

SOMERSET FA ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



*"Football for Everyone
Everyone for Football"*

Contents



Chairman's Report

Chief Executives' Report

Football Services Report

Football Development Managers' Report

Football Development Officers' Report - Male Pathway

Football Development Officers' Report - Women's & Girls and Inclusion

Football Development Officers' Report – Leagues & Clubs

Football Development Officers' Report - Disability Football

Referees Development Officers' Report

Designated Safeguarding Officers Report

Communications, Marketing and Partnerships Report



Chairman's Report

In looking back over the last season, I have to start with a tribute to our President, Francis Hillier, who passed away in November aged 94. He had been a member of SFA Council for 51 years, but I only had the privilege of knowing him for a much shorter time. He was one of the first to make me welcome when I joined; he was always ready with advice, encouragement and wise counsel; and his knowledge of football and its people throughout Somerset was incomparable. Much missed, we have kept the post of President vacant for now, as an ongoing mark of respect.

In May, we held an EGM to adopt revisions to our Articles of Association. This moves us a step closer to achieving the FA's Code of Governance Gold Standard, which we must comply with by June 2025 in order to continue to receive FA funding. The major changes were to introduce term limits of 9 years in total for all Council and Board members. The clock is set with effect from this year's AGM, not retrospectively, and all members are still required to offer themselves for re-election every 3 years within that overall possible term. It also required that Life Members could no longer be Council members as of right, but can stand as league or community representatives. So the composition of our Council continues to evolve – and we look to expand the breadth and extent of inclusion from all areas of the game.

Last year we appointed 2 new non-executive directors in Liam Woodward (legal portfolio) and Rob Dyer (marketing and comms portfolio). Both have made invaluable contributions to the ongoing development of the CFA. Unfortunately our Finance director, Richie Horton, has had to stand down very recently. He had also fitted well into the team and helped us make some important changes and improvements. We wish him well in the future. Recruitment for a replacement has begun as I write, but will not be concluded in time for the AGM.

We also bade farewell to two members of staff. Megan Buller and Matt Eva will have been well-known to many of our clubs, leagues and referees. Both will continue to be involved with the CFA in various ways, and we wish them well as they move on to pastures new. In March we welcomed Olivia Denis as a new member of the team at Charles Lewin House. Olivia has settled in quickly, and many of you will have already begun to get know her.



This spring and early summer has seen a major piece of work for us in preparing our latest 4-Year Strategy, to cover 2024-2028. This has to support and underpin the FA's national strategy for the same period. In bringing this together we held a series of face to face consultations, backed up by online surveys. Thank you to all who attended or submitted their thoughts, we have done our best to incorporate as many as we can. The headline priorities may seem very familiar – Behaviours, Facilities, Inclusion & Diversity – but the tactics and initiatives underlying them have been refreshed. It is a challenging programme we have set ourselves for that next period. Collectively, we welcome all input and support from the football family within Somerset to realise the objectives, continue to grow the game in all its forms throughout the County, and make it enjoyable and rewarding for all.

Speaking of inclusion, one of the initiatives we launched this season was the Individual Access to Football Fund. Ring-fencing some of the disciplinary income from on-field and off-field misbehaviours we have been able to help nearly 100 people with financial support who might otherwise not be able to play. The greatest item of demand was for sports goggles, an expensive item for anyone but especially those struggling with the cost of living. Not only were we able to give grants for those, but also set up a partnership with a local optician to get a welcome discount.

From a personal perspective, I have continued to serve as your FA Representative on the FA Council, which has included serving on the Leagues Committee and Judicial Panel. The FA Council is also evolving, with some committees being discontinued, and others reorganised. It does make it a little more difficult to make our voice heard, but I do the best I can to check and challenge where I feel our interests might not be being best served. The FA also formed a Counties Review of Counties Working Group – 8 chairs and CEOs from across the network – to consider 'what County FAs might look like in 5 years time'. I was fortunate to be selected as one of the Group. Whilst the catalyst for this has been the expectation of funding from the FA to CFAs remaining flat across at least the next 4-year cycle, it also recognises that there is a lack of consistency across the 50 counties in what is delivered to members. Although we started in September, we are still only at a relatively early stage of defining how that future may shape up. Initial thoughts have now been shared on how efficiencies and closer collaborations may be achieved, and consultations will take place across the summer and autumn. Detailed planning of any agreed changes will then commence in 2025 and continue alongside the 2024-2028 strategy delivery.

One of the major frustrations of our just completed 2020-2024 strategy cycle is that we have been unable to progress our plans for County FA facilities. Our long-term vision remains that we should have a hub HQ site with a 3G pitch and other satellite sites with pitches around the county. Despite working with the Wadham site since 2019 we have so far been unable to get past the administrative and political hurdles which keep popping up. All parties remain committed to the project, but we are still some way from getting a start date. The prospect of a suitable location for a HQ hub is even less certain, but we continue to monitor and talk with any potential sites which come up around the centre of the County.

Finally, may I offer congratulations to all those clubs who achieved success this season – even if the measure of that success was that you managed to keep going and keep playing despite all the challenges we faced – not least a second successive winter and spring of bad weather.

Phil Chaplin
Chairman



Chief Executive's Report

As mentioned in last year's report, the 2023-2024 season would see a change in the way Somerset FA affiliated teams result of the new affiliation system, they would move to a team not club based model; this would see a brand new affiliation pricing model introduced; happily this did not seem to cause problems for clubs. I am pleased to report that there will no change to affiliation rates for the coming season

The board of directors are conscious on the various cost pressures faced by clubs and have decided once again to subsidise all Personal accident polices taken out by all teams, adult and youth, through the National Game Insurance Scheme (NGIS) with Marsh (Bluefin), overall this will be a financial commitment of nearly £19,000 into grass roots football. There will be a change to the Public Liability Policy offered by Marsh, with the Countycover and Countycover plus policies both previously offered by Somerset FA being merged into one policy. All insurance policies will be available to be purchased at affiliation should clubs wish to do so.

