



Title: CEO Report	Meeting: Annual General Meeting
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Introduction

Welcome to the 2023 London FA AGM.

I am pleased to write this report following another full season uninterrupted by factors out of our control. Despite some periods of poor weather, virtually all our competitions have been played in full and completed to time.

This is testament to the extraordinary work that our army of grassroots volunteers bring to the game in London. We are always inspired by the amazing work that is carried out by our clubs and leagues to ensure that grassroots football in London can continue to be played in as safe, enjoyable, and inclusive an environment as possible.

2022-23 Season Summary

Over the course of the 2022-23 season, grassroots football in London has continued to recover positively from the pandemic and we have seen further impressive levels of growth. We affiliated just over 1,000 clubs and passed 5,000+ teams for the first time ever last season and this season we have seen our team numbers grow further to 5,431 teams.

This represents 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 since that time is represented across both the male and the female game and disability participation has also recovered strongly. Growth in the Women & Girls game has been particularly impressive, increasing from 5,717 players last season to 7,068 players this season – well over our target of 5,700. Our disability pathway also now boasts 668 players, again well above our target of 550 players and a major recovery from the challenges faced by disability players, teams, and clubs throughout the pandemic.

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 delivered 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 109 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. We have seen four of our targeted sites reach the application stage for Football Foundation funding this year and were delighted to announce the opening of the new Burgess Park facility in Southwark, a new double 3G pitch site with upgraded pavilion (see picture overleaf).



Burgess Park, Southwark

Alongside our work on improving grass pitches and establishing new 3G sites, we have seen a very encouraging response to the development of the new PlayZone initiative – a programme to develop new or refurbished mini football pitches for recreational football use in the heart of London’s communities. There have been 23 expressions of interest from London’s local authorities for this programme. Finally, we have also been successful in applying to the Football Foundation for an additional ‘hybrid’ grass pitch at Regents Park, allowing us to further explore this new technology in a community setting.

The shortage of referees has also been a significant issue and in response to this we have significantly accelerated our referee recruitment. This season we have delivered an unprecedented number of courses to respond to demand and to date have registered 1,200 referees, a 14% increase on last year. We are also conducting an exercise to better understand the gaps in refereeing provision across the game in London and this will allow us to strategically target our training and education for next season.

We launched our new coach membership programme last season, which offers face-to-face CPD to complement the FA’s education programme. We have significantly expanded this programme this season and this has resulted in us recording 1,996 CPD instances over the course of the season, engaging 1,017 individual coaches. Further detail on this programme and membership opportunities are available at the link below:

[Coach Membership - Season 2022-23 \(londonfa.com\)](https://www.londonfa.com/coach-membership-season-2022-23)

To support the work above and create more capacity across the team to manage the increased demands of the growth in teams affiliated to London FA, we have added two new specialist roles to the business. The first of these is a Facilities & Investment Officer, who’s primary purpose will be to support our clubs to access the grass pitch improvement fund and provide generic facility support and guidance. The second role is a partnership with Middlesex FA to employ a Volunteer Development Officer, to work directly with our club and league volunteers to address the challenges they have around volunteer recruitment, retention, support, and reward.

Members will recall that last season we launched our comprehensive racial equality action plan and this has continued to be delivered over the course of the 2022-23 season. As a result of this plan, we have delivered a series of education and training events for our clubs and leagues focused on our discipline procedures and processes, to include a discipline roadshow over the summer of 2022. We have also targeted specifically our South Asian communities in London for coach and referee education and recruitment and developed a high-quality ‘racial equality in football’ training workshop



for our clubs and leagues. This workshop was piloted in April 2023 and will be rolled out to our stakeholders this summer.

[Inclusion - London FA](#)

Finally, our plans for affiliation for the 2023-24 season are on track, with affiliation opening on 12th June 2023. It is important that members note that Club Affiliation will be available within the **CLUB PORTAL** for affiliation from the 12th June 2023 onwards, instead of through the Whole Game System.

This change has many benefits, allowing clubs to complete up to 75% of their affiliation now and not having to wait until the opening of affiliation to get started. It is a much more efficient and user-friendly system and we have provided extensive training to our clubs and leagues already through our webinar series. We have also produced a series of short 'how-to' videos to support clubs to complete affiliation on the new system. All the guidance a club needs is contained on our website at the link below:

[Affiliation - 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 10th July 2023.

June 2023

Paul Bickerton, London FA CEO