



ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20



*"Football for Everyone
Everyone for Football"*



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Chairman's Report

This has to be the strangest end of season report that I have written or have read from my predecessors. I of course refer to the effects that covid-19 has had and is having on football and our normal way of life and the way our season came to such an abrupt end with all its ensuing frustrations.

At the time of writing this we are receiving the first signs of a restart to our game however, I am sure that in the current circumstances this will not be without its challenges. I can assure you that the staff at our County Office and the Board are ready and anxious to support you in whatever way is practical. I

would like to thank all of our staff for their patience during this difficult time. You will be interested to know that the Board are doing their absolute best to ensure we retain the current staffing levels in these very difficult economic times. In addition, the Board are also trying to assist leagues and clubs wherever possible with i.e. affiliation fees, player insurance and cup entry fees etc. You will have gathered from the tone of this that the Board also face significant challenges due to the downturn in FA funding and are currently examining what effects this will have on us.

Sadly, I have to report the loss of some of our colleagues. Bob Keyes, SFA Life Member, Vice-President, Referee and many other footballing activities. He was very much a champion of inter-league and representative football. Ivan Rendall, SFA Vice-President and our accountant for many years and Director/Secretary at Yeovil Town Football Club. Steve Hillier, a former SFA Council Member and Fixture Secretary for the County League. There are two long standing Club Secretaries I would also wish to mention they are Malcom Hunt of Bishop Sutton and Dave Aries of Tone Youth. There may be others who regrettably I am not aware of at this time, but I say thank you to all who have served our game and who are no longer with us.

As many of you will be aware, I took the decision last autumn to retire as your Chairman and FA Representative in order to make way for younger people. Both of these positions I have considered to be a privilege to work on your behalf and whilst I don't know how many thousands of miles, I have covered in respect of both positions it has been an enjoyable and sometimes eye-opening experience. I would like to thank my Board colleagues for all of their support and at times seeing us through some difficult decisions. I would also like to single out Jon Pike our CEO who has had to put up with me and all my own style of management. Jon thanks for all your support.

In closing may I wish all of you good times with whatever capacity your involvement is in the game and sincerely hope that the younger generation step forward as us old ones come to the end of our time.

Peter Hockley
Chairman



Chief Executive's Report

Obviously, this season, along with every other aspect of everyday life, has been dominated by Covid-19. This is apparent both in the shortened nature of this report, most of our staff have been furloughed so cannot contribute to it and of course all football activity has been stopped, and the fact we are compiling the abridged version in August for an AGM that is over two months later than normal.

As covid-19 spread across the country in late February and early March football at first continued, however as the effects became more apparent, not least following the suspension of professional football on the weekend of the 14th/15th March, when many local grass roots clubs also asked for cancellations, that the status quo would not remain. On the evening of 16th March following an announcement by the Prime Minister, Somerset FA suspended all football in the county, this was followed very shortly by the FA doing the same across England. Just over a month later the FA cancelled the season nationally for all football in this country below step 2 of the men's game, declaring all leagues null and void in the men's National League System. Leagues at Grassroots could decide if they wanted to declare their seasons null and void or award championship/promotion/relegation on a points per game basis. Leagues across the county have made decisions for their respective competitions, often after consultation with their members.

The announcement by the FA on 16th March suspended all football activity, including training, and there was consequently no football from March for several months, this was obviously confirmed by the national lockdown instigated by government on 23rd March. This was obviously a very worrying time for all clubs with many of them with grounds and club houses facing considerable financial pressures from the effects of lockdown and all clubs worrying if their players would return after lockdown.

To mitigate against these pressures, the Football Foundation launched both the Pitch Preparation fund in the spring and Club Preparation Fund in the summer; the aim of the former to provide funds so clubs could prepare their pitches in preparation for when football returned while the later was for clubs to mitigate for actions they would need to put in place to make it safe at that time. Staff promoted this to our clubs and the take up was excellent with our county being among the top recipients of funds for both funds in spite of us being only a mid-sized county; we can hope that these funds will help clubs as we start up again. As a county we saw an upturn in our own small grant scheme for clubs and made a number of wards throughout the summer.