Lats year all adult clubs needed to have a Welfare Officer named as a condition of affiliation, this year that Welfare Officer will need to have completed the Player Welfare course, a free online course that was rolled out by the FA this year; this condition will also apply to all team officials of adult clubs, this has been communicated to clubs during the season by the FA and the County DSO, Shirley Needham. In spite of this, a number of Welfare officer and other officials were shown as not being in possession of this as we approached affiliation, so there may well be delays to completing the process while this is achieved by individuals. As we move onto the season, any team official of an adult team were 16 and 17 year olds are registered will also need to have a current DBS obtained through the FA unit failing which the individual will be suspended. Again while this has been heavily trailed over the past season.

The FA have informed all county associations that compliance with the FA Code of Governance will be mandatory by June 2025. One of the conditions of the code is that each county publish a governance report, therefore the company section which has traditionally formed part of my report will now be found in separate document.

Wadham School

The aim of delivering a 3g pitch in partnership with Wadham School in Crewkerne, has been a long-held ambition of the county, as mentioned in chairs report above we have still not achieved it. After delays that were outlined in previous reports, we have faced delays this year establishing the respective roles of the Council and School, Wadham is one of few schools that is not an academy but remains in council control. We have recently been delayed as we have sought to establish potential liabilities to the council, if at some future date the school were to join a academy trust, this has seen us seeking that clarification from the Department for Education. This has perhaps not surprisingly, been drawn out to say the least and we have as a result slipped out of the current football Foundation funding window.



Finance

The accounts circulated for approval at the AGM are for the financial year running to 30th June 2023 and are once again produced by Old Mill accountants. This period relates to the 2022-23 season, (July 2022 – June 2023). The full financial statements have been circulated along with AGM information.

The accounts show a surplus of £34,790 at end of year, this was compared to a surplus of £116,381 for the previous financial year (although it should be noted that the latter figure included a revaluation of the property at North Road). Sadly, one of the main sources of income, discipline, remained at all most the same level as the previous season, which are at record amounts.

We have strong cash reserves, although these are somewhat higher than would normally be expected as we have funds for the proposed Wadham project – if and when this comes to fruition the reserves will develop significantly. In spite of this the board have continued to invest back into the game at grass roots, this includes the subsidy for all insurance purchase equating to around £19k; this is augmented by the existing small grants scheme for clubs, and Individual Access to Football grant scheme initiated this season.

We continued to receive rental income from tenants at the flat at Hobbs House North Road, the rents were reviewed by the board during the season. All 5 car parking places in the adjacent car park have been let.

Staff

Staff continue to work in a "hybrid" way, with working from home complementing several days a week in the county office; this has been well received by staff and we believe is meeting the needs of stakeholders.

In the last 12 months we have seen changes to in the county office. In November Megan Buller, Head of Football Services and Discipline Manager, left to take up a position with the London FA. Megan has been with us since 2017, initially in the Development Team running the coach education programme before becoming Discipline Manager in 2021. She leaves us with our best wishes although she is still a Somerset FA registered Referee and Referees Tutor as well as being part of the SFA Cups Committee.

The decision was made to not replace the post internally, but instead the disciplinary investigation element of the role, would be transferable to a third party, Sport integrity Matters (SIM), who already carry out disciplinary functions for over a dozen county association. In the new system alleged misconduct cases are submitted to Somerset FA as before, where they are logged are then passed to SIM, who will then investigate before making a recommendation to change or not, if the former they will suggest

the charges which should be issued. Somerset FA will then issue charges and carry out the hearing of the charges issued. As a result of this decision, we have reduced our head count of staff to 11.

The end of the year saw the departure of Matt Eva, the Referees Development Officer. Matt joined us in 2017, he has made the decision to return to his previous profession teaching. He leaves with our best wishes and like Megan, we are delighted that he remains a Somerset FA registered referee. Matt's replacement as RDO was Martin Peters who was the Somerset FA Discipline and County Cups administrator, Martin Peters. Martin joined in 2019 and as a current referee having achieved Level 3 in the past, he brings great experience and knowledge of referring to the post to augment his experience of 5 years at Somerset FA. While Martin officially took up his new role from January, he continued to cover his former role until his successor was in place, thanks must be recorded to Martin for managing to do much in the RDO role simultaneously.



Following a thorough recruitment process Olivia Denis was appointed to be the new Discipline and County Cup administrator; Olivia joined us in late April from Somerset Council; I know that a number of you will already have had contact or met her as she begins this role.

We continue to receive funding for a Women's & Girls Football Ambassador and a Disability Football Ambassador; this allows us to employ someone to deliver 50 hours of support to the W&G and disability game over the year. Abigail White who began delivery in February last year sadly left us during the year but Caroline White who started last summer has been joined by Avril Cooke who will deliver between them.

Safeguarding

We completed the second year of the new Safeguarding Operating Standard, Safeguarding 365 (SG365), this saw all county FA complete an external assessment with the NSPCC CPSU; Somerset had already been assessed in spring of 2023 as one of the first CFA to go through the new process, so we were not assessed during this season. The FA have indicated that there will not be an external assessment in the next 12 months, although we will continue to upload evidence that we are meeting the criteria throughout the year. The FA safeguarding Conference will take place in November where all CFA will be informed of changes to the standard. Safeguarding validation visits were carried out physically during the winter months and again these were augmented by a virtual meeting to review of club's online presence.

County Strategy

This year saw the end of the 2021-2024 3 year FA National Strategy and our own strategy, "Uniting Somerset Football" to deliver national targets specific in Somerset. A full list of our KPI's is listed in the Football Development Managers report later.

In preparation for the new National Game Strategy the FA undertook an extensive national consultation, a "Conversation about our Game", this included a number of regional face to face sessions around the county and an online questionnaire the results of which, Both nationally and locally, was fed back to county FA. To augment this, we carried out a Somerset consultation event. This consisted of 3 face to face sessions, thanks to Middlezoy Rovers, Brislington and Yeovil Town for hosting them, which saw

stakeholders from across the game tell us what was important not them. We also held a session at the county office for our affiliated leagues. These consultations were in tandem with an online questionnaire that sought views from stakeholders across all areas of the game, which was completed by 300 stakeholders. A joint board and staff session saw these findings debated and from this the county strategy was written in April and May with unput from both the Youth Council and IAG to check and challenge. The resultant strategy was signed off by Board in May and submitted to the FA before being presented to a FA panel on 6th June, where it was signed off.

