



NORFOLK COUNTY FA ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23

NORFOLK FOOTBALL - A STRATEGY FOR EVERYONE

ANNUAL REPORT

Chairman's Review

MY REPORT THIS YEAR WILL BE AROUND A LOT OF THANK YOU'S.

It has been another exceptionally busy year for Norfolk FA, and I would like to start my report with firstly thanking all the staff who have gone on and above their normal work to make football happen in the County.

As always within my annual report, this being my tenth, it gives me opportunities to thank numerous people, people who you might not have met but who are working tirelessly behind the scenes to keep football moving forward in Norfolk. I'm not really going to touch much on the football side as Matt has covered very comprehensively all aspects of Norfolk football.

With Kate Dixon leaving us in the early part of this year it gave us the opportunity to appoint, from within, Nina Buckingham to take on the role as Office Manager and I'm sure like myself you will wish her well.

My thanks to Ian Grange, his work commitment, as always, is unbelievable, and I would like to thank him for the work he has done to support local clubs but also, and at times the nail biting work he has done to secure the new pitch at FDC Open.

Myself and the Board of Directors recognise all the hard work the staff do and we appreciate each and everyone of you and of course a big thank you from me as you always make me so welcome when I visit.



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Our CEO Matt Carpenter, what can I say? his work effort is non-stop and although I constantly try to tell him to switch off he's still answering emails at ridiculous times! Matt is growing into the role nicely, still learning every day and I do like our quick phone calls which normally last an hour! On behalf of the board I would like to thank you Matt for your due diligence in everything you do for Norfolk Football.

As part of the code of governance we now have to have an annual Board skills audit, from this initial audit back in 2022 it highlighted the fact we were missing certain skills, so back in January this year we interviewed six applicants for two new directors. This time round the quality of the applications was very strong, so we didn't just appoint two, we appointed three new Director's.

- Kathryn Hirst – Legal Commercial
- Ashley Judd – HR
- Oluwatobiloba Amadasun affectionately known as Tobi – Inclusion.

Even though it's only been a few months since they have joined us, already they are showing an impact on the board, with Kathryn joining us on the FA Project Board presentation, and was involved in the interview panel for the Office Manager role.

Ashley joined Matt at a conference at St Georges Park and as Matt mentioned Tobi now reporting back into the Board from the ISAG meetings, something we have not had in the past.



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We now have a board of eleven which includes our CEO as the only executive member. The Board, including the aforementioned three new members, is now made up of:

- Michael Banham – Chair
- Matt Carpenter – Company Secretary
- John Turner – Legal
- Paul Ballard – Insurance & Risk
- Paul Marshall – Finance
- Joe Conway – Commercial
- Matt Wells – Safeguarding
- Stacey Annison – Sustainability

Stacey was appointed as co-opted Director and has now been formally appointed a director by the Board in June.

I would like to thank each of you for the commitment you show to the Board and Norfolk football especially as volunteers. Special thanks to Paul Marshall with the time he gives to Matt and Lynette on the finance of the company. Matt Wells for his hard work with Safeguarding and his support to the safeguarding team which will include Ken.

John Turner for re-writing the articles for the umpteenth time and his involvement in the negotiating of FDC Flegg, this was the right decision to let Flegg go and having the full support of the board made this happen.

But overall, my thanks to each of you for the commitment you have shown to the Board and Norfolk football especially as volunteers.



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I would like to mention in my list of thanks, Trevor Cobb, Life Member, Trevor can't be with us this evening but he has helped out at most of the County Cup Finals this year and even spent the day with us at Youth Cup weekend, managing the pitches on a very warm day, thank you Trevor, we all appreciate what you do and hopefully will continue to do. I haven't forgotten other members of Council who also contributed to the finals, thank you.

Matt has already mentioned the finals so I'm not going over them again, but I will say a big thank you to all who made them possible with record attendance's.

