



*"Football for Everyone  
Everyone for Football"*



# SOMERSET FA ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

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## Chairman's Report

While not without some disruption, it has been a welcome relief to us all to get back to playing a full season of football. Our thanks and congratulations go out to all those club and league officials – the vast majority of whom are volunteers - who have stuck with it and provided all the support needed to get players of all abilities out on the grass again.

Congratulations to all our clubs who won leagues, cups and promotions. Too many to list, but special mention must go to Taunton Town, who next season will play in National League South for the first time in their history. Commiserations of course to those less successful teams, but there is always next season to come back stronger and the most important thing is to get out there, play and enjoy.

Off the pitch, we have moved forward with our Governance changes. The new articles, which take effect from this summer's AGM, were passed by the EGM back in February. That gave us the authority to recruit new independent directors and I am delighted to welcome Danni Laing (HR), Richie Horton (Finance) and Kim Johnson (Marketing); those may be their respective main responsibilities, but they are already making wider contributions to the running of your County FA.

I cannot mention Board changes without thanking two directors who have stood down. Dean Waghorn became a director in 2019, taking the lead on Health & Safety; we wish Dean well in his increasingly busy professional life. Bob Hemburrow was one of the founding directors in 1999. Since then he has taken the lead on Finance, HR, Development and Rep Football as well as contributing to most other aspects of football in the county. His experience and wisdom will be hard to replace. On a personal note, Bob was one of those who made me so welcome when I first joined Somerset FA and I like to think has been a firm friend and colleague ever since. Bob will remain on Council so his input will not be lost, but our best wishes go to Bob and Norma as he takes a well-earned step back. Francis Hillier also stands down as a director, but will continue as President, an office he has held since 1997.

We have also had changes in staff. Brendan Dix was able to follow up a year-long secondment to the Football Foundation with a permanent appointment to a similar role with them. Brendan was one of our longest-serving members of staff; in his new role we will still see a lot of him and look forward to continuing to work together to improve facilities throughout the county. He is succeeded as Football Development Manager by Rob Allan, who is relishing the opportunity. That created a further vacancy, resulting in Bex Snelling being recruited as our new Football Development Officer - Clubs and Leagues. In that role she will no doubt soon make herself known to many of you.

Many areas of football saw growth as we came back from lockdowns and restrictions. The only area which did not was Disability, but we know the ambition is there and champing at the bit, so we hope to see that recover next season as we all get more comfortable with the 'new normal'. Football is a game for all; we are doing all we can to maintain that growth and to help in these times when one crisis looks likely to be replaced by new cost-of-living challenges for many. We are holding affiliation fees at pre-pandemic levels; we are continuing to subsidise the vital insurance cover; we are offering more small club grants; we have re-titled the Benevolent Fund as the Hardship Fund, enabling us to widen the areas of financial support offered, not just to injured players. The money into the fund is mainly derived from the 5% of discipline income we assign to it. Discipline has seen a significant increase this season, and while the extra income is useful, the overall decline in behaviour is most certainly not. This is a national problem – not specific to Somerset, not specific to our sport. But if we are to continue to attract and retain players, coaches, referees and all the volunteers who go to make up successful clubs and leagues, that behaviour has to improve. Wouldn't it be wonderful if Somerset could be one of the first places to see an outbreak of better behaviour! We expect the Respect campaign to be relaunched and refreshed, but don't wait for that – next time a decision, a bounce or a tackle does not go your way, count to five and think how much more enjoyable the game will be without that less pleasant side to it.

There is so much still to do in the season ahead. Our governance reforms have to be finalised and bedded in. Our IAG (Inclusion Advisory Group) are expanding their activities to make our game more inclusive – but need your help. We need to keep safeguarding at the forefront of everything we do, and ensure all qualifications are kept up to date. We are still looking to develop Somerset FA-run sites as part of the ever-improving facilities to play football. We will be doing whatever we can to

ensure football continues to recover from the impact of the pandemic and becomes an increasingly enjoyable, safe and welcoming sport for all who want to take part – be that playing, coaching, refereeing, watching or supporting in any way.

**Phil Chaplin**  
**Chairman**



## Chief Executive's Report

After the curtailment of the season in 2019-20 and further disruption to the 2020-21 season when again many leagues were unable to complete their seasons, 2021-22 saw a return to some degree of normality. While there was still disruption to from Covid, Somerset saw some of the highest rates of Covid in early 2022, all leagues managed to complete their respective competitions in 2022, the first time in three years for some.

While there were no lockdowns this season there were still a number of postponements due to covid, with each league and competitions dealing with these specific to their leagues. In spite of this, leagues were completed in good time, doubtless helped by a mild winter that resulted in comparatively few cancellations.

In spite of the problems of the last two years, we retain roughly the same number of teams and clubs, this is in large part to everyone in the game be they league management committees, club officials, players or referees, the vast majority of who are volunteers, who have kept the game going over the last two years; it goes without saying that they have our grateful thanks for their efforts.

From last summer as restrictions were lifted staff returned to working in the county office on a more regular basis although not at levels pre-pandemic; this saw up to half a dozen staff in the office at any one time, this resulted in staff spending approx. half their week in the office with the remainder working from home. This was curtailed when government advice before Christmas was to work from home if possible as a result of rising Covid cases then the county office was again closed with staff working from home. Since the easing and then lifting of restrictions, staff numbers in the office at any one time has been low, the cases number in Somerset was higher than most areas of the country. As we approach the summer months staff are returning to the office, but as mentioned above, the new "normal" will not be like that which existed pre March 2020; staff will work from home for part of their working week from now and attendance in the office all the time is invariably something of the past. Up until now, home working has been ad-hoc in relation to circumstances, our task moving forward is to draw up a more formal procedure to integrate this working practice into our procedures

Affiliation fees will be in place for the coming season; they remain at the same rate as for the last "normal" season in 2021-20 (which then had seen only one rise in over a decade). For season 2023-24 a new Affiliation system will be introduced nationally by the FA, this will invariably see some change although we cannot predict what will look like at this time. The board of directors have again decided to subsidise all Personal accident policies taken out by clubs through the National Game Insurance Scheme (NGIS) with Bluefin, this will see each adult and youth team subsidised by £25 and £4 respectively; overall this will be a financial commitment of nearly £19,000 into grass roots football.

## Company

The process of reviewing and amending our corporate governance structure is nearing completion. After many years hard work, begun by a review group, delayed by the pandemic and incorporating elements of the FA Code of Governance, new Articles of Association were presented to the membership at a EGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, the articles were passed and will become effective as of the Annual General Meeting. While these are not fully compliant with the FA Code, we have not incorporated term limits for other directors or council, we will be in line with the vast majority of it. There is some work to do in amending membership rules and standing orders for meetings, both of which will be confirmed at the AGM, and some paperwork, but we find ourselves near the end of this process. Thanks should be recorded to all those who have helped in this process, not least the working group who took up this challenge initially over three years ago.



As a result of the new articles there will be changes apparent at this year's AGM. We will as normal elect a President, but that office will no longer confer the position of Director on the incumbent, although the President will be able to attend board meetings as an observer. We will not be electing a Chair or Deputy Chair at the AGM as they will now be elected by the Board from their membership. Board will now have a minimum of 1/3 independent and 1/3 council elected directors; furthermore, we will aim to have at least 1/3 of directors female and 1/3 male. There will also be a change to the make up of council with it now being constituted of up to 15 Life Members, League Representatives and Football Community representatives.