This strategy would follow the FA National Game Strategy to deliver a whole game approach and have the following Five strategic priorities:

- Improve Playing Choice & Opportunities
- Deliver Equal Opportunities for Women & Girls to Play
- Build More & Improve Existing Facilities
- Tackle Poor Behaviour
- Develop A Valued Network of Volunteers, Coaches & Referees

These will be underpinned by three Strategic Drivers

- Support Thriving Community Clubs
- Connect & Serve Participants
- Progress The Game's Governance

Delivery of the strategy will commence on 1st July 2024, with the strategy running until 30th June 2028. We plan to launch this document publicly sometime later in the summer.

We also developed the operational plan for 2024-2025, which will see the delivery of the first year of the 4 year strategy; the first draft was submitted at the beginning of June and following comments from the FA the final iteration at the end of the month, at time of writing is awaiting sign off from the FA.

IT

The summer of 2023 saw the roll out of the new affiliation system, with many of us remembering recent summers marred by player registrations issues this was not without some trepidation. I am pleased to report that any fears we had were unfounded and that the new system working perfectly and most secretaries finding it intuitive and easy to use. Consequently this saw the affiliation process carried out by all on time, no mean feat as the new system necessitating a change in the way Somerset FA affiliate with it seeing team rather than clubs affiliating.

This gives some optimism with the forthcoming roll out of various Platform for Football (the successor to WGS) modules over the coming years being as equally hassle free.

Representative teams

The 2023-24 season saw the return of Representative football for the first time since prior to the. At the AGM of the South West Counties

Championship, the competition that our teams enter, Cornwall, Devon and ourselves agreed to compete in a boys Under 16 competition. (Somerset also wished to compete in a Women's open age competition along with Devon, however no other CFA wished to enter so the competition was not viable.)

The competition format would see



each county FA play the other two counties home and away with matches were scheduled to take place in Spring of 2024. On Thursday 14th March, just over 4 years after last competing, Somerset Under 16 took the field against Devon FA at Middlezoy; the team would play 3 matches in 10 days with the final game, against Devon away, little under a month later, the results were as follows:

- 14th March Somerset 2-2 Devon, at Middlezoy FC
- 17th March Somerset 1-3 Cornwall, at Middlezoy FC
- 24th March Cornwall, 1-1 Somerset, at Sticker FC
- 18th April Devon 2-0 Somerset, at Newton Abbott Devon FA HQ

We were excellent hosted by Middlezoy for our home matches and would like to thank the club for their considerable help. Thanks are also recorded for the Representative Team Committee for the support, not least to Conor Ogilvie-Davidson who was instrumental in arranging transport to the Cornwall game.

Although we finished bottom of the group the return of rep football seemed to be very well received by all; the Board have committed to entering the Boys Under 16 competition again next season, with a hope to also enter a Women's open age side as well if sufficient other numbers of CFA allow for a competition to take place.

County Cups

Following decisions at the Annual General Meeting, the 2023-24 season saw the debut of two new county cup competitions, the Boys Under 18 Cup and Girls Under 13 Cup, with Westland Sports and Ashton being the inaugural winners of the respective competitions. This brought the number of county cups to 16, our highest ever. The appalling weather of winter and early spring saw several of the premier Cup semi-finalists face fixture congestion from their league programmes at the end of the season that resulted in both Premier Cup semi-finals could not be scheduled; the cups committee decided that the two semi-finals and finals would instead be played in the pre-season of the 2024-25 season (the 2018-19 competition also saw the final delayed to the commencement of the following season after fixture delay). Subsequent to this to the semi-finalist, Weston-super-Mare and Larkhall Athletic, were unable to commit to the fixtures and withdrew from the competition; the Cups Committee decided that their respective opponents Brislington and Taunton Town respectively would receive walk overs to the final, which will take place at Bath City on 31st July. Thankfully, the inclement weather while problematic, did not cause similar disruption to our other county cups and all were completed on time.

This year all county final venues and dates had been arranged prior to the commencement of the competition, so that clubs had advance notice of the date and location of their final should they reach it; this appears to have been a success and we will aim to repeat for 2024-25 season.





County Cup Finals 2024 results

UES MEN'S PREMIER CUP

Brislington - Taunton Town @ Bath City FC, 31st July

MEN'S PREMIER CUP

Sporting Weston 1-4 Wells City Res @Paulton Rovers FC, 30th April

MEN'S JUNIOR CUP

Wells City A 3-1 Weston Town @ Middlezoy Rovers FC, 24th April

MEN'S INTERMEDIATE CUP

Brislington 2-2 Haywood Village @ Bishop Sutton FC, 17th May

Haywood Village won 5-4 on penalties

MEN'S SUNDAY CHALLENGE

P F Loco 0-0 Kingsmead @ Bishop Sutton FC, 18th April

Kingsmead win 4-1 on penalties

WOMEN'S SENIOR CUP

Yeovil Town 0-4 Keynsham Town @ Paulton Rovers FC, 25th April

WOMEN'S JUNIOR CUP

Weston-super-Mare 4-0 Portishead @ Brislington FC, 11th April

MEN'S LEGENDS CUP

Street 2-1 Staplegrove @ Street FC, 21st April

BOYS UNDER 18 CUP

Street 0-4 Westlands @ Street FC, 10th May

YOUTH SHIELD

Burnham United 0-4 Wellington @ Middlezoy Rovers FC, 5th May

GIRLS UNDER 16 CUP

Bridgwater United 9-2 Larkhall Athletic @ Middlezoy Rovers FC, 5th May

UNDER 15 CUP

Bath City 8-0 Ilchester Trojans @ Brislington FC, 12th May

LEWIN CUP

Brislington 0-0 Frome Town United Eagles @Bishop Sutton FC, 19th May

Brislington won 4-3 on penalties

GIRLS UNDER 14 CUP

Weston Mendip White Socks 6-1 Portishead Town Rangers @Bishop Sutton FC, 19th May

UNDER 13 CUP

Tone Hornets 1-11 Ilchester Rockets @ Brislington FC, 12th May

GIRLS UNDER 13 CUP

Ashton 6-2 Hutton Tornadoes @ Brislington FC' 12th 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. Thanks are also necessary for the County Cups Committee, who met three times during the season as a committee and on several other occasions as a sub-committee to adjudicate on various issues.