My thanks go out to all our match officials, a thankless task at times but very much appreciated by myself. Congratulations to those who were fortunate enough to receive the honour of officiating a County Cup final and hopefully will inspire future referees to push for that goal.

I would like to congratulate all our County volunteer award winners for 22/23 season and they will be recognised at our Annual Awards evening in September.

My second year on the FA Council and I'm on a mission to award The FA 50-year medal, I think this year at the awards evening will be the most we have given out, and I know there are many more out there who have dedicated 50 years or more to football who rightfully deserve one.

As we have just approved the articles it's now appropriate for me to thank you all. It's not goodbye to all the fantastic knowledge we have within Council, I'm looking forward to it being the beginning of a new chapter where we can use your skill set in another way with a mixture of yourselves if available and the bigger footballing community in small working groups where football will be discussed. Within these working groups we will have a board member in attendance and then they will report back to the Board.

It was my main concern that we maintained some history of Council and with that our Life Members, those seven have given Norfolk FA a fountain of time and knowledge and deserve to continue to be recognised.

I can recall walking into my first Council meeting at the Brook Hotel, twenty-two years ago, talk about old school, everyone looking at me, who's this young person with hair joining our meeting. I believe Ray Venemore was there, so he stopped me being the youngest in the room. Council/ football has evolved over those years from the old man in a grey suit, to us having women, youth and younger council members involved, which has progressed the modern game immensely.

So, with a heavy heart I thank you all as the current Council for what you have given to us and of course for all those members who have come and gone.

Have a wonderful summer and enjoy the women's world cup which started today with both southern hemisphere teams winning.

Come on the lionesses and especially our own Lauren Hemp. Have a great 2023/24 season. Thank you.

Michael Banham
Chairman



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Chief Executive's Review

Good evening and welcome to our 2023 Annual General Meeting, my second as CEO.

Over the next few minutes, my aim is to provide a summary of the last 12 months in #NorfolkFootball, before touching on what the next 12 months might have in store for us.

I'm going to start this report by focusing on a core activity that runs through the heart of everything that we do, safeguarding. I spoke last season about how we had successfully passed the NSPCC assessment against the Safeguarding365 standard that all County FA's must adhere too. Despite that success, we have not stood still over the last 12 months, as we have:

- Adding our Office Manager Nina Buckingham to our safeguarding team to assist with the all-important administration tasks
- Joined The FA's shared safeguarding service, which has proved to be a great success in ensuring that those volunteers who deliver youth football week in week out are compliant with all the relevant FA requirements
- In addition to completing our 'mandatory' 17 unannounced safeguarding visits, Matt Wells, our Board Safeguarding Champion, has completed 2 unannounced safeguarding visits to summer tournaments
- Refined our 'Talk to Us' process to ensure that all issues raised are effectively tracked and updated on a regular basis
- Reviewed and updated our Risk Assessment Template and introduced a new events calendar to allow us to ensure that these are being completed and reviewed for every event that we run
- Opened a comprehensive survey of youth players, which is being led by our Youth Council, that will allow us to listen to and more importantly act upon the voices of young people that play the game.



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I am confident that we will be ready for our next safeguarding assessment, which will take place at some point next season, but we already have plans in place to do even more, including:

- Acting upon the results of the youth survey
- Hosting a face-to-face safeguarding conference for the first time since covid

Safeguarding is, and always will be, at the heart of all that we do.

I mentioned our Youth Council a few moments ago, and 2022/23 has brought about some significant changes to the group, guided by our Football Development Officer (Male Pathway & Coaching), James Buhlemann. The Chair of the group is currently Harry Bland, who also sits on The FA Youth Council and he is joined by Alice Parker, Shannon Owen, Will Scott, Anoushka Williamson, Georgie Munday, Gracie East, Gemma Barker, Callum Simmons and Emilia Chilvers. I'm excited to see what this group achieves over the coming twelve months and beyond.

