



NORFOLK COUNTY FA ANNUAL REPORT

2021-22

NORFOLK FOOTBALL - A STRATEGY FOR EVERYONE

ANNUAL REPORT

Chairman's Review

Good evening and welcome to our AGM

I would like to start off this year's Chairs annual report with thanking you all for overseeing a complete year of football. I know you will probably say a few games were cancelled through Covid or weather, but overall, you have succeeded in managing the season as only you as leagues can do. Thank you.

Another busy year for Norfolk FA with Matt Carpenter being appointed in August as our new CEO, my third CEO to work alongside. Matt had some big shoes to follow, but he is finding his feet within the role and although he loves a good terms of reference, I think overall he has done an excellent job, my only frustration with him is the silly hours he works, but I should be used to that by now as with Shaun and Gavin it seems to come with the role. Well done Matt for nearly completing your first year, appraisal to come next month!

As always within my annual report, this being my ninth, it gives me opportunities to thank numerous people, people who you might not have met, but are working tirelessly behind the scenes to keep football moving forward in Norfolk.



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Firstly, I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their continued support and voluntary time given to myself and Matt. John Turner, Matt Wells, Paul Marshall, Di Cunningham, Ben Casey, Joe Conway and Paul Ballard. I would like to welcome our newest Independent Director for Sustainability, Stacey Annison, who you may well remember worked for Norfolk FA over four years ago.

I would like to put on record my thanks to Ben Casey who has decided to stand down as a director and member of Council. Ben has worked tirelessly for Norfolk FA since he joined Council in 2006. 2011 Ben was appointed to the Board as Chair of the Representative Committee. Ben was my Deputy Chair for three years within that time. Many thanks Ben for all the time you have given Norfolk FA from myself, the Board, staff at Norfolk FA and the footballing community within Norfolk, especially Sunday football where your passion has always been in the forefront.

It has been another busy year for the Norfolk FA staff. It wouldn't be correct of me to select individuals out, but what the heck, I am going to. Special thanks go to:

Kate Dixon, (Operations Manager) having to not only put up with me but now having to put up with Matt.

Michelle Stewart, (FDC Manager) for the relentless hours she does and her commitment to the centre, another member of the FDC team, Steven Berry, (Operations Officer) for his organisation of the Women's and Girl's tournament and the following week for FDC Youth Cup. As I said in my speeches at the time, both weekends were so well organised it was a pleasure to be there and witness such great football and talent Norfolk has to look forward to in years to come.



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County Cup finals, this year saw us with two at Carrow Road and seven at the FDC, organised and overseen by clipboard Dan Bird (Football Services Administrator).

Sam Wooldridge (Football Services Apprentice) for his arrangements of the live cup final draws. Harvey Newstead (Referee Development Officer) and Ryan Starkey (Referee Appointment Officer) for liaising with the referees.

My thanks to newly promoted Matt Lemmon (Head of Football Services) who has taken on the role which Matt Carpenter held and Tom Constance (Regulatory Services Manager) for stepping into Matt Lemmon's role. Congratulations to all of them in making the finals successful and as usual making my life easy.

Rebecca Burton (Head of Marketing & Communications) and Bryn Hughes (Marketing & Communications Officer) for all the social media content you will have seen over the year, oh and my ghost writers for the monthly Chair Newsletter. Thank you .

My final thank you to the staff is to Ian Grange (Head of Facilities & Development). Ian has been in his element over the last few months with the development of the centre, especially the Arena pitch and I know all of you who would have seen it will say what a magnificent venue it now is. You will always get the odd person who doesn't approve of a 3G pitch but there aren't many who have played on it or have seen the venue who won't admit it is brilliant. We are certainly making other Counties think about how they move forward.



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Ian has, with his hard hat and yellow hi vis, spent many hours on and above his daily role to get this over the line and I thank him for achieving that. A week later after the Arena pitch was finished, we started converting the 5-side pitches into 7-side and again overseen by Ian.

Matt and I speak most days and whenever the call comes through and he says I have Ian with me, instantly my reply is "NO" wanting me to approve spending more money! Ian hasn't finished yet, so watch this space!