County Awards

After the return of the annual awards evening last year following Covid, we again celebrated outstanding achievement by volunteers across Somerset. The event was held on 16th November at Yeovil Town FC and the winners were as follows:

FA Awards

Grassroots Coach of the Year Male Pathway Josh Hurst - Paulton Rovers DC

Grassroots Coach of the Year Female Pathway Ben Bolland - Frome Town United/Frome Town Women

Grassroots Coach of the Year Disability Pathway Bob Young - Bristol City CP FC

Positive Football Environment Award Gav Step - Huish Tigers



Grassroots Match official of the Year Award	Olly Lawson
Grassroots Grounds Team of the Year	Gary Parsley - Combe St Nicholas
The Lioness Award	Mark Grinter - Fry Club
Grassroots League of the Year Award	Taunton & District Saturday League
Grassroots Club of the Year Award	Huish Tigers
Young Volunteer of the Year Award	Beth Cottle - Uphill Juniors
<u>SFA Awards</u>	
Keith Buller Award: Outstanding Contribution To Refereeing	Dave Waller
Referee of the Year	Dylan Baliss
Young Referee of the Year	Riley Scribens
Young Referee of the Year	Constantino Pierre
Welfare Officer of the Year	Chris Donald - Woodspring League
Secretary of the Year (Youth Team)	Alison Sutton - North Curry
Secretary of the Year (Adult Team)	Gareth Paisey - Welton Rovers
Digital Engagement Award	Somerset County League (Men's) - Matt Counsell
Squad Girls Programme of the Year	Stratton United - Simon Matthews
Weetabix Wildcats Centre of the Year	Frome Town United - Chris Wilkinson
Disability Club of the Year	Wellington - Jason Fox
Disability Volunteer of the Year	Toby Willis - Clevedon United Junior
Services To Football Award	John Hansford - Coleford Athletic Glenda Young Peasedown Miners Welfare Stuart Henley - Clevedon Bryn Hawkins - Mid Somerset Football League Bob Beale - Mid Somerset Football League Colin Macpherson - Ashcott Christina Storey - Porlock Colin Waller (Wellington) Craig Berry - Middlezoy Rovers
Respect Club of the Year Award	Nailsea United Junior Youth - Ken Hallett
Respect League of the Year Award	Yeovil Mini League
Grassroots Recognition Award	Woodspring Junior Football League - Dave Gooding
Services to Youth Council Award	Alex Caird & Georgia Ferdinando

We were delighted to learn that in the FA Awards, the winner of the Grassroots Coach of the Year Disability Pathway, Bob Young of Bristol City CP FC, was the winner of the FA National Award. We would like to offer our congratulations to Bob on this fantastic achievement.

Congratulations to all of thoroughly deserving winners.

Equality

The IAG continues to meet regularly, under the leadership of our equality Director Lee Ballard, the IAG are planning to release their own report on the seasons activities while the Equality FDO, Rachael Lawler-Edwards, has made a full report, see below. In last year's report I mentioned that we had submitted the Inclusion in Sport, Preliminary Level, I am delighted to say that application was successful and that have achieved the award. This is a great reflection on the work of the county in our aim of increasing diversity and inclusion across the game in Somerset; while many people have worked hard to achieve this, special thanks must go to Rachel Lawler-Edwards who led on this and completed much of the work.

Jon Pike

Chief Executive



Football Services & Discipline

The 2023/24 season saw the introduction of the new affiliation model and portal which saw clubs using Platform For Football (PFF) to complete their affiliations. This system allowed clubs to affiliate on a team by team basis, to avoid long waits for one specific team to be ready, and in a semi-automated way, which reduced the interaction level required by the County FA. Both of these points were designed to make it easier and quicker for the club to affiliate. On the whole this process went very smoothly with most clubs being able to affiliate without any errors and where points were flagged up they were able to be dealt with efficiently.

Discipline figures continue to increase at all levels. The most notable of these is the increase in the more serious cases, and those leading to abandonment of matches. From conversations with other County FA's it is believed that this is a national trend of increases. Currently the staff are looking into ways to improve behaviour in football as looking at the consistent increases the current sanctions don't appear to be working as a deterrent. See below further statistics to show exact details of these increases. We have had 28 Abandoned Matches, a 100% increase from last season, of which 12 of these were within Youth Football. There have been 83 Serious Cases, up from 54 in 2022/23, investigated this season, of which 31 were within Youth Football. 35 Cases were found Proven, 4 were Not-Proven, 34 there was either not enough evidence or the complainant dropped the charge, 10 are still to be heard.

	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-Playing Participant Offences
2018/19	7648	758	236	Data Not available	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
2020/21	4142	453	131	Data Not available		0		6	7	0	0	51
2021/22	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
2022/23	7945 (890 sinbin)	763	254	10 Charged 1 Not Proven 7 Proven 2 awaiting FA	0 Charged	2 Charged 1 Proven 1 awaiting FA	6	18	58	8	1	137
2023/24	9105 (1096 sinbin)	720	273	18 charged 1 not proven 14 proven 3 awaiting hearing	7 charged 0 not proven 4 proven 3 awaiting hearing	No Data	26	19	62	16	3	207

There have been 8 Red Card Appeals this season, 1 was Upheld and 7 were Dismissed.

Bradley Welch
Football Services



Football Development Manager Report

Development Staff

One change in staffing occurred in December 2023 with our Referee Development Officer, Matt Eva, leaving us to return to his previous teaching career. We thank Matt for all his work over the last six years and wish him all the best. He remains one of our registered referees, so he's still heavily involved in the game.

Matt was replaced by Martin Peters who moved over from the Football Services Team. The change meant Martin had to juggle two roles in early 2024 whilst we backfilled his position. Olivia joined the Football Services team in March and Martin continued to offer her support whilst transitioning over to the RDO role. Martin has had a great early impact, and we look forward to his enthusiastic approach to the role.

Football Foundation Grants

Somerset FA have been heavily involved in supporting clubs to submit grants to the Football Foundation for a wide range of facility development projects. Below is a summary of the grants offered in the county during the 2023/24 season:

- 68 Grants offered since July 1st, 2023, to clubs in Somerset.
- £2.49M offered to clubs in Somerset towards projects totalling £4.59M
- Grants breakdown
 - 42 - small grants (under £25k)
 - 19- Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund Grants
 - 5- FSIF grants (Football Stadium Improvement Fund – Steps 1-6/Tiers 1-4)
 - 2- 3G pitch grants
- A further 60 grants applications have been submitted totalling £1.92M. These are either awaiting assessment, have been rejected or are awaiting further information.