We continue to work hard to ensure that we make football a safe and inclusive environment for all, and as such our Inclusion Strategy Advisory Group has also been revamped over the course of the last twelve months, with a new Terms of Reference, Gabby Evbota taking over the role of Chair and more recently our Office Manager, Nina Buckingham, moving into the role of our Inclusion Lead. The most recent meeting of the group was the most positive that I have sat in on since becoming CEO and I am anticipating the group making a real difference to the EDI picture in Norfolk, particularly around providing support for victims of discriminatory abuse which is a project that they are working on.



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In addition to supporting the ISAG our inclusion work has seen us, amongst many other things:

- Running female only coaching sessions
- Delivering a Playmaker course in conjunction with New Routes and Norwich International Youth Project
- Delivery women's mental health football sessions at The FDC
- Support and promote Black History month and the Rainbow Laces campaign
- Providing specific EDI training to our workforce

We have also taken steps this season to support and improve the diversity and representativeness of our referee workforce with our Referee Development Officer, Harvey Newstead, recruiting three Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Ambassadors to help us recruit and support match officials from a diverse range of backgrounds.

We have also recently recruited three Disability Football Ambassadors which will enable us to do even more work in this area in the next 12 months.

Everything I have spoken about so far has been around some the structures that allow football to happen, so let's now turn our attention to matters on the pitch.

Normally at this point, I would start by talking about Norwich City's men's first team, but this year the first side getting my attention is Norwich City Women. Last season, for the first time, the team came under the umbrella of the main club and that support behind the scenes allowed the side to achieve a much improved 4th place finish in the league.



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That, though, only tells a small part of the story of last season. Crowds off the pitch were consistently high and on Sunday 16th April the team played their first ever league game at Carrow Road in front of an amazing crowd of 7,585. I was lucky enough to be one of those at the game and a thrilling encounter saw the Canaries win 5-3 on a day that anyone there will remember for years to come. That wasn't the only game the Norwich women played at Carrow Road this season, but more on that later. Hopefully the team will continue to go from strength to strength next season.

Overall the female game in Norfolk remains really strong. It was very disappointing to lose Wymondham Town at the very start of the season, but by the end of the year, Mulbarton, Dussindale & Hellesdon and Thetford Town had all secured promotion to the Eastern Regional League Division One North, where they will join Fakenham Town whilst King's Lynn Town and Wroxham both will once again play in the Eastern Region Premier Division. Hopefully the Lionesses will enjoy more success down under over the summer and this growth in the female game will continue for many years to come.

Turning my attention to the male game, Norwich City were hoping to bounce straight back into the Premier League after relegation but it wasn't to be and they had to be satisfied with a 13th place finish.

King's Lynn Town were also hoping to bounce back from relegation and they came so close, battling all season with AFC Fylde for the one automatic promotion place from the National League North, missing out by just two points in the end and then suffering the heartbreak of getting knocked out of the play-offs by Kidderminster Harriers who went on to win the playoff final.

King's Lynn Town weren't the only side to suffer play-off disappointment as Dereham Town's lengthy run as a Step 4 club came to an end with defeat to Stotfold on 29th April which saw them relegated to Step 5.

Our other two Step 4 Clubs, Wroxham and Gorleston, managed to maintain their status at that level and the Greens season ended on a high at Carrow Road, but more of that in a minute.

There was yet another play-off disappointment for a Norfolk side in the Thurlow Nunn Premier Division, as a fantastic campaign by Thetford Town saw them finish second in the table, but they lost to Barton Rovers in the play-offs and so will remain at Step 5 next season.

In the Thurlow Nunn Division One North I can finally report on a Norfolk play-off success with Downham Town capitalising on their 2nd place finish in the League by beating Harwich & Parkeston in the play-off final to secure promotion. The star performers in that division last season though were newcomers Heacham, who continued their amazing run of promotions by securing the title and they are about to begin their first season at Step 5.

