

Title: CEO Report	Meeting: Annual General Meeting
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Introduction

Welcome to the 2024 London FA AGM.

I am delighted to write this report following another successful season of growth and 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.

One of the real highlights of the season was our [Grassroots Heroes awards night](#) on the 31st January 2024. It provided us with a great opportunity to fully recognise and say thank you to our volunteers, all in the impressive surroundings of London's Guildhall. Only a small number of volunteers are award winners of course, but the event is set to up to showcase and recognise the contribution from everyone across the grassroots football family in London.



London FA Grassroots Heroes Awards 2023

2023-24 Season Summary

Over the course of the 2023-24 season, grassroots football in London has continued to see further impressive levels of growth. We affiliated just over 1,000 clubs and passed 5,000+ teams for the first time ever two seasons ago and this season we have seen our numbers grow to its highest level ever: 5,610 teams.

This represents quite a change from four 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 7,046 players last season to 9,144 players this season – well over our target of 6,433 set out in our original strategy. Our disability pathway also now boasts 662 players, again well above our target of 596 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, and it is for this reason that at the start of the 2023-24

season we set out a detailed plan to invest some of our reserves to support specific areas of the game most challenged by a lack of capacity. A few highlights from this 'reserves reinvestment' plan include:

- A £50,000 fund for our women & girls clubs to apply for, to support them to better access appropriate facilities.
- Further investment into our refereeing and coaching support programmes, to include specific funding for people from an Asian / British Asian background to get into coaching or refereeing, as this audience is significantly under-represented in this area. This has resulted in an increase in the Asian / British Asian refereeing workforce in London from 4% to just under 8% in the past season.
- Additional capacity added to our discipline team to better manage the increased number of cases coming into the team and to identify target clubs and leagues to pilot training and education programmes to improve behaviour across the grassroots game in London.
- We have also increased our commercial and income generation capabilities, with a view to being able to invest even more back into the grassroots game in London in future. An exciting new partnership we have just signed is with [TOCA Social](#), the interactive football dining and entertainment venue that has a site based at the O2 in London and is expanding nationally.



Alongside the above, we have continued to focus heavily on the further development of our workforce. We have significantly accelerated our referee recruitment and this season have delivered an unprecedented number of courses to respond to demand. To date we have registered 1,609 referees, a 34% increase on last year. We launched our new coach membership programme two seasons ago, which offers face-to-face CPD to complement the FA's education programme. This season we have recorded 2,6021 CPD instances (compared with 1,996 last season), engaging 1,856 individual coaches. Further detail on this programme and membership opportunities are available [here](#).

Finally, our plans for affiliation for the 2024-25 season are on track, with affiliation opening on 5th June 2024. Last season we switched to the **CLUB PORTAL** for affiliation, instead of through the Whole Game System, and this proved a much better and smoother experience for all concerned.



The change had many benefits, allowing clubs to complete up to 75% of their affiliation before the affiliation window even opened. 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 in May 2024. 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:

<https://www.londonfa.com/news/2024/may/10/be-ready-for-affiliation-2024-2025>

New London FA Strategy 2024 to 2028

A significant priority for the London FA over the first part of 2024 has been to develop a new strategy, as the current strategy was nearing its end. To develop this new strategy, an extensive consultation has taken place with key London FA stakeholders. This involved three face-to-face sessions at Wembley, with our clubs and league members on the 6th March, external professional stakeholders on the 11th March and the London FA staff team on the 14th of March. A further online session took place with our London FA Council Members on Monday 18th March 2024.

The format for all four of the above sessions was the FA's Grassroots Strategic Framework for County FAs, which was developed following the FA's 'A Conversation with the Game' series in the summer of 2023.

Overall, 153 stakeholders participated in the consultation, and 50 of those responded to a follow-up survey on further strategic questions. The FA's 'A Conversation with the Game' online survey also added to this consultation exercise, which comprised a digital survey with just under 500 responses from London FA participants.

The new London FA Strategy, 2024 – 2028 is included with these AGM papers at *LFA AGM 2024 #6*. The strategy is based directly on feedback from London FA members and wider stakeholders and has been approved by the London FA Board at its meeting on Monday 17th June 2024. It sets out a vision to ensure that London FA becomes much more externally facing, with a focus on *servicing* the grassroots football community. The theme of partnership working runs right throughout the strategy, with a detailed list of stakeholders that can support the delivery of our objectives identified throughout the process.

Each strategic priority is split into more detailed objectives and interventions which came from the consultation. The same applies for the three strategic drivers, and this is all directly aligned to the FA's own national Grassroots Strategy 2024 – 2028. Equality, diversity and inclusion interventions, and safeguarding interventions, have been fully integrated into this strategy, as opposed to being developed as separate plans.

We hope members will see that this new strategy is the culmination of the firm foundations set for the organisation over the previous strategy period, alongside a very detailed and engaging consultation period. The support for the consultation process from London FA members has been hugely positive and the plans set out are ambitious but achievable. This is undoubtedly a very exciting time for the London FA and presents us all with a tremendous opportunity to lead the development of the grassroots game across our capital city.



Conclusion

At London FA our new vision is to *'serve London's grassroots football family, supporting them to improve the quality of football provision'* and we believe that by working closely with our clubs, leagues and Council members 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 15th July 2024.

June 2024

Paul Bickerton, London FA CEO