Throughout lockdown there were still numerous enquiries received by the county office and there was a definite eagerness to return, probably exacerbated by the conditions of lockdown. In June the FA announced they had agreed a return to training, albeit it distinctly limited, groups of no more than 6 and no "contact training" with a risk assessment to be carried out and mitigating actions put in place. However, from the take up and a quick glance of social media alone would tell that the appetite for football was as great as ever as clubs returned to training.

On 18th July, the FA following discussions with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, announced that football could begin again. This saw an immediate return to full training was allowed, albeit with a limit of 30 for the session, and the resumption of friendly matches from 1st August; grassroots competitive matches will be allowed from the start of September. This was accompanied by guidance documents and the return to football would not be like we used to before, the new normal will see risk assessments, PPE for first aiders, track and trace for players and spectators, no changing rooms or showers and a Covid officer for each club among others. These new conditions will place a greater burden on the volunteer workforce who are the lifeblood of football and will mean it is harder to simply turn up and play than before; furthermore at time of writing the return of spectators to matches has yet be decided means those clubs in the NLS who rely on paying spectators face an uncertain future. Suffice to say, while football is to begin again, the coming season will be one of the most challenging we have ever faced. Perhaps there is some good form this; at first we were worried that we may face a number of clubs folding due to the financial pressures, at present we haven't seen a raft of this although it cannot be ruled out that this will happen in the coming months,

but at present most of our clubs are still there. There may be another reason for optimism, a number of leagues are reporting an increase in applications and new teams wanting to join, we have seen this in our Legends (Veterans) league with 9 new teams applying to enter. We can hope that the experience of lockdown has made us all aware of how much we value football and missed it and will encourage everyone back and some people who have left in the last years, to return.

Company

No nominations have been received for the post of President aside from the incumbent, Francis Hillier, consequently he will be returned unopposed (and also as directors as a result of that) for the coming season.

As mentioned above in his report, our Chairman Peter Hockley will stand down from the position at the end of the season, albeit that has been slightly delayed due to covid-19, he will end his tenure as Chair at the AGM. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Pete, not just for his time as chair but for almost 40 years of service to Somerset FA. Pete joined the Somerset FA Council in 1982, representing the Yeovil & District league, during his time on Council he has served on numerous committees, many of them as Chair or Deputy Chair. In 2003 he became a Life Member of the association. He was one of the original members of the Board of Directors at incorporation in 1999 and in 2005 was elected Deputy Chair of the Association. At that time he was also elected to serve as Somerset FA representative on the Council of the Football Association where he has served ever since, serving on several committees and become Chair of the prestigious Protocol Committee. In 2013 Pete was elected Chair of Somerset FA on the retirement of Alan Hobbs and has served with distinction in the post ever since. Simple words and listing of dates and posts, do not go anywhere close to acknowledging his commitment and service to football over the past four decades; he leaves with everyone's best wishes and all of our thanks for his work.

Two nominations have been received for the post of Chair, Phil Chaplin the current Deputy Chair of the Association and Scott Burnett; the election will take place at the AGM.

With Phil being nominated for Chair he chose not to be nominated for the post of Deputy Chair; therefore a vacancy will arise. Nominations have been received for David Braithwaite and for Scott Burnett. The latter will only be applicable if he Scott is unsuccessful in the election for chair, in which case David would be elected unopposed. This election will also take place at the AGM

Pete will also stand down as the Somerset FA representative on the Council of the Football Association, in line with the articles of association nominations for this post were sought from Council in the spring and Phil Chaplin was elected unopposed to serve in this role.

In line with the Articles of Association the director standing down in rotation was D Braithwaite; he elected not to stand again, which therefore necessitated an election. Nominations were received from council for Carrie-Anne Morgan and Gary Best, due to covid-19 the election was conducted on line, the result will be announced at the first meeting of the new council immediately after the AGM.