No nominations have been received for the post of President aside from the incumbent, Francis Hillier, consequently he will be returned unopposed at the AGM; as a result of the article changes that post no longer makes the incumbent a director, although the resident may attend Board meetings as an observer.

There are no new nominations for Vice President at the forthcoming AGM.

As a result of the Article Changes, this year's AGM will not vote for the Position of Chair or Deputy Chair, those positions are now elected by the Board of Directors from their number. Phil Chaplin and David Braithwaite are the current Chair and Deputy Chair respectively

Phil Chaplin will continue to serve as the Associations representative on the Council of the Football Association.

The past 12 months has seen the biggest change to membership of Board members since incorporation in 1999.

In last year's report I advised you that we were searching for a new Board Safeguarding Champion, Richard Swaine applied from council and was appointed in August 2021, succeeding Bob Fox; as a schoolteacher his professional skills will doubtless be of great benefit to us going forward in this role.

In autumn of 2021 the FA advised us that they were one of three national governing bodies involved in a pilot scheme run by Sport England; this would see an external company Perret Laver assist County FA recruit independent Directors, with particular emphasis on increasing diversity of boards and recruiting from underrepresented groups. Somerset FA were one of six county FA's to sign UP. We commenced the process in November 2022, looking to recruit a HR and a finance director. Following the process, we were supplied a high quality list of applicants from Perret Laver. In line with the new articles, we formed a nomination committee, this consisted of two of our current independent directors and we enlisted an independent member, Sue Henson-Greene from the Gloucestershire FA, who both shortlisted and interviewed between February and March. As a result of this process the nomination committee recommended Richie Horton as Finance Director and Danni Laing as HR director; both were co-opted by the board in April until the AGM, when there will be a vote to formally adopt them at directors.

This process also identified a third candidate, Kim Johnson, who the nominations committee felt would be a significant asset to the SFA board going forward; with marketing skills the Board decided that they would recommend at the AGM that she be co-opted onto the board as Marketing director at the AGM.

This process was highly beneficial to us as we have recruited independent directors, an aspiration for us, who bring high quality skill sets to our board; we have also increased the gender diversity of the board and will meet the aspiration regarding male/female makeup of the board, which also gained new learning that we can take forward for future recruitment. We would also like to record our thanks to Sue Henson- green who did a wonderfully diligent job and brought great experience and impartiality to the role

In May Dean Waghorn tendered his resignation as a director, Dean has been a director for just over 5 years coming from council as part of shadowing scheme. Work/life pressures meant Dean dd not feel he could dedicate the time to the role, causing him to stand down; we would like to record our thanks to Dean for all of his hard work both as a director and councillor. With this



vacancy the Board decided to co-opt Kim Johnson as a director from June, again with the FA confirming this appointment formally.

In June Francis Hillier informed us that he would like to stand down as a director; as one of the original director Francis felt that he would like to take a step back, as a man in his tenth decade his dedication and drive to the role of both director and President and indeed to all things Somerset FA, is remarkable so any rest is thoroughly earned. As his role under the current articles, also confers on him the position of a director, the board decided that while they would accept his resignation as a director, they would co-opt him as President to the AGM, where he has indicated he will stand again as President, so we will still retain his knowledge and counsel. The 2022 AGM will see Francis complete a remarkable 50 years on the SFA Council, half of them as President; a record that will not easily be beaten.

Finally, and by no means least, the AGM will see Bob Hemburrow stand down as director. Bob is another of the original directors from incorporation, his portfolio included Finance and HR, both skills he brought with him from his professional career, and also included the Football Development brief, which is an incredibly wide ranging one, ultimately there were few areas of the business from pensions to coaching courses where he has not been involved (for an idea of everything he did, we had to recruit two people to replace him on the board). This has meant his involvement has been immense and we owe him a debt for his work that cannot be repaid. From a personal point of view his help has been invaluable to me and he has always been available for me to talk and debate ideas and issues with and has been of great support over my 17 years at SFA; I know that everyone will join with me in offering him our grateful thanks for everything.

As mentioned in last year's report, the Board decided that there would be no elections to Council for 2021-22, given an EGM which would change the constitution of this body was imminent, the existing council was retained with new nominations permitted if an existing member could not continue. During the season Martin Coles stood down as he felt he did not have sufficient time for the role, our thanks to Martin for his service. Council met in July, October, December, February and March; all of the earlier meetings were held online, while the latter saw a blended meeting with a few councillors attending at CLH while the rest joined virtually.

Under our new Articles the constitution of the council will change for the forthcoming season. One third of the council will consist of Life Members, with a maximum of 15 Life Members allowed. All life members were asked if they wished to be part of council (Active) for the coming season, a total of 11 members have chosen that option, so we will be technically four short of the maximum number. Of those who have elected to be inactive, several former active Life Members have decided to change their status; we would like to record our thanks to all of them for their service over the years.

There are no new Life Members of Council for the forthcoming season.

There are also 15 places available for league representatives, while we have 21 affiliated leagues who are able to nominate, only 15 names were submitted so all nominated members will sit on council for the coming season.

The final constituent of council is from the "Football Community"; these are places for anyone who wishes to be a member of council and we hope that we will receive nominations from all areas of the football community in Somerset. At time of writing the nominations received are being assessed by the nomination committee.

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

The Board of Appeal did not meet in the 2021-22 season.

After a fallow year in 2020-21, the Leagues' Board of Appeal had cause to meet during the season, with five different hearings required, interestingly all of these were in April and early May and related to issues in cup competitions.

The Youth Council completed its ninth season; with the lifting of restrictions physical meetings were held again along with a number of virtual meetings. It is hoped that many the council will return for next season.



We are grateful for the continued support of Melhuish and Saunders and as you will see from the section below regarding County Cups ASGUK have achieved new sponsors for more of our competitions. We have continued our partnership with Veo, the camera was used for all county cup finals and the footage we have is excellent and we hope will be enjoyed by the competing clubs. We have retained our partnership with KoolPak.

There was again no awards evening, we have not held one since 2019. This resulted in two years of award winners who had not received their awards, as a result we took the awards "on the road" visiting clubs and making presentations to the winners at the club venues. The winners of the 2020 awards were made in towards the end of 2021 with the 2020 winners from spring of this year (ad still ongoing at time of writing). The practice of presenting the winners at their club in front of the members who know them best has generally been very well received

### **Wadham School**

For several years we have been exploring the possibility of partnering with Wadham School in Crewkerne, to deliver a 3g pitch. This work started in late 2019 and we had gathered some pace only to be halted by the pandemic in 2020, however work had resumed, and we were hopeful that we may be nearing starting work. However, we discovered that the land on which the pitch is projected to be is owned not by the school, but Somerset County Council; this meant we had to pause and discuss with SCC as they would have to give permission to proceed. We have met with the council, but process has not been as quick as we had hoped, however the Football Foundation, which backs the project, have completed several desk top surveys of the site that are a pre-requisite of any project commencing. With we hope permission from the council to come soon, we would be able to commence shortly after.