SFA Grants

Somerset FA have provided £12k of funding to grassroots club since opening the Club Maintenance Scheme and New Team Grants on March 1st 2024. The club maintenance scheme has seen 12 grants awarded to clubs, with the maximum amount being £350. These grants cover a wide range of areas to support clubs carry out maintenance or purchase items to support their club and/or facility. Examples are purchasing line markers, goal nets or decorating clubhouses. The grant hasn't been as popular as last season, largely we think as we have an eligibility criteria around clubs not being able to re-apply with 24-months. This limits some clubs coming back in to apply and is something we will look at over the summer months as we currently have £4135 available to grassroots clubs.

The new team grants have seen Somerset FA support 11 clubs with a grant of £150 to create a new team. These new team grants have supported club to create new teams in youth, female, adult, and disability football. This has again not been as popular as last summer but there are currently 20+ applications waiting for review. We are trying to prioritise women's and girls teams along with disability teams so some applications have been delayed their review to ensure our priority teams get first refusal. The number of grants awarded will go up over the summer months.

Facilities Update

3G Pitches

The Richard Huish College 3G pitch officially opened in September 2024. Several clubs such as Huish Tigers, Staplegrove Youth, Taunton Youth and Bishops Lydeard use the pitch for winter training. The site also hosts the Taunton Saturday Leagues midweek cup fixtures. Whilst the pitch hasn't been without its hiccups overall it's been a success and will continue to support grassroots football in the area for many years.

Portishead FC stadium 3G started construction on June 10th, with completion expected by October 2024. This has been possible through a Football Foundation grant following a lot of hard between the club, town and parish council, the Foundation and Somerset FA.

Courtfields school 3G pitch started construction in May 2024 and is expected to be complete by September. The pitch is much needed in the town of Wellington and will serve the community well. This is another Football Foundation funded site with match funding provided by the Academy Trust and Town Council. Somerset FA have been involved in the funding and planning process since the projects inception.

Backwell School 3G project is on the verge of have it's planning application submitted. This has been somewhat delayed for various reason but it is hoped the funding application will be submitted as soon as the planning has been granted.

Wellsway school 3G is still a project in the pipeline. With the Football Foundations current funding cycle coming to an end there is currently no capacity for any large scale projects like this to be taken on. The school are therefore carrying out the due diligence and trying to get themselves in the best position to move forward in mid-2025. No funding application timeframe has been designated yet.

Somerset FA's own Wadham school 3G project remains slow moving and complex. The 2023/24 season has thrown up many more obstacles, some of which have been overcome and some yet to be. Somerset Council have agreed to procure the work but there is an unease on their part of the risk of the school ever becoming an academy, meaning they couldn't on board any debt greater than £45k, which the Foundation debt would be.

Larkhall FC have started the construction of their 3G stadium pitch. The club did not seek any Football Foundation funding and have privately funded the pitch but have gained some Foundation funding via the Premier League Stadium Fund to improve the stadium facilities.

Bath University have ambitions to build a 3G pitch with planning permission being sought. There are some issues around community usage.

Other Facilities

Nether Stowey are progressing their plans to have a new build changing room and community hub building on site. The project has suffered some delays in the planning application phase, it now looks likely this will move into the Football Foundations next funding cycle in 2025.

Wembdon are looking to add two additional changing to the Green, these were part of their original development before the builder went bust and the plans had to be altered. The new changing rooms would hugely support the club's adult and junior female teams. SFA and the Football Foundation are working with the club to support this project.



Weston Mendip looks increasingly likely to lose their St John's ground to housing developers and work has already begun on finding a new home at Hutton Moor Leisure Centre. SFA, Football Foundation and North Somerset Council are all working with the club to ensure their new home can accommodate them and meet ground requirements. A slight problem at Hutton Moor is the water have dug up half the pitches for emergency work, meaning access to the site is limited for a lot of the 24/25 season.

Chard FC's ambition to relocate to Mount Hinderance has largely been at a standstill this season due to phosphate levels. This has been a lengthy process and at the moment there appears to be little progress and the issue is completely out of the clubs' hands.



Wellington FC appear to have dropped their ambition to relocate their first team hound to Longforth Farm due to a shortfall in funding. The site has now been identified as a youth football site and the council has begun work clearing and preparing the site for football usage. Once complete the site will be handed to the town council who will then find user clubs for the site.

Bath City Youth have taken over both Lansdown North and South sites. There are still awaiting from BANES there long-term license in order to invest fully in the site. The club will be entering into the grass pitch maintenance scheme once they have security of tenure from BANES.

The Banwell bypass has now been agreed and the club are happy at this stage with the mitigation of gaining ownership of the adjoining land via compulsory purchase order. N.Som council will come into possession of the CPO field on Aug 16th 2024 with the club keen to get several questions answered via their land agent prior to this. The FF and SFA will continue to work with the club to support.

Monkton Heathfield phase 1&2 pitch allocation- a S106 agreement in phase 1 of a housing development in Monkton Heathfield has allocated two community football pitches. West Monkton parish council have applied to have the pitches changed from football to a cricket and rugby pitch. In principle SFA agree to this provided two additional pitches can be provided elsewhere in the parish or can be offset by pitch allocation in phase 2 of the development. At present nothing suitable has been presented to mitigate the two-pitch loss but the parish are really trying to push on with the development of the rugby and cricket pitches. Our stance remains that we don't object to these pitches being cricket and rugby provided they can offer two football pitches elsewhere.

KPI's (Power BI Dashboards used where available as evidence)

Players

Our player numbers continue to grow in both male and female football. Disability number returned to above pre-pandemic numbers for the first time and whilst we fell short of our target, we are confident that we're heading in the right direction in disability football. New initiatives such as Comets and the Youth Ability Counts league have only recently started and so we are yet to see the real benefits of these on our numbers.

