those who contributed directly to that consultation. Further details and a copy of the plan can be found at the link below:

[Racial Equality Action Plan - London FA](#)

Conclusion

At London FA our vision is to 'harness the power of grassroots football to enrich more lives in London' and we believe that by working closely with our clubs and leagues we are well placed to make a real difference in this great capital city.

Thank you for all that you do for grassroots football in London and I very much look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in person at the AGM on 27th June 2022.

June 2022

Paul Bickerton, London FA CEO