### **Finance**

The accounts circulated for approval at the AGM are for the financial year running to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021; these are the first to be compiled by Old Mill accountants who have taken on the task from Ivan Rendall. This period relates to the 2020-21 season, (July 2020 – June 2021) which encompasses several lockdowns and the general disruption of that period and shows a loss over the period. The full accounts accompany this mail out for your information. As there were also a number of unknowns resulting from Covid we had budgeted to make a loss, as was explained in last year's annual report although the end of year deficit of £14,737 was significantly less than forecast

In terms of reduced income, disciplinary income was down on previous years due to the lockdowns and subsequently a number of leagues not completing their season for the second year running. There was also a significant reduction in coach education income through the partnership with Bridgwater College after courses were taken under the auspices of FA Education; while this was offset by the fees given us by FA Education for learners in Somerset this was nowhere near the shortfall. This year also saw a 14% cut in our FA grant and cuts to other FA revenue streams due to budgetary cutback by the FA as a result of Covid. We had a reduced income from affiliation after reducing or removing affiliation fees for clubs and Referees, although some of this was offset by FA Grants.

There were of course reductions through Covid, once again we had no representative football and with meetings being held online travel costs were reduced; this would be the case both for staff and council travel costs. Further reductions were in cup expenses and award ceremony as neither were held and a reduction in costs associated with staff not working in Charles Lewin House but from home such as stationary and printing and heat and light.

We continued to receive rental income from tenants at the flat at Hobbs House and, so far, 4 of the 5 car parking places in the adjacent car park have been let. In line with good practice we will revalue the property at Hobbs House this coming year as we have not done so for three years.

### **Staff**

Following the changes at the end of last year we have seen further changes in staff over the last 12 months, both in terms of personnel and job roles.



Following the commencement of the new three year strategy we changed the name of the Governance team to Football Services to better reflect that the team don't just deal with discipline but all areas of grass roots football administration. With a new Football Services and Discipline Manager in Megan Buller, Jess Humphry's was moved into the team join Bradley Welch and Martin Peters; the latter was given additional responsibilities as County Cups & Referees Coordinator. This included becoming the County Cup Referees Appointment Officer, this was formally an honorary position, which we brought in house after the retirement of Keith Ingram. At this juncture I should like to record our thanks to Keith for his many years service in the role, Keith continues to officiate and will be known to many of you across the county in that role.

The football development team saw Aaron Clements, Rob Alan and Rachael Lawler-Edwards retitled Football Development Officer Male Participation, Football Development Officer (Clubs & Leagues) and Football Development Officer (Female Participation & Inclusion) respectively to reflect emphasise going into the new strategy.

Following the departure of Conor Ogilvie-Davidson as marketing officer last summer we decided to subcontract the role out to a third party, with ASGUK delivering on our behalf; Paul Coltman has taken up the function on behalf of ASGUK. This role was augmented by two T level students from Weston-super-Mare and Bridgwater and Taunton College joining us for a year for a work placement as part of their course, Noah and Alex have spent the last year carrying out marketing tasks one day a week; I hope they have found the last year helpful to their course and have enjoyed their time with us, we would like to record our thanks for all of their considerable effort over the last 12 months.

In February, Brendan Dix left his role of County Development Manager to take up a position with the Football Foundation. Brendan had been on secondment to the Foundation for a year between 2020-21, when this role was made permanent it was no surprise to see him being snapped up by the foundation. Brendan had been with us for over 15 years, starting as the Football Development Administrator before working his way through the various roles in the department before becoming CDM in 2015. In all of his roles, not last the last where he was a truly outstanding CDM, he has been an exemplary employee, performing to the highest possible standard and he will be greatly missed by us all; doubtless he will be excellent in his new role, which as the regional lead for the SW will see us work closely with him going forward with facilities projects in Somerset.

Rob Allan was appointed to replace Brendan, he continues the policy of promoting from within to this position, indeed Rob had covered the role while Brendan was on secondment, in the most difficult of circumstances starting the secondment two week before lockdown and having nearly all his staff furloughed inside of a month of starting. Hopefully his new tenure will be easier, and he has already made an excellent start; the role has now been retitled Football Development Manager.

To fill the vacancy in Rob's old position of Football Development Officer (Clubs & Leagues) we have appointed Rebecca Snelling; Bex was the outstanding candidate from a high quality interview in February, we are confident she will be a great asset to Somerset FA and wish her a long and successful career with us.

Going forward we will be changing the job profiles of several members of staff after additional funding was granted all county FA to accommodate an expected workload due to increased funding for facilities. This will mean some members of staff who are part time see the hours increased, with this extra capacity we will accommodate facilities support for the FDM into work programmes and move other areas of work between staff; these new responsibilities will be communicated as these changes are finalised over the summer.

### **Safeguarding**

The FA introduced a new Safeguarding Operating Standard, Safeguarding 365 (SG365) for the 2021-22 season. This coincided with new external assessors being appointed by the FA, with the NSPCC CPSU being appointed for the next three years. The new standard was issued in the Autumn with the assessments being from February 2022, this saw a new format with the assessment being carried out over one day as opposed to the previous two. Somerset FA was the third County in the country to be assessed and happily, were signed off with no further action required.



With the lifting of restrictions, safeguarding validation visits were again carried out physically instead of the desk top reviews of the previous year although these were now augmented by a virtual meeting to review of club's online presence.

Following a recommendation in the Sheldon Report, the FA held its Play Safe weekend in November 2021, this saw a number of activities across the grass roots game. This will be an annual event and this year's Play Safe weekend taking place on 17th and 18th September 2022. This year's focus is on positively influencing parents/carers about the safeguarding role they can play.

### **County Strategy**

The latest FA National Strategy commenced in July of last year, the three Game year strategy will run until June 2024. Our strategy, "Uniting Somerset Football" will deliver against national targets specific for Somerset. Overall, we have met or exceeded the majority of our KPI's; the exceptions are related to disability football, in this area this reflects a country wide situation where disability football has not returned to the numbers it had pre-pandemic. We are hopeful that we will be able to return to our 2019 level over the coming season.

Concurrent with the business strategy, we have produced a one year operational plan of how this strategy would be delivered, this has been submitted to the FA and should be signed off at the end of the month. Given we are in year two of a three-year strategy there is no dramatic change as we have our overall direction, although we will of course make changes to reflect the additional funding relating to facilities.

### **IT**

Sadly, for the second year running the player registration system was problematic for nearly anyone, apologies to all leagues and clubs who were affected by the numerous problems and resulting delays and thanks for persevering to achieving registration of players; in spite of the chaos the number of players registered was truly remarkable and as a result, football has never had a better idea of how many people are actually playing the game. The Whole game System is defined as a legacy system and is not able to accommodate the demands placed on it at high volume periods such as the summer months when the vast majority of players are registered. The shortcomings of WGS have been recognised by the FA and it is being replaced by a new system, Platform For Football. This is being rolled out incrementally, so that PFF is in use for Referee Registration for example (where it has performed excellently) but not across all areas; at the moment PFF it is not ready for player registration. Consequently, we face the forthcoming registration period again having to use WGS, the FA have been working on WGS to make it more fit for purpose and all county FA have been assured that this season should not see problems as we have faced at the start of the last two (If it is any consolation, we have faced as many problems with WGS at our end and we do fully empathise with the problems you have experienced). In the event that there are problems again this season, we will repeat what we did last year and have staff ready to take your questions as best we can.