Thanks goes 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 the 2021/22 season and I hope very soon we will have the opportunity to present them with their awards at our Gala dinner.

Thanks must go to Anna Larkins (Football Development Officer) for collating all the nominations and to the panel who sat and judged each category, again not an easy task to take on as there are so many volunteers who are put forward who are worthy of an award and I know there are many more who do not get the opportunity to be nominated, I thank you all.

Commiserations must go to both Norwich City and King's Lynn both having seen relegation. Congratulations to Gorleston and Wroxham for promotion together with all clubs who have achieved promotion and clubs that have won County and League Cup final's.

Recently we have gone through our safeguarding audit. The new FA safeguarding team were the NSPCC. I am so pleased to say we came through with flying colours with no advisory actions and in fact they were so pleased with our safeguarding team led by Matt and our Board Safeguarding Champion Matt Wells they wish us to exchange good practice with other County FA's.

Finally, after many years I am so proud to say we have met the FA Code of Governance, a project we have been working on for a good four years, starting when Gavin was CEO with Matt taking up the reins to finish it. Special thanks must go to John Turner who has not just overseen the article changes in the past years but has been a big part of the working party to get these codes written. We are now the 6th County in England to achieve this and first in the Eastern Region.

Have a great 2022/23 season. Thank you and come on the Lionesses.

Michael Banham
Chairman



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Chief Executive's Review

2022 is the 141st year since the inauguration of Norfolk County FA and this report marks the end of my first season as Chief Executive of the Association. I first started playing football at a time when matches were played in black and white and back then I certainly did not expect that journey to take me to the position I find myself in, but it is an honour to be in front of you all this evening to present a summary of the achievements of the Association over the past twelve months.

We had of course hoped that this evening's AGM would be held face-to-face, but we find ourselves online once again, although this time because of the exceptionally high temperatures rather than Covid.

Much of my first season has been spent building on the great work of my predecessor Gavin Lemmon and finishing things that he started. I well remember the Teams calls when Gavin and Michael shared the news that Gavin would be leaving Norfolk FA to take up the position of Regional Manager at The FA, first to our Senior Leadership Team and then to all staff. Coming out of the pandemic it was news that rocked us, but thanks to the solid foundations that he put in place, together with the undying support of the Board, led by the Chairman, and our fantastic workforce, we have continued to go from strength to strength over what has been another challenging year for us all.



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Two of the most significant activities that were completed this year were the opening of our new Headquarters and the development of Harrod Sport Arena, both representing important milestones in the history of the Association. The majority of our staff are currently working a mix of home-based and office-based shifts, with the Association supporting staff in their individual wishes wherever possible, whilst ensuring the needs of the business are met. Our new HQ is a great working space and as somebody who was previously based at Meridian Way, I can definitely say that being able to end each working day seeing people enjoying themselves playing football serves as a great daily reminder of why we do what we do. It is certainly a much more inspiring sight than just seeing a load of cars in a car park, although I do still get to see that too!

The completion of the project to replace the impressive Field of Dreams with an even more impressive 3G pitch was an enormous undertaking and our thanks go to both the Football Foundation and Norwich City Council for the funding that they provided to turn this dream into a reality. In Ian Grange we are fortunate to have one of the leading facilities experts in the Country working for us and the work that he did in ensuring that the project was delivered in time for the 2022 Cup Final season cannot be overstated. We were also fortunate to have 'scary' Dave as site foreman and his iron rod ensured that the work was completed on time, give or take a week or two, and to a very high standard. The icing on the cake of the new pitch was Harrod Sport agreeing to enter into a new five-year partnership with us, which included naming rights for Harrod Sport Arena and our thanks go to them for their continued support. With the design vision of Rebecca Burton, our Head of Marketing and Communications, the Arena looks amazing and is something that we are very proud of. There will of course always be the odd detractor when it comes to 3G pitches but overall, the feedback has been hugely positive. The Arena will be home to several teams next season, including Norwich CBS, Wymondham Town Women and Costessey Sports, as well providing top class training facilities to plenty of other sides.



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And of course, on top of the Harrod Sport Arena we have also reconfigured our 'pen' pitches, meaning that we now have four seven-a-side pitches and two five-a-side pitches, with all but one of these pitches being re-laid. The expansion of The FDC provides us with a great opportunity and it will see the Centre move to a 7-day a week operation as we provide a fantastic place to play football to thousands of people!