Congratulations to all the teams across Norfolk who were successful in winning league titles and league cup in 2022/23.



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Once again our County Cups proved to be the highlight of the season for so many. We were delighted to be able to host three finals at Carrow Road, and all three saw fantastic attendances with largest crowd being 2,690 for the Harrod Sport Women's Final which saw Norwich City make their second appearance of the season at the ground and they were comfortable 3-0 winners against Mulbarton Wanderers. Gorleston lifted the Ashtons Legal Senior Cup with a 3-0 win against Dereham Town in front of 1,382 fans whilst 890 were in attendance to see Loddon United beat Castle Acre Swifts 2-1.

Away from Carrow Road, 8 successful finals were hosted on Harrod Sport Arena and my congratulations go to all the winners. I look forward to doing it all again next season, when for the first time in the history of the Association we are planning to run three girls County Cups as a further measure of the growth of the female game in Norfolk. All being well, the next annual report will be able to include the names of the history making sides that will be the first to lift the U12, U14 and U16 trophies.

Cup finals aren't just about the two competing clubs of course as there is a third team on the pitch, and my congratulations go to the 44 match officials who were rewarded with a well-deserved County Cup Final appointment this season. The appointment policy for Cup Finals continued to ensure that it wasn't just referees who were up for promotion who got to take to the pitch for these prestigious occasions.

Continuing with refereeing, our Referee Development Officer, Harvey Newstead, continued to have great success against the Key Performance Indicators that we are measured against with all of the targets being exceeded. 133 new referees were recruited against a target of 99, whilst 316 of our referees were retained from the previous season, which is a marked improvement on the 272 retained from the season before.

Of course refereeing is not just about getting people onto a course and registered, it is about making sure that they actually get out onto the pitch to referee games and thanks to the hard work of our two Appointments Officers our coverage numbers were 94% on Saturdays and 99% on Sundays, giving an overall coverage of 95%, comfortably exceeding our 90% target, although we would of course love to hit 100% on both days.



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This season saw The FA introduce a new progression pathway for grassroots referees which has seen a number of our match officials earn promotion, including some who have achieved two promotions this season. My congratulations go to:

Level 7 to 6 – Sam Gasson-Cox, Daniel Knowles, Steve Hemp, Scott Henn, Chris Tyrrell, Daniel Sadler, Tom Miles, Anoushka Williamson, David McCourt-Hall, Thomas Alexander, James Durham, Shane Watts, Michael Clark, Kristen Codman, Andrew Chantrill, Andy Lucraft-Townley, Christopher Watts and Dan Bird

Level 6 to 5 – Alex Passmore, James Barber, Craig Ellis, Mark Shepstone, Steve Hemp, James Newman, Sam Gasson-Cox, Paul Cracknel and Kevin Wingfield

Level 5 to 4 – Tyler Clayton, Jason Ding, Auberon Limmer and Jaden Lister

Level 4W to 3W – Dan Bird, Craig Ellis, Michele Rinaldi, Craig Guy and Scott Hawkins

A number of our official have also been promoted by The FA:

Level 3 to Level 2B – Adrian George

Level 3W to 2W – Callum Parke

Level 4 to Level 3 – Oliver Sadd and Matt Friend

Level 3F to 3E – Mark Chalkley

As well as enjoying great success as our RDO, Harvey also received personal recognition as a futsal referee earning appointments to the European University Games in Poland last July and later this summer he will be officiating at the partially sighted world cup in Birmingham. My congratulations go to him for these appointments.

We have also had two referees promoted on the futsal pathway with Andy Moncur moving up to Level 1 and Jack Wicks going to Level 2.



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I will now turn my attention to our Regulatory Services team, led once again by our Regulatory Services Manager, Tom Constance, supported by our Head of Football Services, Matt Lemmon. Sadly the 2022/23 season has seen a marked increase in the number of disciplinary offences dealt with by the team, as behaviour in local football seems to have taken a step backwards following the pandemic.