In other areas of the business IT s working well; all Education courses now being run centrally through FA education with a large amount, if not all content, delivered online, pleasingly there appears to be few problems with this with learners able to enjoy their learning experience without IT worries.

As mentioned above we continue to work in large part from home and many meetings are scheduled as on line events, Microsoft Teams is the platform we use and it works excellently; we only expect its use to continue to grow as we move forward.

### **Representative teams**

As with the previous season there was no representative football in 2021-22 season. At time of writing the South west Counties Championship, the competition that our teams enter have not yet called an AGM, so we don't know if there is a competition for Our Under 16 Boys and Women's teams to play in, should we wish to resume. Allied to this the FA have stopped the FA County Youth Cup in its current format so the future of representative football is uncertain.



## County Cups

County Cup competitions resumed for season 2021-22, and in line with a decision of the board, entry was be free. This did result in a higher level of entrants, however a number of teams who entered subsequently withdrew from their respective competition before playing, so the numbers of teams who actually played was not significantly different from, 2019-20, the last season that teams entered. Entrance fees for all county cup competitions will be in operation for season 2022-23.

The Cups Committee were wary that there may be further disruption to the season and as the priority was for leagues to resume to give teams regular football the Committee decide to delay the first rounds of the Men's Senior Junior and Intermediate Cups until October, usually the first round of each competition is reserved in September. This allowed leagues to have a good start before losing a weekend to a cup round. This was well received by all leagues and as a result we will repeat the exercise for the coming season.

The county cup finals took place between March and June and were the first most of them were played since 2019 after the curtailment of the 2020 season and no competitions last year. In all seven different venues were used, thanks to all of our host clubs who did a magnificent job in accommodating us.

## County Cup Finals 2021 results

### MENS PREMIER CUP

Yeovil Town 3-0 Bath City @ Yeovil Town FC, 10<sup>th</sup> May

### MENS SENIOR CUP sponsored by Mehuish & Saunders

Wells City Res 3-0 Broad Plain House @ Frome Town FC, 4<sup>th</sup> May

### WOMEN'S SENIOR CUP sponsored by Mehuish & Saunders

Larkhall Athletic 0-2 Bridgwater United @ Shepton Mallet FC, 25<sup>th</sup> March

### MENS JUNIOR CUP sponsored by Mehuish & Saunders

Sporting Weston 2-1 Worle Res @ Shepton Mallet FC, 27<sup>th</sup> April

### WOMEN'S JUNIOR CUP

Bridgwater United U21 3-0 Keynsham Town Res @ Bishop Sutton FC, 30<sup>th</sup> March

### MENS INTERMEDIATE CUP sponsored by Carrier Pigeon

Mells & Vobster 3-1 Staplegrove Res @ Shepton Mallet FC, 12<sup>th</sup> May

### MENS SUNDAY CHALLENGE sponsored by Greensward Sports Consultancy

Ramblers 1-2 West Bower @ Wells City FC, 6<sup>th</sup> April  
(aet 1-1 @ 90 mins)

### LEGENDS LEAGUE

Street 0-1 Midlezoy Rovers @ Street FC, 12<sup>th</sup> June

### BOYS YOUTH SHIELD

Bath City 0-2 Chew Valley @ Brislington FC, 24<sup>th</sup> April

### GIRLS UNDER 16 CUP

Stockwood Wanderers 2-8 Bridgwater United Red @ Brislington FC, 24<sup>th</sup> April

### BOYS UNDER 15 CUP

Whitchurch Sports 2-0 Priory Rangers @ Street FC, 15<sup>th</sup> May

### BOYS LEWIN CUP

Pen Mill Panthers 2-3 Whitchurch Sports @ Street FC, 15<sup>th</sup> May  
(aet 2-2 @ 90 mins)

### GIRLS UNDER 14 CUP

Portishead Town Pumas 0-1 Keynsham Town @ Street FC, 8<sup>th</sup> May

### UNDER 13 CUP

Bath City 4-2 Mangotsfield United @ Street FC, 8<sup>th</sup> May

We would like to record our thanks to our partners for their support of the competitions this season and look forward to working with them again next season. Going forward, it is hoped that titular sponsors will be in place for all county cup competitions for the coming season.

### **Equality**

Assorted last year, we have appointed Lee Ballard, as independent chair of the IAG; this year has seen his first full year and he has provided the direction that was needed, in tandem with the staff lead Rachael Lawler-Edwards. The IAG has met regularly, again online but face to face meetings are scheduled for the coming year. We have been successful in recruiting some new members but would welcome more, so if you are interested in this vital piece of our work, please contact Rachael or myself.

We continue to work towards the Inclusion in Sport, Preliminary Level, we have carried out extensive surveying of our membership to determine how diverse the Somerset football population is; this is a pre-requisite of the standard. While we have been successful in getting most of our football community to respond in sufficient numbers (coaches, referees, administrators, etc.) players have proved to be a harder number to crack to get the numbers required. Once this issue is solved we can move forward and work towards achieving the standard.

**Jon Pike**

**Chief Executive**



### **Football Services & Discipline**

The start of season 2021-22 started with a repeat of previous system issues, this time surrounding Player Registration. This created a lot of work for all the Volunteers in Grassroots Football, which I would like to again pass on my thanks for their patience and understanding. We are hoping for a better start to the 2022-23 season, whereby promoting the use of the specific links to login direct to Player Registrations, rather than accessing this through WGS, which we are hoping will potentially prevent any speed issues. If we encounter issues, we are contacted all the Leagues asking for the League start date, so that we can prioritise their start dates as to which Teams Player Registrations we will action first, but we are hoping that we will not have to do it this season.

The Affiliation Window opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> June, with Clubs having to get this completed by the 30<sup>th</sup> June, which has been communicated out, but highlighting the importance of getting this done, due to the impact that this has on the Leagues completing their affiliations.

The FA are continuing with the Pilot for the Regional Discipline Panels, of which they have now opened this wider for more County FA's to enter into this, at present we are still not entering into this Pilot.

We have had a high number of Misconduct Charges raised this season, this has seen to be the trend Nationally, this has had an impact on the workload in getting these investigated, charged and heard, all being done on a priority basis of Abandoned Matches (which have to heard within 287 days of the fixture), Serious Cases and then County FA Cases. With the Threatening Behaviour towards Match Officials, now being classified as a Serious Case, Somerset FA Discipline Panels are still seeing a high amount of other Misconduct Charges.

We have had 23 Abandoned Matches, of which 16 of these were within Youth Football.

There have been 72 Serious Cases investigated this season, of which 29 were within Youth Football. 33 Cases were found Proven, 7 were Not-Proven, 4 were closed with the Complainant not Pursuing, 14 there was insufficient evidence, 8 were not an aggravated charge, 6 are currently still under investigation, charged or awaiting to be heard.

There have been 5 Red Card Appeals this season, 1 was Upheld and 4 were Dismissed. There have also been 3 Misconduct Charge Result Appeals, which were all dismissed.