Following nominations to Council for season 2020-21 there were two nominations for the North division so an election was necessary; this has been carried out on line and the results will be announced at the AGM. In the South division, although the incumbent councillor decided not to stand again, only one nomination was received so there was no need for an election there, albeit there will be a new divisional councillor. No league has increased its number of Councillors through having enough teams to exceed the threshold to warrant another seat, for the coming season. There are no new Life Members at the forthcoming season sadly we have lost one of our Life Members with Bob Keyes passing during the season. The Board will co-opt 3 people onto Council for the coming season.

There are currently no new nominations for Vice presidents; last year we received one with Paul Williams being added to our list of Vice Presidents. Sadly, two of our Vice presidents passed away during the season, Bob Keyes as mentioned above and Ivan Rendall

All chairs and deputy chairs of the various committees and subcommittees were elected at the AGM.

The ongoing review at the governance structures, the Board and Council, of Somerset FA has continued. The working group has produced a draft that has been shared with Council. This document is now being checked and challenged in line with comments from the Council and against the FA Code of Governance that was released during the season. While FA code is not mandatory the internal SFA review was always designed to meet the expected contents of this (it is based on the Sport England code) so compliance in general is expected. The covid-19 shutdown has hampered progress here, but we remain on schedule to produce proposals for an EGM during the season for implementation at next year's AGM.

As last year the Board of Appeal did not have reason to be held this season. The Leagues Board of Appeal met on 2 occasions during the 2019-20 season, the low number may reflect the curtailed nature of the season. The Youth Council completed its seventh season.

We continued partnerships with Bridgwater College for coach education and the FA Nike deal for kit and equipment, this is largely through Discountfootballkits. We continue to work with Koolpak that allows purchase of first aid equipment by clubs at cost price. Melhuish & Saunders remained title sponsors of three County Cup competitions.

Due to Covid-19 the annual presentation, scheduled for July evening was cancelled; we are hopeful that we can host this before the end of the year, restrictions permitting.

Finance

Following the decision in 2018 to move our financial year from a calendar year, to run from 1st July to 30th June, the financial year ending 30th June 2019 were the first full year to be completed (An interim 6 month accounting year, 1st January 2018 – 30th June 2018 was produced for last year's AGM). Those accounts have been enclosed with AGM mail out packs.

The 2018—2019 financial results show a surplus of income over expenditure of £41,065; this surplus was largely responsible to an over performance in coach education and a revaluation of the Hobbs House property at Midsomer Norton.

Throughout the financial year we continued to receive rental income from tenants at the flat at Hobbs House and have begun to lease car parking spaces at the site, three of the five are currently let.

Moving into this financial year all indications were that we would perform in line with budget for the first 8 months of that period, during which we completed repayments for the loan from the Football Association taken out in 2010.

From March onwards the effect of covid-19 has of course completely disrupted our income streams. With the cessation of all football all discipline income stopped immediately; furthermore, all coaching course income also stopped at that point. Our only remaining regular income source was rent from the flats and FA Grants. This caused a massive drop in our monthly income and consequently we have taken advantage of the Government Furlough scheme and 8 members of staff have been furloughed, with 80% of their salaries claimed back.

The covid-19 shutdown caused severe disruption to the FA revenue streams and in June we were informed (along with all other county FAs) we would receive a 14.4% reduction in their core funding and an overall 24% funding cut, effective from the start of the new financial year starting 1st July 2020. This will obviously have a severe effect on our finances, not least with our other revenue sources, discipline and coach education, suspended. A review of the budget is being undertaken and all areas of our business will be reviewed.

We did apply to Mendip District Council for rate relief on the county office based on the fact that we are a leisure business, however we were turned down as the office has no leisure facility as such on the premises, this in spite that several other county FAs across the country who are in a similar situation to us receiving relief from their local authority.



Given the covid-19 shutdown the Board decided that affiliation would be free for all clubs and leagues for the 2020-21 season, subsequent to this we have received an FA grant to help with this cost. This would also include cup entry fees for the coming season.