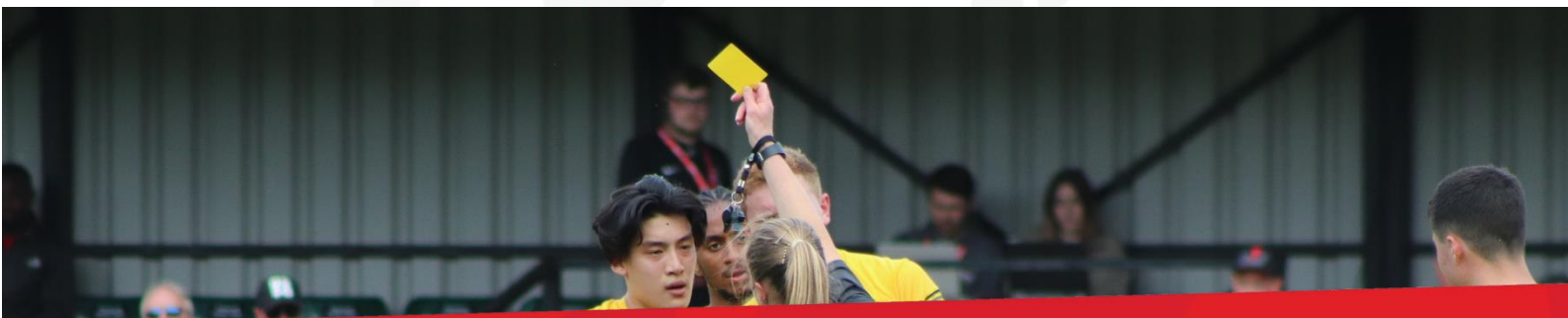
In 2022/23 both cautions and sending off offences were up by around 7% on the previous season with 6,712 yellow cards and 584 red cards shown. Particularly concerning is the fact that dissent and dismissals for language are both up so behaviour towards match officials seems to be getting worse which is definitely not the direction we want the game to be travelling in.

There has also been a significant increase in the number of misconduct charges raised, 350 compared to 211 in 2022/23. This represents an alarming increase of 66% and whilst some of this can be accounted for by a change in the regulations surrounding club charges, again this is not a positive position for the game and is something that all of football must work hard to address in the coming seasons. One small "positive" is that pleasingly there has been a drop in the number of the most serious cases against match officials, with no proven assaults and only three instances of physical contact against a match official, although this is of course still three too many. And countering this is the fact that the number of threatening cases against a match official has jumped from 3 to 11 so yet another worrying increase.

Another very concerning rise in cases is around aggravated charges, which are those that make reference to one or more of the protected characteristics. There have been 42 charges raised this season, compared to just 11 in 2021/22. It is always difficult to say whether this relates to an increase in the number offences being committed or whether it is also down to people feeling more confident to report offences and therefore awareness being increased. Either way this is an extremely disturbing statistic and shows why the work that our ISAG are looking to do around victim support will be so important.

There were 119 disciplinary hearings in season 2021/22, with 65 being held by ourselves and the other 54 being heard by The FA or other counties hearing cases on our behalf. Overall, the number of cases dealt with by a commission that were found proven was 95%.

I spoke last season about the fact that we would be joining a Regional Disciplinary Panel to support the hearing of cases and this has proven to be a great success as it has made it easier for our staff to arrange hearings and has provided us with access to a wide range of skilled individuals to ensure that the process is as fair and transparent as it can be.



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Moving away from discipline and on to player registrations, following the significant number of IT issues experienced the previous season, the FA had invested a substantial amount of time and resource to ensure that the processes this season would be far more efficient and that certainly proved to be the case. Pleasingly the new Club portal based affiliation process that has been introduced for the 2023/24 season also seems to have benefited from the lessons that were learned as overall that has run extremely smoothly so far.