	Cautions	Standard	Total Misconduct offences	Threatening Behaviour Towards Match Officials	Physical Contact / Assaults on Match Officials	Matters with the Police	Individual Misconduct	Multiplayer Offences	Respect 6 offences	Respect 10 offences	Respect 15 Offences	Non disciplinary Offences
16/17	7752	719	222	Data available Not	10 Charged 2 not proven 1 ongoing 7 proven	3 2 proven 1 not proven	13	24	116	46	14	140
17/18	7861	717	208	Data available Not	6 charged 2 not proven 2 Proven 2 Ongoing	8 Proven 3 Education 1 Refused Ed 6 not charged 5 ongoing	9	24	121	39	9	254
18/19	7648	758	236	Data available Not	5 Charged 1 Appealed NP 4 Proven 1 to Charge	9 charged 7 Proven 1 Education 1 awaiting FA 2 ongoing	15	23	122	49	7	178
20/21	4142	453	131	Data available Not		0		6	7	0	0	51
21/22	7838	755	297	16 Charged 1 Appealed NP 15 Proven 2 awaiting FA	9 Charged 2 Appealed NP 7 Proven 1 to Charge	15 charged 11 Proven 11 Education 2 awaiting FA 1 ongoing		8	60	8	3	110

7838 Cautions of which 960 were Sin Bin Cautions

127 Club Misconducts Raised

170 Individual Misconducts Raised

105 Misconduct Charges raised were In Youth Football

**Megan Buller**

**Football Services & Discipline Manger**



## Football Development Manager Report

Football Foundation Investment

A new small sided 3G opened at Isle of Wedmore in March 2022 with £140k funding from the Football Foundation.



Park Knowle successfully gained £25k for a changing room development which has now been completed.

The Richard Huish College 3G build is moving slowly due to several factors but they have now had an offer from the foundation pending a successful planning application.

Completed Football Foundation projects have slowed somewhat since COVID with many projects stopping or pausing temporarily. With the increased FA facility funding coming into county FA's shortly the number of projects being delivered over the next three years should increase. Currently the Somerset FA and Football Foundation are in varying stages of discussions with multiple sites and clubs regarding facilities, some of which are shown below:

- Richard Huish College- 3G pitch
- Courtfields School- 3G Pitch
- Backwell School- 3G Pitch
- King Alfreds School- 3G Pitch (no discussion for some time)
- Somerdale Pavilion- 3G Pitch (not being pursued further)
- Portishead Town FC- 3G stadium pitch conversion via Premier League Stadium Fund
- Larkhall FC- 3G stadium pitch conversion via Premier League Stadium Fund
- Lansdown- SFA to take over the running of multi-pitch site from BANES
- Chard Town FC- Stadium relocation
- Weston Mendip FC- New pavilion build
- Nether Stowey FC- New pavilion build
- South Bristol Sports Centre/Manor Farm- Changing block condemned and therefore 12-pitch site largely unused. Issue around ownership of land and a lack of a Playing Pitch Strategy for Bristol makes it extremely difficult to move this forward.

In total 37 clubs/sites have successfully received Football Foundation funding in 2021/22 season to date. A total of £426,673 has been awarded to Somerset FA clubs, the majority of these for small grants under £25k. A large majority of these grants were for goalposts and machinery to support grass pitch maintenance, with 12 clubs entering the Grass Pitch Maintenance Scheme

#### **Wadham School- 3G Pitch**

Our own Wadham School 3G pitch has stalled largely down to the proposed pitch being on Somerset County Council land. With the merger of the other local authorities into one unitary and the councils lack of funding and team to focus on this it's meant we have had many frustrations. We hope this starts to progress in July 2022 as both the school and SFA are still keen.

#### **Somerset FA Funding**

SFA offered two funding pots to clubs in the 21/22 season with the New Team Grants and the Club Maintenance Scheme. Both have been hugely popular and well received by clubs.

The club maintenance scheme has awarded 14 grants to date totalling £4735. This has supported clubs to carry out maintenance or purchase equipment where there is no other funding available through the Football Foundation or other sources. The funds have been used for a range of things such as purchasing line markers, decorating changing rooms and purchasing goal nets. The new team grant has been slightly changed this season to encompass all age ranges. Grants of either £100 or £150 are awarded depending on if the team is part of an existing club or a brand new club altogether. There have been 20 grants awarded totalling £2700 supporting mini, youth, female, adults and veterans teams to get started.

### **New Staff**

A few changes occurred in the development team in the 21/22 season. After many years at the SFA Brendan Dix departed for the Football Foundation in January to be replaced internally by Rob Allan. Rebecca Snelling arrived in April as the FDO (Club & Leagues) and several tweaks were made to roles. The full makeup of the development team is shown below:

- Football Development Manager- Rob Allan
- Football Development Officer (Clubs & Leagues)- Rebecca Snelling
- Football Development Officer (Disability)- Nick Hawkins
- Football Development Officer (Female Participation and Inclusion)- Rachael Lawler-Edwards
- Football Development Officer (Male Participation)- Aaron Clements
- Referee Development Officer- Matt Eva

### **Rob Allan**

#### **Football Development Manger**



## **Football Development - Male Pathway Report**

### **Legends League**

The Legends League has once again been a huge success this season, with over 40 teams taking part in the league, across 5 regional groups and then quarter/semi finals.

The final took place in June between Street FC and Middlezoy Rovers, with Middlezoy running out the county winners, for the second season in a row.

Team entry for the 2022/23 is now open.

### **Walking Football**

This season we had 7 teams taking part in each of our Over 50's and Over 60's Leagues. Following the final round of fixtures in April, Weston FC did the double and won both the Over 50's and Over 60's league.

Team entry for both Walking Football leagues for the 2022/23 season is now open.

Our Friendly Festivals for the 2021/22 season are also now complete, with the final one taking place in April. We had a record 14 teams and over 130 players take part in this one and these festivals are growing season on season.

The friendly festivals are for all those walking football teams/players who just wish to play some friendly games and nothing competitive. The plan is to hold 3 or 4 of these events across each season, to ensure we are providing opportunities for all participants (competitive and non competitive).

### **Charter Standard / England Football Accreditation:**

Big changes have come in this season, with the FA Charter Standard accreditation. In short, it is has changed and rebranded to "England Football Accreditation" so clubs and leagues who were Charter Standard have now become England Accredited Clubs/Leagues. These are based on 1 star, 2 star and 3 star criteria.

Somerset FA and The FA ran a number of workshops and webinars to support existing clubs and leagues to transition into the new framework across the summer.

### **Somerset FA New Team Fund**

This is now the sixth season we have offered a "Somerset FA New Team Fund" to support the creation of new teams. We have recently opened the funding window back up and as always, it has proved very popular.

We have so far awarded 14 applications, with all these teams given £100-150 to support the creation of their new team for the 2022/23 season (Banwell, Stratton Utd, St Crispins, Bristol Spartak, AFC Strode, Huish Tigers, Berrow, Middlezoy Rovers, Hengrove, Westfield, Sporting Weston, Ashcott and Weston Village).

We hope to award even more over the coming weeks before the funding window closes.

### **NEW Somerset FA Small Sided Series**

In partnership with Yeovil Recreation Centre and South Somerset District Council, our FREE 5-a-side football events are back, with the first events taking place back in February 2022. We had run a few events back in early 2020, before the lockdown and they proved a huge success.

These events are ideally aimed at individuals who do not currently play in teams or who don't play football at all, but may fancy getting their mates/work colleagues together and entering a team.