Staff

Following the announcement by the Prime Minister on the evening of 16th March requesting that businesses work from home wherever possible all staff begun to do so from following day. At time of writing staff have not yet returned to the office and we are now in our 20th week out of office. From the start of April 8 members of staff were placed on furlough, we will begin to bring people back from the start of August on a part time basis as allowed by the scheme. When staff will return to work, they will continue to work from home with no return to the office imminent. We have undertaken a risk assessment to mitigate the office for a safe return for staff and will action when we need to return to the office.

Last September saw Shaun Eigelaar leave his position of Governance Administrator after almost 10 years with us, we wish him well in his new career. His replacement in the office is Martin Peters, who will be known to many of you as a referee. At the end of February our County Development Manager Brendan Dix started a 12-month secondment with the Football Foundation as Regional Facilities Manager for the SW, we wish him well in the role which will give him numerous skills that will benefit us when he returns in early 2021. To cover Brendan's absence our Youth Football Development Officer Rob Allan was promoted to acting CDM for the coming year; to backfill the CDM role Lewis Morgan was successful at interview (literally days before the office closed) and will fill the role until 2021. Suffice to say both Rob and Lewis have started their roles in the strangest conditions that they could not possibly foresee – Lewis has yet to work in the office and has only met his employees virtually on line

Safeguarding

The FA safeguarding Operating Standard continues for all counties, this year however the FA changed the criteria so that the assessment period would be over two year rather than one, with 2/3 of county FA being assessed in 2019, commencing in January, and the remainder, along with any county FA "scrapping through" 2019, being assessed (or-reassessed) in 2020. Somerset FA were selected for a 2019 assessment and as one of the earlier counties and underwent our two-day external assessment in February; after that we had a small action plan which were implemented and our re-assessment in late March (online after lockdown) saw us achieve the standard.

In spite of lockdown safeguarding obviously remains our priority and while there was a significant drop in incidents during lockdown we have still had incidents reported. Initially during lockdown DBS applications were stopped and no new DBS checks could be undertaken. People whose DBS expired between March and October have been granted a 1-year extension and at time of writing the BDS application process has been reopened

County Strategy

We were on course to deliver Against most targets in the second year of the county strategy, obviously the advent of covid-19 stopped progress in the last 4 months of the year to achieve this. Before this there were encouraging signs regarding the number of adult male 11v11, after many years of decline recent years has seen some plateauing if figures and this year we saw a small rise for the first time in a number of years. Obviously, we don't know if this is a one off or the start of a trend, or indeed what effect covid-19 will have on numbers

Going forward we are about to enter the final year of the strategy; planning for this was nearly impossible as many of the staff were on furlough and we were planning for a season we didn't know if and when it would start. This was impacted by the news of the funding cuts to all county FA. In light of this the FA will be reviewing our targets for the coming year and targets will invariably be adjusted down to reflect the affects of covid-19.

Whole Game System & IT

The FA are developing the Platform for Football (PFF) to succeed WGS, the early parts of this have already been rolled out and more will follow over the coming year, largely modularly to avoid any disruption to the end users.

We have continued to use social media to augment the county website, we achieved 10,000 followers on Twitter this year. These have proved invaluable in maintain communication with our customers during lockdown.

In autumn last year all county FA received a Microsoft upgrade, among this was the addition of Teams; this function could not have been better timed and it safe to say that without it, it is difficult to imagine how we would have continued to function during lockdown. Lockdown has also seen us use numerous on line conference platforms, and this has allowed the board to meet regularly, hold forums for clubs and leagues and meet as a work team.

Once again the County handbook was produced in an App format, as well as the online version.