Our Football Development team, led by Football Development Manager Rachel Cossey, have enjoyed a very busy and successful 12 months.

We were sad to lose Harry Diggins part way through the year, but the recruitment of his replacement, James Buhlemann as our Football Development Officer (Male Pathway & Coaching) has been a resounding success, in particular with regards to our Coaches Club, which now has close to 550 members and those individuals have benefitted from a number of top quality CPD events. We recently opened an online Coaches Club shop and there are also plans afoot for a potential tour – watch this space!

Harry's departure saw a change in Anna Larkins role as she became our Football Development Officer (Female Pathway and FA Accreditation) and it was thanks to her hard work that so many of our Clubs achieved Accredited status by the deadline imposed by the FA. Indeed, the percentage of our Clubs that hit that deadline was one of the highest in the country.

A large part of the work undertaken by the Football Development Team is around our Key Performance Indicators and I'm delighted to be able to say that we exceeded all of our targets bar one. The one was the number of Disability players which we missed out on by just 9 people, but with disability football having taken the longest to bounce back from the pandemic to get that close was still a great achievement.



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Of course Football Development isn't just about KPIs and statistics, it is about delivery football projects and supporting everybody involved in the local game. The team have undertaken an enormous number of projects over the course of the year, far too many to mention them all, but I will highlight a couple that we are particularly proud of.

Our Youth Leadership Programme has seen the team run a number of events that have enabled us to engage with the next generation of leaders, with a number of individuals already having transitioned into other areas of the game such as refereeing.

Our superheroes Pan-disability sessions were also a great success. They were started by Alice Parker, who was with us on a short-term contract, as she developed the project from scratch and enabled young disabled children to engage with football in a way that they had previously been unable to do.

These sessions have now transferred to a grassroots Club, Horsford FC, and the success of this project has seen us be awarded money from The FA to continue the project further in 2023/24 as we look to start a new league based around this activity.

Football Development links very closely with facilities and this area of work is led by our Head of Facilities and Development, Ian Grange, and over the past twelve months, additional FA funding has enabled Rachel Cossey to support Ian in this area of the business as the demand for new and better facilities continues to grow exponentially.

A total of £3.4m of capital projects have been delivered this season, which is an increase of £1.2m in comparison to 2021/22. Highlights of projects delivered include:

- The Nest 3G - £1.1m
- The Wellesley 3G - £970k
- Open Academy 3G - £671k
- Football Foundation Small Grants - £307k
- Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund - £380k

A refresh of the 7 Local Football Facility Plans is also underway, with the plans refreshed in the Greater Norwich area (Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk districts) during the 2022/23 season, and the 4 remaining Local Authorities (Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, Great Yarmouth, Breckland, North Norfolk) will be completed in the forthcoming season.

We are of course fortunate as a County FA to have our own facilities, which help underpin the work that we do to support the game.



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The main one of these is The FDC and 2022/23 has been a very successful twelve months for our prestigious home site. Operating with 1 full size, 4 7v7 and 2 5v5 pitches has seen us move from a 5 days-a-week operation to a 7 days-a-week one. This has brought challenges along the way, but the team, under the leadership of both Ian Grange and our FDC Operations Manager, Michelle Stewart, have worked exceptionally hard to deliver a service that we are proud of and the fact that so many Leagues host their Cup Finals at our venues, together with the vast number of teams that call the FDC home, is testimony to the work that they have all put in.

The jewel in the crown is undoubtedly the Harrod Sport Arena, which continues to receive praise from everyone who uses it, particularly if they have not been to the facility since it was a grass pitch!

The FDC also recently hosted a hugely successful Harrod Sports Women's & Girls Tournament and our annual FDC Youth Cup. Both events continue to go from strength to strength and the feedback from this year's events was overwhelming positive, although our way of working will see us to continue to look to improve things even further next year!