Despite the pandemic, interest from teams has been high, with the next one taking place at the end of July 2022.

### **Somerset FA Awards Roadshow**

With us not being able to hold our annual awards evening back in 2020 and 2021, we came up with the idea of visiting each 2020 and 2021 winner to present their award to them in person, at their club training and/or matches.

This season, each staff member was allocated 5/6 visits and met each winner in their own environment to present/celebrate the awards and the winner's achievements.

The roadshows have been a huge success and it was great for us all to get out to clubs, meet individuals and present their awards.

The plan is to now hopefully hold an awards evening again in late 2022.

### **FA Pokemon Futsal Cup**

Somerset FA hosted a county qualifying round of the FA Pokemon Futsal Cup across February and March 2022, for U10 and U12 male teams in the county.

The qualifying events took place at Bridgwater and Taunton College (Taunton Campus), with Paulton Rovers Development Centre winning the U10's and Saints South West winning the U12's event. Both teams now qualify for the regional event that will be run centrally by The FA in May.

### **Aaron Clements**

**Senior Football Development Officer (Adult Football)**



## **Football Development Officers' Women's & Girls and Inclusion Report**

### **Women & Girls**

#### **Affiliations**

Youth Female: 112 teams (increase of 24 teams)

Adult Female: 52 teams (increase of 10 teams)

#### **Wildcats Programme**

The Wildcats programme is for 5-11-year-old girls who want to try football, either for the first time, or as an extra playing opportunity. The programme is now in its 5th Season and still have many Wildcat programmes operating across the County. Following a recent retention audit, we have retained 24 Centres (losing 6 due to a variety of reasons such as coach capacity, facility issues, lack of promotion and therefore players); however in the recent 2 application windows, have identified 7 new Centres which will start operating across the summer. Our new total is 31 Centres in Somerset. Due to the Women's Euros which start in July 2022, the Wildcats application window will open again in July/August and we are working with another 2 centres to go through this process, identifying gaps in provision within the county.



Geoff Stevens has been appointed the Wildcats Community Champion for Somerset and will be supporting / mentoring Wildcat programmes within Somerset. Geoff's main role will be to support on pitch; coach support; deliver Wildcats specific CPD opportunities and help identify new partners for future programmes.

The Wildcats programme for the County is very good, and in terms of the geographical spread around the County, we have very good provision and access for young girls to access a programme and play football.

### **Squad Girls Football Programme**

Squad Girls Football is a new initiative from The FA aimed at recreational turn up and play opportunities for 12 – 14 year old female players. The FA approved 4 Centres in Somerset and these are being run by Bath City Foundation; Frys Junior FC; Bristol City Robins and Weston Mendip. Each of the Centres have been strategically placed within key Girls School Football Partnership areas and help to fill gaps in the playing pathway for girls.

Next Season 22/23, we hope to offer more Centres to clubs as this programme is perfectly placed to support those clubs hosting good Wildcats Centres, as the next step for players from 12 years. National training has now taken place, and Centres will be operational from July onwards.

### **Women's Euros 2022**

We are promoting and supporting the Women's Euros National campaign, whilst at local level, we will be visiting clubs and tournaments within the County, to promote the Euros, together with filming and promoting what clubs are doing to engage with female players and create more opportunities for females to play the game. We will film activities, interview players, coaches and parents and share this across our website and social media platforms.

### **Somerset Women's Football Fixtures**

The Somerset Women's County League has had a full season, with all divisions completing by early May at the latest. The league cup finals were hosted at Street FC on 29<sup>th</sup> May and 2 very competitive and enjoyable cup finals took place. Woodspring Women won the Chairman's Cup and Pen Mill Ladies won the League Cup Final. I am delighted to now sit as a committee member on the league, working alongside the committee members who work hard behind the scenes to run a successful league.

### **Somerset Girls League**

The Somerset Girls League hosted a full season, delivering an U10s Development League, U11s Development League, U12s, U13s, U14s and U16s. At the start of May, we hosted the Girls League Cup Finals for U12s and U13s age groups, where Hutton FC and South Glos RTC won their respective age groups.

The forecast for Season 2022/2023 is looking very positive, with 4 new clubs looking to join the league. We have full divisions in all age groups which is a credit to the clubs providing more teams each season and giving more players an opportunity to play football and compete in the league. The League will be operating the following age groups for Season 2022/2023:

- U10s Development League
- U11s – Development League
- U12s
- U13s
- U14s
- U15s
- U16s

The League AGM is being held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June and the league are providing a Manager's Meeting and CPD opportunity in early September, ahead of the new season starting on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The League are launching their season with a league tournament on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September for all teams to participate in and this is being hosted by Strode Sports Centre and will be a fun and enjoyable launch to the new season.

### **Advanced Coaching Centre (ACC)**



The ACC programme completed a full season of 29 weeks, together with 6 additional fixtures and an FA 'If You Care, Share' Mental Health & Wellbeing workshop for players. We supported 51 players through the programme across 3 age groups; U12s, U14s and U16s. We have a dedicated and experienced staff team delivering the technical programmes to each of the players and they have worked hard throughout the season.

During the season The FA announced their review of the Female Talent Pathway had completed and a change to the programme will take place from Season 2022/23. The ACC programme has been funded by The FA & Sport England; however this funding has come to an end, and the Premier League will be funding the talent pathway in the future. This therefore means the ACC programme has now come to an end and a new programme, The Emerging Talent Centre (ETC) programme, starts in 2022/23. All ACCs, who want to transition into the new ETC programme, were required to complete a transition plan for submission on 25<sup>th</sup> May. Somerset has completed the transition plan and we await the outcome to know if we will be hosting the ETC programme for 22/23.

### U10s Player Development Centre (PDC)

The PDC completed a full season this year, with 13 players part of the programme. We purposely took a small number of players, as we wanted to give them dedicated, bespoke and targeted coaching to ensure they were in the best place possible for a step up into The FA's Female Talent Pathway for 22/23 Season. The PDC completed 25 weeks of training, between September 21 and May 2022.

With the change to the Female Talent Pathway merging into the ETC for next season, Somerset's plan will be to introduce the U10s into the Foundation Phase of the ETC programme, therefore enabling us to work with and support younger players from age 8, and meaning the PDC will no longer be required, this age group will phase into the ETC programme as mentioned above.

### Inclusion & Equality

The IAG group has had a successful season of meetings, working on various projects and linking with new partners to develop areas of work in the County. Here are some of the areas of work we have been developing:

- Refugee Resettlement Projects – with Bath City Foundation
- Hardship Policy / Bursary Support – for leagues /clubs & Players to access
- Together Events – celebrating cultures within communities – Yeovil
- Anti-Social Behaviour Football Projects for Young People – Wellington
- Preliminary Level of the Equality Standard
- Somerset FA County Planning
- Code of Governance & support to the Council application process

From September 2022 the IAG will focus on the following priorities:

- Preliminary Level of the Equality Standard process / work programme
- Equality Training for whole organisation (new staff, Board & Council members)
- IAG Leadership Roles
- Ambassadors of the Game (Player, Coach, Referee Ambassadors)
- Partnerships & IAG Recruitment

**Rachael Lawler-Edwards**

**Football Development Officer (Female Participation & Inclusion)**



## Disability Football Development Report

### Grassroots Disability Football

#### Affiliated Teams

Current disability affiliation figures for 2021/22 season:

Adult male: 7

Adult female: 0

Adult mixed: 12

Youth: 4

Total affiliated teams: 23 (increased by 3 from 20/21)

### Disability Football



After being decimated due to the pandemic we have seen a steady response in returning back to our previous disability football levels. Teams wise we have seen a slight decline against pre-pandemic levels but will be seeing more teams return in the 22/23 season after having regular communications and support to individual clubs.