It is not just on the pitch that we have seen changes at The FDC. The redevelopment of the pavilion that took place during lockdown is now reaping its rewards as the Centre becomes a far more attractive place to visit. Centre Manager Michelle Stewart and her team have worked incredibly hard on the services that we provide at the venue and a great example of this is the birthday parties that we host which have been completely revamped and this has proven hugely successful.

Towards the end of the season, The FDC hosted three very successful tournaments. The Harrod Sport Women's & Girls' Cup, The FDC Youth Cup and a Walking Football Tournament. All three events felt like the culmination of all the work that had gone into getting the Centre to where it is now, and the feedback received has been overwhelmingly positive.

Turning my attention to our other facilities, the resignation of Elliot Pride saw Fionn Goodwin-Wright appointed as Satellite FDC Manager, overseeing both the FDC@OpenAcademy and the FDC@Flegg. Flegg continues to present challenges for us, but the benefits of the restructure are already being seen and I am confident that over the coming season the usage of Flegg will increase whilst at Open we are hopeful that work will start on a second seven-a-side pitch allowing us to expand our operation at the site with the existing pitch very close to 100% capacity.

Exciting times ahead!



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Whilst the development of our facilities creates headlines, our top priority continues to be ensuring that safeguarding remains embedded at the heart of everything that we do. This season has seen several enhancements to the work that we do to make #NorfolkFootball a safe and fun environment for all, including:

- Adding Matt Lemmon, Harry Diggins and Kate Dixon to our safeguarding team
- Holding monthly Safeguarding Team meetings
- Introducing the Safe Squad of Leo, Laura and Logan as we provided age specific content in the Cubhouse section of our website
- Revamping our risk assessment process for events that we hold and host
- Introducing 'Talk to us', a new and simple to use online reporting tool

**Talk
to
us!**

The above is on top of continuing all the good work that we did previously, including unannounced safeguarding visits, with 15 Clubs being seen face-to-face this season, as well as receiving a desktop review of their social media presence. These visits are well appreciated by Clubs and provide us with the opportunity to see first-hand the great work going on at our Clubs to keep young people safe.

On 29th June, we were assessed by the NSPCC and I am delighted to be able to say that we successfully met all six areas of the Safeguarding365 standard, with each of the 78 measures across those six standards being achieved which is appropriate recognition of all the hard work that we undertake in this area.

We will not be resting on our laurels though and we are considering how we can improve things even further next season, which will include signing up to The FA's shared safeguarding service which will help with the administration of DBS checks and club visits.



The Safe Squad



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On the pitch, our two professional clubs both suffered relegations with Norwich City continuing the yo-yoing of recent seasons with a return to the *Championship*, whilst King's Lynn Town finished 12 points from safety in the *National League* meaning that they will be in the *National League North* for the 2022/23 season. Hopefully both clubs can bounce back from disappointing seasons.

The picture locally is much more positive. In the higher echelons of the male game, Dereham Town maintained their status at Step 4, although they will be in a new division next season having been moved to the *Pitching In Northern Premier League – Midlands division*. Joining them at Step 4 will be Gorleston and Wroxham who were winners and runners-up respectively in the *Thurlow Nunn League Premier Division*. The top four places in the *Thurlow Nunn First Division North* were all occupied by Norfolk teams, with Sheringham claiming the title and Harleston Town also earning promotion via the play offs. The *Anglian Combination Premier Division* title was won by Heacham and it is great to see them take up the challenge of Thurlow Nunn football next season.

Meanwhile the female game in Norfolk continues to go from strength to strength. A string of positive results towards the end of the season saw Norwich City maintain their place in *The FA Women's National League Division One South East* and for the first time ever we will have two teams playing at that level as Wymondham Town earned promotion following a tremendous campaign that saw them complete a treble of league, league cup and County Cup. After a good season in the *Norfolk Women's & Girls League*, Fakenham Town will be taking the step up to the *Eastern Regions Women's League* next season meaning we will have five teams competing in regional football.

Congratulations to all those teams and all the other sides who won leagues and league cups in 2021/22.