	PR YES (PLAYERS)	PR YES (PROXY)	PR NO (PROXY)	NOT ELIGIBLE FOR PR (PROXY)	PARTICIPATION FROM EVENTS	TOTAL	TARGET	VS TARGET
MALE PATHWAY	31,107	256	663	242	68	32,336	28,519	3,817 13.4%
FEMALE PATHWAY	4,683	103	331	55	146	5,318	4,019	1,299 32.3%
DISABILITY PATHWAY	207	11	5	37	157	417	460	-43 -9.3%
TOTAL	35,992	370	999	334	223	37,918	32,998	

Coach CPD



"Football for Everyone
Everyone for Football"

A strong year for coach CPD as shown below, note this doesn't include the 40 coaches that attended the recent Coaches Conference at Yeovil Town FC.

KPI DASHBOARD		CURRENT PERFORMANCE	CURRENT TARGET	% OF TARGET REACHED	TARGET PERFORMANCE
INSTANCES OF CPD		730	726	100.00%	50.0

Note: Qualification Name CPDs Awarded FILTERS

We are also performing extremely well in the secondary KPI of a Youth Team with a Qualified Coach, currently at 97.2%. This KPI can fluctuate, particularly at the start of a season when new coaches come in and are awaiting their attendance on a coaching course but we have been consistently high on this for the past two seasons.

KPI DASHBOARD		# YOUTH TEAMS BASELINE	# YOUTH TEAMS W/ QUALIFIED COACH	CURRENT PERFORMANCE (AGAINST BASELINE)	CURRENT TARGET	CURRENT SCORE (OUT OF 50)
YOUTH TEAM QUALIFIED COACH		1,451	1,411	97.2%	90.0%	50.0

The Target KPI for YTWQC is 90% of the number of youth teams recorded at end of the 2022-23 season. Progression towards this KPI is at the top right of this page.

The below visuals show a live performance out of all **current** youth teams.

2023 - 2024 CURRENT YOUTH TEAMS (LIVE):	2023 - 2024 CURRENT YTWQC (LIVE):	2023 - 2024 CURRENT YTWQC% (LIVE):
1,490	1,411	94.70%

(LIVE) Teams by Has Youth Team Qualified Coach

Team Age Group/Name	Female	Male	Mixed	Total
U18	2	1		3
U16		1		1
U15			4	4
U14			4	4
U13	2		6	8
U12	2		5	7
U11		2	11	13
U10			8	8
U9			6	6
U8	1	2	11	14
U7			8	8
U6			2	2
U5			1	1
Total	5	7	67	79

FILTERS: County FA, Team Age group, Team Category, Team Gender, Team Disability, Is Team Charter Standard?, Parent Club Name, Team Name

Referees

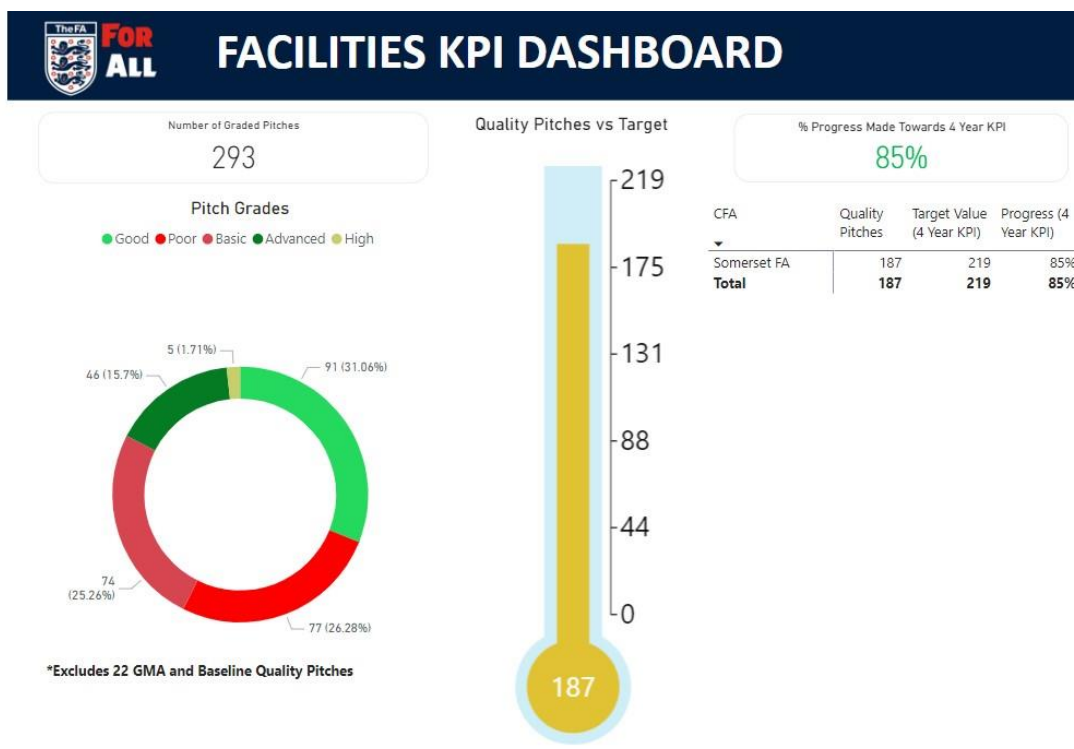
Unfortunately, as referee registration has reopened for the 2024/25 season, the referee dashboard has reset. I can report though that we outperformed our KPI's in all referee areas. The areas are: Overall Number of refs, Recruitment, Conversion, Retention, Progression.

Grass Pitch KPI

We fell just short of our target of 219 good or better grass pitches, hitting 85% of the target. A week before the data cut 10 good pitches unfortunately had their grading changed to poor which effected the numbers. Work is already being carried out with the GMA to identify which poor and basic pitches need support to elevate them to good.



"Football for Everyone
Everyone for Football"



Rob Allan

Football Development Manger



Football Development - Male Pathway Report

This season once again seems to show huge growth across our "Non Traditional" formats of football in Somerset.

Legends League

The Somerset FA Legends (Over 35's) League has proven hugely popular again this season, with 6 new teams entering for the 2023/24 season. The league had 40 teams across 4 regional groups. Plus this is now the second season we have run a "Legends Cup" as part of our County Cup programme.