The pandemic also meant that all our previous recreational centres had to shut down. What wasn't anticipated was that whereas returning teams had their players come back, centres didn't so essentially have to start again from scratch. Centres also had to transition to the FA Events platform which has provided an extra set of barriers.

#### **Ability Counts League**

We have managed to host 4 festivals of fixtures for entered teams with our last meeting on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June at Strode College. The league decided this year that with the number of teams returning that no trophies and medals will be presented this season due to the league wanting to ascertain the ability levels of teams since returning from the pandemic. Trophies and medals will however return for the 22/23 season.

#### **England Talent Day**

The FA has now shifted these events from being county led to now being hosted on a regional basis. We have two currently being held in the South West, one in Devon and the other in Gloucestershire. We have promoted this opportunity across our social media.

#### **England Disability Football Recreational Centres (Turn Up and Play centres)**

We have had a small return of centres since the pandemic was ended but all have been very successful in their participant numbers. The creation of more of these centres will be a priority for me in the 22/23 season working with England Football Accredited clubs to create, sustain and/or develop their current disability football offer.

#### **Inclusive Schools League**

We have also brought back the Inclusive Schools League competition which also was brought to a halt due to Covid. In total we have had 9 teams enter with festivals being hosted across April and May with the last festival taking place on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June.

#### **CPD Event**

In January 2022 we hosted a disability football specific CPD event held at Strode College which was delivered by Jeff Davis (former FA National Disability Football Pathway Manager). In total we had over 10 attendees for the event and will now be looking to host at least one disability football specific event per season.

#### **Youth Council**

This year has been a very successful year for the Youth Council. They have managed to create their first club youth council and are in discussions to roll out at least two more for the 22/23 season. With support from SFA staff they have also recorded a mental health podcast which will be publicised across multiple SFA media around particular themes. Currently all youth council members will be returning for next season but SFA will be hosting an open application process to recruit a further 2-3 members in July/August time.

#### **Impairment Specific Football**

Both of our impairment specific disability football clubs have now returned from the pandemic.

Bristol City CP and Frame Football Club (soon to be two separate clubs) have been training regularly. In conjunction with CP Sport and my counterparts in the SW we planned to host a regional CP and Frame Football Festival in Bristol in which attendees were going to play some friendly games before then going on to watch Bristol City play a home game. Unfortunately, this fell on the same weekend that Storm Eustice hit so we had cancelled the event but are looking to do this in the 22/23 season.

Frome Falcons Powerchair Football Club have also returned to training and have also managed to organise friendlies against other returning powerchair clubs. Currently the club has 25 players registered with a waiting list established so will be working with the club to support and hopefully grow their provision. Jenny Rutter (head coach of Frome Falcons) has also started setting up a Powerchair session in Bristol with support from The Robins Foundation in which 5-6 people have regularly attended.

#### **Nick Hawkins**

**Football Development Officer – Disability**



## Referee's Development Officer Report

The return to football following the pandemic provided a number of challenges for football, not least for refereeing. However it also provided a number of opportunities to review how we work, the processes we use and the way we support our referees to develop.

Despite the changes that many of our officials faced, it was great to be able to provide our local league with more referees than in any of the previous 5 seasons. At the end of the 21/22 season, there were more than 540 registered referees across the county, serving the game in the male, female, youth and alternative format game. This includes over 100 new recruits from 7 referee courses held in Somerset

during the season.

However, we also lost a number of our referees during this time. Many had changes to their personal circumstances due to Covid, whether it be personal, financial or with their work commitments. Some of those have decided to take a break from refereeing, and some have decided to officiate in other forms of the game, such as Walking Football, where the time commitments are less demanding.

It is also worth noting that we lost some referees due to the conduct of players, coaches, managers and spectators on match day. While the sin bin rules have been effective to a degree, the amount of referees reporting abusive behaviour towards them has increased. This isn't just in the adult male game, but has become more and more prevalent in youth football. On the whole, coaches and spectators create an environment of support and encouragement for young players to learn the game and enjoy their football in, but don't always afford our young referees the same opportunity – but why? The courage shown by every young person that picks up a whistle or a flag deserves more respect and we are very grateful to the majority of clubs and teams that support them in this way – thank you.

There's no doubt that our purple shirt initiative is helping to improve things where needed. Feedback from our young referees shows that they feel more confident when people understand that they are new and that they are learning, and that dissent and abuse is reduced as a result. Over 70% of U18 referees told us that they regularly wore their purple shirt at games, with 65% saying they felt it had reduced dissent and improved their enjoyment of matchday.

As well as retaining and recruiting our referees, it's been great to see the progression that some of them have made. We have had over 20 successful promotion candidates this season, some even gaining mid-season promotions to reflect their hard work and commitment. We look forward to supporting them as they progress through the refereeing pyramid and operate at their new levels for the 2022/23 season.

It isn't just promotion candidates that have looked to better themselves. We have had lots of people join us at our various development sessions around the county or on our online meetings– match officials of all ages that seek to improve their knowledge and understanding of the game, as well as their fitness levels. This is all stuff that goes on behind the scenes that people don't see or tend to think about, but it truly makes a difference when that first whistle blows.

Many of these referees were rewarded for their hard work by being appointed to one of our County Cup Finals. Officials in all 13 finals did themselves proud with their conduct, their management of the occasion, and their contribution to enjoyable matches for everyone involved. Congratulations and thank you to everyone that took part.

Finally, no review of a season is complete without acknowledging the wider refereeing team across the county. Newly qualified referees don't tend to stay in the game long without the right support, so thanks go to the mentors that gave up their time to voluntarily support the new referees during their early matches. None of our referees can get promoted without the work of our observing team, who provide detailed support, feedback and developmental advice to help them progress. Attending matches, making notes and writing reports takes a lot of time, and we are grateful to those that do this for us across then course of the season.

Looking ahead to 22/23, there are some really exciting things happening in refereeing. Changes to the structure within the refereeing department at the FA are geared up to a progressive and forward-thinking approach to referee support and

development. New opportunities for referees to progress will be supported by new observing and mentoring schemes, changes to the promotion system, and vast additions to the online learning opportunities available to grassroots referees. The Basic Referee Course has been streamlined, making it far more practical and interactive which is encouraging to anyone that is interested in taking on the challenge of becoming a referee.

In Somerset, we have 7 more courses planned between the start of the season and February 2023, with many spaces already booked up. We are seeing more people coming forward from within football itself – current and former players and coaches are taking up refereeing, which is fantastic.

Refereeing in Somerset, and across the country, is in a good place. Negative news stories will naturally attract the most attention but, in context, these make up a tiny fraction of the picture. The infrastructure and the plans that are in place for Season 2022/23 will give all referees, of any age, level or ability, the chance to become better – to be the best that they can be – and this will benefit them as individuals and football across Somerset as a whole.