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Our County Cups proved a great success this season. With the Intermediate Cup taking place for the first time, we enjoyed 11 hugely successful finals. Unfortunately, we were only able to host two games at Carrow Road, but with around 2,000 people in attendance both evenings were memorable occasions and hopefully they might prove the catalyst to getting the Junior Cup and Sunday Senior Cup back to Carrow Road next season. The other matches were all played on Harrod Sport Arena and our congratulations go to all the winners. My personal highlight was the very last game, the Under 12's final, which was a tremendous game of football between two evenly matched teams that could only be separated by a dramatic penalty shoot-out. The tears of the runners-up were quickly wiped away as both teams celebrated the part that they had played in the match.

There are of course three teams in every cup final and my congratulations go to the 44 match officials who were rewarded with a well-deserved County Cup Final appointment this season. The Referee Committee made a conscious effort to ensure that the appointments were shared amongst those who had earned promotion as well as those who were not on the promotion pathway but were worthy of appointment and this shift in policy was well received by the refereeing community.



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Continuing on the theme of refereeing, 2021/22 saw a new look refereeing team at Norfolk FA. Harvey Newstead took up post of Referee Development Officer, with David Robinson taking early retirement. David didn't leave us entirely though as he continued as part-time Appointments Officer (Sunday) and Ryan Starkey joined the team as part-time Appointments Officer (Saturday). This proved to be a winning combination as our refereeing numbers for the season were outstanding. Against a target of 90% our Saturday coverage was 93.5% whilst on Sunday, it was a near perfect 99.4%.

Any concerns that we may have had regarding refereeing numbers following the pandemic were blown away, as we recruited an amazing 145 new match officials, against a target of 82, converting 79 of those by the end of the season. On top of that we retained 272 of our existing officials and 30 officials were promoted, performing well above the Key Performance Indicator targets set by The FA.

A large number of our Match Officials earned promotion this season and my congratulations go to:

Alex Melton, Alex Vasey, Alex Passmore, Craig Ellis, James Barber, James Newman, Kevin Wingfield, Mark Shepstone, Paul Cracknell, Paul Elliott, Stephen Ramsdale, Tim Goble and Vincent Were, who all achieved promotion to Level 6.

Promoted from Level 6 to 5 were Auberon Limmer, Jamie Brett, Leon Howard, Morgan Rusted and Scott Hawkins

No fewer than 7 candidates will be operating at Level 4 next season, subject to passing a fitness test, namely Rob Bunting, Lorraine Catchpole, Chris Fuller, Stuart Jessop, James Ludlam, James Sneddon and Adrian Summons

Pleasingly we also have three referees moving from Level 4 to Level 3, Ben Green, Dario Matthewson and Ashley Tyne. Two others earning promotion are Ryan Starkey, who moves up to Level 3W on the female pathway and Ryan Head who is promoted to Level 3E (Step 1 AR).

It is fantastic to see so many of our match officials achieving success. 2022/23 sees a significant change to the way that referee promotion is achieved, and we will see over the coming campaign what this means to us, but it is likely that the numbers of promotion candidates will increase.

2021/22 also saw the introduction of REG, our Referee Engagement Group. The group consisted of representatives of the Young Referees Group, the Referees Association, and the Assessors Association as well as volunteer referees at various levels of the game. After finding its feet REG proved to be a great success, with some of the outcomes of meetings directly influencing the work of the refereeing department and this could prove to be a model that is adopted for other areas of the business in the future.

Turning my attention to discipline, our Regulatory Services Team, led by the Regulatory Services Manager and supported by the Head of Football Services, has once again been kept very busy by disciplinary offences.



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6,242 cautions were recorded in the 2021/22 season and whilst normally we would compare this to the previous season, Covid means that doing so would provide little value, but this does represent a drop of around 6% compared to the 2018/19 season which was the last full season played. Comparing against the same season, standard charges (red card offences) have also dropped, this time by a significant 27% to 502.