Representative teams

This season we fielded teams at Boys under 16 and Women’s Open age groups, both in the South West Counties Championship; for the first time in many years we did not have a Boys under 18 teams. Both teams entered the South & West Counties Championship Competition

Women

The women’s competition saw one group of four teams, ourselves-, Gloucestershire Devon and Dorset, with each team due to play each other once. Somerset started with a comprehensive 8-1 victory over Devon before travelling to play Gloucestershire who had alos beat Devon. A close match saw Somerset win by 1-0, meaning that their destiny with in their own hands with the final game against Dorset to come. Unfortunately, Dorset withdrew before playing a game and Somerset were left as winners of the competition. Although achieved in a way they didn’t want congratulations to the players and management team lead excellently by Neil Hayward

Results

Somerset 8 v Devon 1

Gloucestershire 0 v Somerset 1

Final Table

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1	Somerset	2	2	0	0	8	6
2	Gloucestershire	2	1	0	1	3	3
3	Devon	2	0	0	2	-11	0
Withdrew	Dorset	0	0	0	0	0	0



Above: Somerset Women’s Representative Team and managers, having won the annual tournament at Gloucestershire FA

Boys Under 16

The boys under 16 were drawn in one group of six, where they were joined by Berks & Bucks, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Gloucestershire, again with every team playing each other once. After opening with a fine 5-0 at Devon and a draw at Berks & Bucks had led to the possibility of winning the competition, however a defeat at Gloucestershire meant even a 2-1 win over Devon along with results in other games made that impossible, even before our final game against Cornwall. The possibility of 2nd place remained with a victory, but the Cornwall game was scheduled for the week that lockdown started and after its inevitable postponement the whole competition was subsequently cancelled and declared null and void

Results

Somerset 5 v Dorset 0
Berks & Bucks 0 v Somerset 0
Somerset 0 v Gloucestershire 2
Somerset 2 v Devon 1



Right: Somerset U16s ahead of their inaugural fixture against Dorset, winning 5-0

Table (at time of cancellation of competition)

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1	Berks & Bucks	4	3	1	0	11	10
2	Cornwall	3	3	0	0	5	9
3	Somerset	4	2	1	1	4	7
4	Gloucestershire	4	1	1	2	-2	4
5	Dorset	4	0	1	3	-15	1
6	Devon	3	0	0	3	-3	0

County Cups

As a result of Covid-19 all county cups were suspended in March, at that point the various competitions had all reached different stages with some not even at the quarter final stage while four had both finalists decided. While the option existed for the competitions to be held over and completed when football resumed the Board felt that the simplest solution given the uncertain future at the time and indeed to some extent now) was to cancel all of the competitions and declare them null and void for the season. This decision was not made lightly, the Board were sympathetic to all of those teams who had fought through to the latter stages, especially this who had reached the final, along with match officials who had been appointed based on their performance during the season, however they believed this to be the best solution. The record books for all competitions will show 2020 listed as "No competition".

The intention was to play county cups in the 2020-21 season, however there is still much uncertainty as we approach the coming season. To help clubs recover from lockdown the best solution will be for them to play regular matches which is best done through their leagues, while those leagues face the prospect of disruption from possible future lockdowns, the county cups at all levels would likely be a hindrance to these aims. Therefore, the Cups Committee have decided that the Premier Cup will be cancelled this season, the late start to the National League System and consequent lack of midweek fixture dates make the playing of this competition impossible. The other county cups will be postponed, allowing league fixtures to take place for the first half of the season, if this sees leagues nearing completion early in 2021 the cups committee will review if some of the cup competitions can be played over the concluding weeks of the season.

Equality

After much hard work, the County achieved a renewal of the Equality Standard Foundation level, congratulations to all those who have worked to achieve this, not least Rachael Lawler-Edwards our Equality Development Officer. Renewing the foundation level confirms our commitment to equality, and we had started working on achieving the next level, Preliminary, when covid-19 struck. This will be one of our priorities when we get back to working as "normal".

The IAG has met throughout the season; several new members were identified and attended a meeting just before lockdown; again covid-19 has very much stopped the progress here but again we will reconvene. The Black Lives Matter protests over spring and early summer demonstrate that this remains an area with much still to do.

Jon Pike

Chief Executive