**Matt Eva**

**Referee Development Officer**



### Designated Safeguarding Officer Report

As we come to the end of a more 'normal' season I hope that you've had some positive and enjoyable experiences. So much more of what we do has moved online as a result of the pandemic, you can find information [here to support clubs and individuals to stay safe online](#).

All our courses are now available [online](#). The Welfare Officer tutor lead course continues to be delivered around twice a week making it an easy process for new incumbents to get themselves qualified in a timely manner. There are usually a few weeks to wait as the courses get booked very quickly.

The DBS process is now fully integrated into whole game for clubs. Individuals need to ensure they have a relevant email address attached to their FAN to be able to gain access to their account. Clubs need to data cleanse and advise us of multiple FANs so they can be merged. Please remember that the individual receiving their certificate is not the end of the process, you will need to wait until whole game records show as updated and green.

Safeguarding requirements across the game are changing for both youth and adult clubs. During this season 22/23 clubs will need to ensure that all team officials (coaches, managers & assistants) have an in date safeguarding qualification. For youth clubs this means the safeguarding children course or the recertification, both can be found [here](#). Adult clubs should wait until the FA launch their Player Welfare course which is currently in development as the usual courses aren't necessarily relevant to the adult environment. We expect to have this course available from January 2023. These qualifications across the youth and adult workforce will form part of the affiliation requirement for the 23/24 season.

As we move into the new season, we will be checking compliance of managers, coaches, and assistants in the adult game where teams have 16/17-year-old players. FA regulations already state that if you are working with players that are U18 on a regular basis then you must hold an FA in-date, accepted DBS check. If you require any support with this process, please don't hesitate to get in touch by emailing [safeguarding@somersetfa.com](mailto:safeguarding@somersetfa.com)

Referees registering for the new season will all now have an in date safeguarding qualification which helps to keep our game a safer place. All those officiating in youth football must have an in date accepted DBS check.

Safeguarding Adults in Disability football is now a key part of our safeguarding program. You can find information and resources about this [here](#) Nick Hawkins and myself are also available to support and if there are concerns that need addressing.

Throughout this season we have been trialling a couple of initiatives to tackle discipline and poor practice across the youth game as we have seen a marked increase in the number of matters being submitted and felt that action was required. Further details

will be communicated before the start of the new season but essentially, we want to hear about your match day experience – good or not. We'll be sharing a form that you'll be able to use to submit your experiences. The good stuff we want to share and highlight, the not so good we'll look to see how we can support a club/individual or referee to improve appreciating that some behaviours will need to be dealt with through the discipline process. The other aspect we're addressing is the offensive, insulting, or abusive behaviour towards anyone under 18 whether that be a referee or a player where the adult is considered to be in a position of trust and therefore broken the code of conduct. I'm sure you'd agree that a young person coming off the pitch in tears as a result of an adult's behaviour towards them isn't acceptable. More details will follow on this High-Level Poor Practice Process.

To finish I'd like to thank all our volunteers for their continued commitment and hard work ensuring we all play our part in keeping football safe.

**Shirley Needham**

**Designated Safeguarding Officer**



## Communications, Marketing and Partnerships

ASGUK have been brought into Somerset FA to manage all thing communication, marketing and partnerships as a 3rd party. Its been a successful relationship with all areas seeing significant increases, which we will detail further in the following sections.

### Communications

#### Social Media

Social media was being underutilised with some platforms being left unused in favour of other platforms that offered limited opportunities. Now Somerset FA uses regularly and efficiently Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, with the addition of Youtube and Flickr for an extended level of promotion for video

and images.

### Facebook and Instagram Data (June 21 to May 22)

- Reach (The number of people who have seen SFA content) = 1,368,603
- Engagement (The number of people who have engaged with SFA content) = 67,607
- Engagement Rate (The figure as a percentage of the reach) = 4.94%

### Twitter Data (June 21 to May 22)

- Reach (The number of people who have seen SFA content) = 2,339,970
- Engagement (The number of people who have engaged with SFA content) = 94,394
- Engagement Rate (The figure as a percentage of the reach) = 4.03%

### LinkedIn Data (June 21 to May 22)

- Reach (The number of people who have seen SFA content) = 668
- Engagement (The number of people who have engaged with SFA content) = 218
- Engagement Rate (The figure as a percentage of the reach) = 32.63%

Follows and Likes are tracked to ensure continual growth but are not used as a KPI, as it's more important to ensure that the content is being seen and engaged with by the largest audience possible. This is done using simple tactics and processes to maximise the footballing network and audience across Somerset, the UK and the world.

As you can see from the data SFA is reaching a massive audience on social media and that number is growing on a monthly basis. But there is still potential to grow in all areas, especially engagement.

We would like to see a 20% increase in this data by the end of next season.

### Website



The SFA website continues to develop with both internal and external working groups developing the platform to ensure the most efficient and informative format is delivered to our network and audience.

The data for the website is limited so we are unable to provide annual activity data at this point, but we will try and establish a way to monitor and track the data moving forward so that we can analyse the effectiveness of the website for SFA.

There are a number of plans in place throughout the operations plan for all departments of SFA and we expect the website to see some significant development thought the coming season.

## **Marketing**

### **Brand**

The current brand image has undergone a slight tweak in the last season to enhance the SFA image and maximise it for social media and other marketing purposes. There is planned additional branding work to be done, with department identification branding to become standard practice for example.

### **Events**

Currently, Somerset FA events are limited to mainly Football Matches (all disciplines) and training events, but we are planning on increasing to include a range of events, to include not just football-related ones. This should in turn increase the visibility of SFA across the region to a new and current audience both football and commercial.

The current events have seen a respectable level of support, with decent crowds at cup finals as one of the highlights of the year's events.

### **Campaigns**

This season has seen Somerset FA participate in a number of campaigns covering a range of subjects that are both directly and indirectly linked to, and relevant to, Football. These have proved to be extremely successful with our network and audiences engaging in a range of ways that have helped to publicise and promote the topics of the campaigns for both SFA and the lead partners of the campaign.

SFA has also increased the number of campaigns that we publicise. Some of these are in conjunction with The FA through their marketing channels, but we have also explored and developed the links with other 3rd parties to highlight their campaigns and specials days throughout the year.

### **Commercial Partnerships**

This is probably the area that has seen the largest amount of work over the last season, completely transforming the partnership model. SFA now operate an asset-based model where all competitions and departments of the business are valued based on their commercial viability and sold to partners for advertising/marketing purposes.

All of the existing Somerset FA partnerships have been reviewed and renegotiated into the new model, with great success. These partners have been joined by a number of new partners who have come on board to use SFA as part of their advertising and marketing programme.

Each partner now has a formal agreement with terms and conditions based on the level of their investment and the asset with which they are associated. The partners have and will continue to come from a range of industries, some of which will not have a direct link to football but have seen a value in our network and audience hence the partnership.

The partnerships are now a financial investment as opposed to a commission-based programme, this allows SFA to understand the potential value of the investment and to plan and budget depending on agreements and the length of terms involved.

We are excited by this model and its potential for SFA, our network, audience and commercial partners.

**Paul Coltman**

**Communications, Marketing and Partnerships Manager**

**Somerset FA / ASGUK**



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