211 misconduct charges were raised, with 11 them being for aggravated offences. Sadly, there were five instances of physical contact on a match official and one assault. We continue to work hard to try and eradicate discrimination in all forms and abusive and violent offences against match officials. Compared to the 2018/19 season misconduct cases have almost halved in number which is a pleasing trend although the majority of this can be accounted for by less Respect charges which is good, although anecdotally Match officials are suggesting behaviour isn't improving that much.

There were 81 disciplinary hearings in season 2021/22, with 56 being commissions held by ourselves and the other 25 being heard by The FA due to the nature of the offence. Across the 56 cases we dealt with directly, five were personal hearings, with three of those being proven. There were five verbal pleas, 177 correspondence cases, of which 173 were proven five wrongful dismissal cases, two of which were upheld and the third dismissed.

Of the cases heard by The FA, two were personal hearings, with one being proven and one not and there were 24 correspondence cases, of which 23 were found proven.

Next season we will be joining The FA Regional Disciplinary Panel meaning that our representatives will hear cases from other counties and conversely, we will have access to panel members from other counties to hear our cases which should help improve the transparency and consistency of how we handle disciplinary matters even further.

Once again, the Regulatory Services team also processed player registrations on behalf of all our sanctioned leagues and unfortunately a significant number of IT issues made this a far more difficult task than it should have been, causing major disruption to a number of our Leagues. We are hopeful that the problems have all been resolved and certainly registrations for the 2022/23 season have got off to a more promising start.



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Whilst the Regulatory Services team have responsibility for governing the game, our Football Development Team, led by the Football Development Manager have a primary focus of growing the game and developing everyone involved in local football, and they have achieved great success this season. From an FA perspective much of the success of the Football Development team is judged by measuring KPI's and every single one of the primary KPI's has been met, with all bar one seeing significant over-achievement.

Football Development is about much more than just KPI's though and the team have excelled in so many areas, including, but definitely not limited to:

- Enabling three new clubs to obtain England Football Accreditation
- Supporting 26 Weetabix Wildcat Providers
- Helping to ensure that four Squad Girls Providers were established
- Successfully establishing a second Women's Walking Football Centre and delivering a Women's Walking Football festival
- Helping develop coaches with 306 individuals taking part in CPD throughout the year
- Delivering seven Club & League support workshops, with 84 volunteers receiving direct support
- Overseeing an increase in the number of County 5IVES teams at the UEA, including the delivery of three student tournaments recruiting over 60 teams
- Delivering a Platform for Football pilot supported by the Youth Council



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I spoke earlier about the fact that our Regulatory Services team had to issue 11 disciplinary charges in the 2021/22 season for aggravated cases, i.e. those that include an abusive or derogatory comment including one of the protected characteristics. Led by our Football Development Manager, and supported by our Inclusion Strategy Advisory Group, we continue to work hard to make football a safe and inclusive environment for all, ensuring that equality of opportunity is at the core of what we do. This season has seen us:

- Hold four meetings of the ISAG
- Deliver a girl's disability festival
- Deliver a black and Asian festival
- Produce an updated equality monitoring report
- Hold a disability forum
- Support the Rainbow Laces campaign

To enable us to further enhance the work that we do in this area, we have recruited a new Football Development Officer (Disability) who will be joining us on 1st August.



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I mentioned earlier that we are fortunate to have Ian Grange as our Head of Facilities & Development and he hasn't just spent his time improving the facilities that we run, he has also secured a total facility investment of £2,242,005 across the breadth and depth of the County, including:

- Hethersett Parish Council - £776,326
- Football Foundation Small Grants - £295,224
- Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund - £189,400
- Football Stadia Improvement Fund - £10,015

With significant additional funding being provided to the Football Foundation this is an area of the business that will see even more activity next season. Everything that I have spoken about so far is underpinned by our financial position and the strength of our Governance. As at the end of May 2022, The FDC's and our County 5IVES programme accounted for almost 50% of our total income and the plan is to increase that in the coming years as we look to reduce our reliance on funding from The FA. We are on a sound financial footing as we continue to invest in all aspects of #NorfolkFootball.

We have also been working hard on improving our Governance over the past 12 months. We have added a new Director to the Board, Stacey Annison, who is our Independent Director (Sustainability) and have plans for further recruitment. We are also working hard to ensure that our Board is reflective of the #NorfolkFootball community and as such we are committed to:

Increasing gender diversity on the Board. The female membership of our Board is currently 20%. We are committed to aim to increase that to 30% by the end of 2022.