- Alan Cumner Division: This season's winners were Worle Vets.
- Bryan Wells Division: This season's winners were Coleford Athletic Vets.
- Bob Hemburrow Division: This season's winners were Staplegrove Vets.
- Peter Hockley Division. This season's winners were Westland Sports.

Legends Cup

The Legends County Cup saw over 30 teams from across the county take part this season. The final took place in May, with Street Vets running out as county cup winners.

It's clear that the appetite for Over 35's football is getting bigger and bigger each season!

Team entry for the 2024/25 season is now open.

Walking Football

Both our Over 50's and Over 60's league seasons are now complete for another season, with Weston Super Mare running out winners of both the Over 50's and Over 60's leagues.

Team entry for both Walking Football leagues for the 2024/25 season is now open.

We are also hosting our first ever Walking Football National Cup qualifying event in early August, in line with the FA's National Cup Competition. We will be running 3 categories (Mixed Over 50's, Mixed Over 60's and Female Over 40's). Team entry is now open.

Our Friendly Festivals for the 2023/24 season are also now complete, with the final one taking place in April. We once again had a record number of teams taking part in these across the season, with each of the festivals being full to capacity.

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

This season we have also introduced female walking football events, which have proven really popular. We have so far run two friendly festivals, with the last one of the season taking place in late June. So far we are averaging 7-10 female teams at each event.

The plan will be to hold more female specific events again next season and liaise with the clubs to see how they wish to move things forward in future seasons.

Again, the appetite for Walking Football continues to grow each season.

NEW Over 45's/Master's Football

Somerset FA have this season hosted two brand new Over 45's events. The idea came about from conversations with both Legends League (Over 35's) players and Walking Footballers (50+).

The Over 45's provision is set up to help bridge the gap between Legends League players who are 45+ and coming to the end of their Legends League time but do not wish to go into Walking Football, as they are still able to run. It's also helping those walking footballers who can still run and wish to play in a running format of the game but do not want to play in the Legends league against players who are 35+ and in some cases 15-20 years younger.

Setting up this brand new provision and bridging the gap will then mean that Somerset FA can potentially offer a full player pathway for male players in the county, meaning they never have to stop playing the game they love!

The plan is to liaise with the teams over the summer to see where they wish to go with it. We hope to then make these more regular from season 24/25 onwards and see where it goes.

Club Maintenance Grant

We once again launched our Club Maintenance funding scheme in early 2024. The scheme gives clubs the opportunity to apply for funding (up to £350) for materials and/or equipment to help improve their facilities. Funding can potentially be provided for items such as:

- Paint for re-decoration of club house/changing rooms etc.
- Replacement goal nets.
- Line marker.
- Improve dug outs.
- Tea hut refurbishment.
- Improvements to clubhouse/changing room including lighting, boiler work etc
- Maintenance on ground.



- Kitchen refurbishment
- Providing safety measures to club facility.



As of June 2024, we have paid out just under £4000 to Somerset clubs. Some examples include:

- Sporting Weston (Paint/Decorating Materials)
- Ilchester (Goal Nets)
- Paulton Rovers (Line Marker Paint)
- Old Inn (Paint/Decorating Materials)
- Templecombe Youth (Kitchen Improvements)
- Burnham United (Roof Improvements)
- Odcombe (Goal Nets and Line Marker)
- Nailsea United (Changing Room Improvements).

Aaron Clements

Senior Football Development Officer (Male Pathway)



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

Women & Girls

Number of Registered Females participating: (target 4019) **Actual: 5214** (29.7% increase)

Wildcats Programme

The Weetabix Wildcats programme has been successfully running for over seven years, offering recreational football opportunities to children aged 5-11. With more than 30 active providers in Somerset, the programme continues to thrive locally.

The programme is transitioning to the new 'Book Football' portal, enhancing usability and accessibility for providers. Although no additional funding is available for the 24/25 season, existing resources such as kits, equipment, and training modules continue to support the programme.

The Weetabix Wildcats programme benefits from robust support and collaboration with The County FA, Community Champion Geoff Stevens for on-pitch assistance, and Equal Game Ambassadors Caroline White and Avril Cooke for off-pitch club support.

The Weetabix Wildcats program has demonstrated resilience and adaptability over its seven-year run, continuing to support young football players in Somerset. With the transition to a new online portal and ongoing support from key community figures, the programme is well-positioned for future growth and development despite funding challenges. The strategic focus on identifying areas for expansion promises to further enhance the programme's reach and effectiveness.

Squad Girls Football Programme

The Squad Girls Football Programme, catering to females aged 12-15, has been successfully running for three seasons with 14 active programmes in Somerset.

The programme is highly accessible, allowing clubs to apply at any time. Each participating club benefits from £600 funding, kits, equipment, and excellent online resources.

The Squad Girls Football Programme has established a solid foundation over three seasons, providing valuable recreational opportunities for 12-15 year-old females in Somerset. With flexible application options, substantial funding, and excellent resources, the programme is well-supported and poised for growth. The focus on identifying and filling gaps over the next four years will ensure continued expansion and success.

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 start of the season, the league had a restructure to accommodate an increase of new teams at the start of 23/24 season. The league restructured into a Division 1 and Division 2 (North and South). This has worked well to try and limit the amount of travelling for teams, particularly within Division 2 via the geographical split.

Division 1 Winners – Yeovil Town Women, who have now been promoted to the

SW Regional League. Banwell applied for and were granted promotion by the JLC but have chosen to remain in the Somerset County Women's League for season 24/25.

Division 2 North Winners – Weston Super Mare Women Reserves



Division 2 South Winners – Yeovil Town Development

The league AGM took place on Monday 17th June, with 14 new teams applying to join the league (1 of which was Middlezoy who withdrew from the SW Regional League to join the County League). 13 new teams were approved to join the league and the constitution for the league will now be presented to the member clubs and voted to approve ahead of the 24/25 season.

Somerset Girls League

The Somerset Girls League hosted a full season, delivering an U10s Development League, U11s Development League, U12s, U13s, U14s, U15s and U16s. On Saturday 18th May, we hosted the Girls League Cup Finals for U11s, U12s, U15s and U16s age groups, hosted at Street FC. This was an excellent day full of great football and a real showcase event.