The FDC @ Open has also enjoyed a successful year with demand to get onto the pitch continuing to exceed supply. Shortly into the new season, the completion on the second pitch at the site will help address this problem and we already have teams queuing up to use the new pitch as soon as it is ready to be played upon.

There is no denying that the current climate makes operating facilities more challenging than it has even been and towards the end of the year our Board made the decision to transfer operation of the FDC @ Flegg to Ormiston Academies Trust. This decision will enable us to focus our efforts on our other two sites whilst ensuring that teams in the East of the county still have access to Flegg for community usage.



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I think this report has already highlighted the amazing amount of activity that Norfolk FA have undertaken in the past twelve months and to be honest I have only really scratched the surface of what we do!

Of course, none of this would be possible to achieve without the help of others, so it is only right that I conclude this report with a series of thank-you messages.

Firstly, to our partners. They are all incredibly important to us and my sincere thanks go to them all. I think though it is worth highlighting Harrod Sport who have provided new top quality goals for both The FDC and the FDC @ Open that I know everybody who uses the facilities are extremely grateful for.

I will now move to our incredible grassroots volunteer workforce, without whom quite simply there would be no football. As I know from experience, volunteering can be a relentless and thankless task at times, in fact most of the time, but ultimately it is a hugely rewarding thing to do so thank you to everyone that gives up their time to make football possible. Every year we get to recognise a small selection of the volunteer workforce at our annual awards dinner.

That event will be repeated later this year for the 2022/23 winners:

- Club of the Year – Bure Valley FC
- Coach of the Year (Male Player Pathway) – Jason Best
 - Highly commended: Luke Coppen
- Coach of the Year (Female Player Pathway) – David Clarke
- Coach of the Year (Disability Player Pathway) – Darren Hunter
- Grounds Team of the Year – Jason Brister
 - Highly commended: Jeff Lake and Thomas Lake
- CoacLeague of the Year – North West Norfolk League
- Match Official of the Year – Samuel Gasson-Cox
 - Highly commended: Andy Lucraft-Townley
- New Volunteer of the Year – James Pollard
- Young Volunteer of the Year – Gracie East
- The Lioness Award – Norwich Women's Walking Football Club
- Positive Football Environment Award – Alive KLCF



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My congratulations go to each and every one of the people, leagues and clubs who have been honoured this season and I look forward to seeing them all later in September for what should be another great celebration of #NorfolkFootball.

And so we are almost at the end of my second annual report. Like my first year in post it has been a twelve month period of lots of highs and a few lows but overall I am hugely proud of everything that we have been able to achieve. And the key word there is of course we, as everything we do is very much a team effort and no one part could function without all the others. So my next thank you goes to our Board and in particular our Chairman Michael Banham, for the continued support and guidance that they provide. I think next year will see us make even more use of the expertise that we have on our Board and that will definitely be a very positive thing for #NorfolkFootball.

2022/23 has seen the loss of some significant members of staff. None more so than Kate Dixon, who left us back in March having completed an amazing 21 years with the Association. It was certainly an emotional day for all involved! My best wishes go to all of those who have moved on in the past twelve months, but those that have left have all been replaced and the team that we have at the County now is as strong as it has ever been in my opinion and they all continue to do an amazing job in supporting #NorfolkFootball. My thanks go to each and everyone of them for the incredible dedication, commitment and service that they show grassroots football and also to me in my role as CEO – it's a privilege I will never take for granted.

2023/24 will be a very significant one for the Association. We will shortly be voting on some changes to the structure of the organisation that will enable us to continue to service football in the best way possible and this coming twelve months will also see us write our new strategy to cover the period 2024 to 2028. Football will continue to evolve in the years to come and we have the opportunity over the next twelve months to ensure that Norfolk FA can continue to lead our national sport in the county. We have some exciting opportunities to grasp!

Matt Carpenter
Chief Executive

Presented at the Annual General Meeting, Thursday 20 July 2023



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