Increasing ethnic diversity on the Board. Our current Board does not have anybody on it who is from a minority ethnic background. We are aiming to rectify this by targeting for at least 10% of the Board to be from a minority ethnic background by the end of 2022.

The ultimate aim for any County FA is to reach the FA's Code of Governance standard and as the Chairman said, we are delighted to have recently achieved this, becoming only the sixth county in the country to do so.



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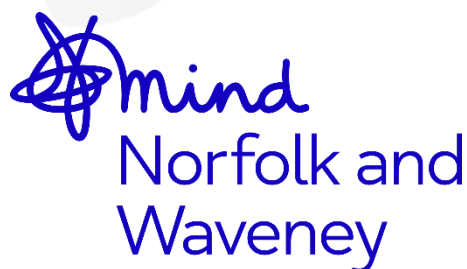
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Of course, it would not be possible to achieve what we do without the help of others, and our partners are all incredibly important to us and my sincere thanks go to them all. Despite the disruptions caused to local football, all our partners have supported us and continue to do so, leaving us in a good position for the 2022/23 season, although we continue to look for other companies that we can work with to complement those who already help us achieve our aims.



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Our partners aren't the only people that deserve to be thanked though! I'll come back to our Board and staff shortly, but I will start with 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. One of my first tasks as CEO was to host our annual awards dinner along with Harry Diggins, the Ant and Dec of #NorfolkFootball as we are now known, and it was a very successful evening. It was an occasion when we got to recognise several of our volunteers, either as award winners or for their incredible long service to the game.

That event will be repeated later this year for the 2021/22 winners, the names of whom you can see below:

- Club of the Year – Martham FC
- Coach of the Year (Youth Teams) – Chelsea Brister
 - Highly commended: Karl Barnard
- Coach of the Year (Adult Teams) – Neil Jarvis
- Grounds Team of the Year – Peter Goodfellow & David Todd
 - Highly commended: Richard Brandowski
- League of the Year – Norfolk & Suffolk Youth League
 - Highly commended: Norfolk Combined Youth League & North West Norfolk League
- Match Official of the Year – Rob Bunting
- Project of the Year – New Routes
- Rising Star of the Year – Francesca Catchpole
- Volunteer of the Year – Tanya Pitt
 - Highly commended: Gary Howes
- Spirit of Grassroots Football Award – Gabby Evbota
 - Highly commended: Costessey Sports FC

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 in September.



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As my first year as CEO draws to a conclusion, I would like to thank the Board for their amazing support and especially our Chairman Michael Banham, who is always on hand to provide advice and guidance whenever it is needed, despite having his own successful business to run. And we must not forget that all our Board members are also volunteers, who provide their services free of charge. So, thank you all. We are also bidding a sad farewell to Ben Casey this evening as he steps away from the role of Independent Non-Executive Director (Adult Football) and my personal thanks go to Ben for the support he has given me over the years, even if his horse racing tips leave plenty to be desired!

And finally, I thank our staff, who have made my transition from Head of Football Services to CEO as smooth and painless as it could possibly be. The support that I have received from each and every one of them has been overwhelming and something that I will be forever grateful for. I'm extremely proud of our workforce, who face challenge after challenge with the same incredible levels of energy and commitment as they provide amazing dedication to #NorfolkFootball, often going above and beyond. During the course of the 2021/22 season, we established a new staff wellbeing group whose sole focus is ensuring that we do all we can to support our staff as without them we could not function. Thanks everyone!

As I draw to a conclusion, I am excited by the opportunities that the next twelve months will provide us. No doubt there will be challenges along the way, but if we all continue to pull together for the good of #NorfolkFootball I am confident that the 2022/23 season will be another successful twelve months for us all.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve Norfolk FA for the past 13 years and especially in this last year as Chief Executive. Local football has been my passion all my life and I am proud of what we have been able to achieve this season and I look forward to embracing the opportunities that we have to continue to grow and develop the game we all love.

Thank you.

Matt Carpenter
Chief Executive

Presented at the Annual General Meeting, Tuesday 19 July 2022



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