The forecast for Season 2024/2025 is looking very positive, with 10 new clubs (15 teams between them) 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 2024/2025:

- U9s/U10s Development League
- U11s
- U12s
- U13s
- U14s
- U15s
- U16s

The League AGM was held on Monday 24th June and the league are providing a Manager's Meeting on Monday 2nd September, ahead of the new season starting on 7th September 2024. The league is developing really well, ensuring each age group is stable and sustainable when new changes are proposed and brought in.

Equal Game Ambassador Programme

In December 23, our existing Equal Game Ambassador, Abi White, had to step down from the role, however this offered an opportunity for new personnel to be involved in the programme and help to develop women and girls football in Somerset. We were delighted to receive excellent applications for the role and due to 2 candidates being fantastic at interview, we were able to appoint 2 Equal Game Ambassadors in February 2024 for the remainder of the Season. Caroline White for the North of the County and Avril Cooke for the South of the County. Their roles are to provide clubs and teams with off pitch support, to ensure their structures are sound and appropriate to support the growth of female football. We recently hosted 2 Equal Game Workshops (11th June in South of the County; and 19th June in the North of the County), inviting clubs looking to develop female football within their club, to come along and gain a greater understanding of what can be in place to help women and girls thrive in football. These workshops were well attended by clubs committed to the female game and we look forward to seeing their provision flourish over the next season and beyond.

Both Caroline and Avril have been working hard since being appointed to their roles and we are delighted will be staying in post for the new 24/25 season.

Community Champion Role

The Community Champion for Female Football in Somerset is Geoff Stevens. Geoff Stevens role is to provide clubs and coaches with on pitch support to deliver female football. Geoff is working across the County helping to upskill and develop female volunteers and coaches to get involved in the game. One of Geoff's roles is to deliver the Stepping Over the Sidelines Workshop – this is a bespoke workshop which can be hosted at clubs, to identify potential new female volunteers to the game. Geoff has hosted 8 workshops across the last couple of seasons, supporting clubs with identifying over 20+ female volunteers between them. Geoff can then provide ongoing support to the new volunteers to ensure they feel supported in their new roles with their clubs.

Emerging Talent Centre

Somerset FA hosted the second season of the ETC in 23/24. Somerset FA's ETC has worked well over 30 weeks of provision. We have supported 72 players through the programme (which is an increase of players from our previous 22/23 season). We have an excellent team of coaches / staff who operate the programme and support our 8-12s (Foundation Phase), U14s and U16s.

The season has run from August 23 to May 24, we've played training fixtures each month, together with fixtures against other South West ETC programmes during half term and school breaks. Somerset FA hosted the South West ETC festival on 11th April at Kingweston playing fields, and thankfully the weather was lovely which helped it to be an excellent event showcasing talented female players competing at a high level.

The ETC will operate again in 24/25 season and trials take place to identify new players on 6th July, with over 300 players signed up. For the first time we are hosting GK specific ETC trials on Wednesday 3rd July with nearly 50 GKs signed up to trial. Once these trials have taken place, we will be in a position to prepare for preseason in August and officially starting the season on 4th September.

Female Alternative Formats of Football

Female Walking Football – this season we have launched the Female Walking Football Festivals as part of our successful project with The FA Delivery Fund. We launched the project by hosting a steering group meeting of existing and new female walking football groups, giving them ownership on what they wanted to see delivered in the County. The plan was proposed to host x 3 festivals (Central venue, North and South of the County). These festivals were hosted in November (Central), March (North) and June (South). 8 teams have engaged with the festivals across the season and the steering group will meet on 5th September to debrief this season, and then look ahead and agree the plan for 24/25 season.

Small Sided Series – 2 small sided series were hosted this season, 1 in October and 1 in February. The purpose of these events is to support teams currently playing friendlies only, and not part of a competitive league and offer players out of football to access football again, but in a safe and friendly environment. Both events were well attended, with 8 teams in each competition. These events are important in the football calendar, as they are hosted in specific months to help newly formed teams (October) and for teams looking to take the next step into competitive league football in the following season (February).

Female Friday Fives Football – this is a new initiative which was piloted on International Women's Day on 8th March and Bridgwater & Taunton College. The principle behind the project is to provide recreational (casual) fun small sided competitive games under lights on a Friday evening, enabling players to take part whilst also making socialising a key feature of the evening. The plan is to host this league once a month on a Friday and this will be open to existing teams, brand new teams, teams of friends and individuals who want to come along and join up with a team on the evening.

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:

- Individual Access Fund – offering financial assistance to individuals to access football
- Somerset FA Diversity, Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)
- Somerset FA 4 Year Strategy and Operational County Planning
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Calendar
- Female Walking Football Project & Pathway (FA Delivery Fund)
- Somerset FA improved 'Inclusion' Webpage and content
- Somerset FA Staff Recruitment & Processes
- Annual Report Planning
- Development of Referees
- Social Media for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Rainbow Laces & Football vs Homophobia Campaigns

The IAG has developed some new partnerships through the course of the season, supporting communities across Somerset to better access football. Following Somerset FA's Preliminary Equality Standard Award and recommendations, North Somerset has been a priority area for development of these partnerships:

- LGBT+North Somerset Forum
- Broadoak Academy Culture Festival
- VANS - Volunteer Action North Somerset
- CYP (Children & Young People) North Somerset

Rachael Lawler-Edwards

Football Development Officer (Female Participation & Inclusion)



Football Development Officers' Leagues & Clubs Report

England Football Accreditation

The continued use of the Clubs Portal has made the accreditation process much more streamlined. We are in a position where most clubs are now familiar with the accreditation process and able to log into the portal to apply/renew their application.

The number of clubs achieving England Football Accreditation has increased, which is shown by the number of clubs on each star rating below:

2022/23 Accredited Clubs

3 Star ★★★	12 clubs
2 Star ★★	47 clubs
1 Star ★	124 clubs

Over the last season, the number of 2- and 3-star clubs has decreased. This was expected as these clubs were given an additional season to complete their player pathways when the England Football Accreditation star rating system was introduced.

2023/24 Accredited clubs

3 Star ★★★	6 clubs
2 Star ★★	29 clubs
1 Star ★	163 clubs

Moving forwards, we will continue to focus on supporting clubs to provide more varied playing opportunities and increase the number of 2- and 2- star clubs.

Coach Development



2023/2024 was a successful year for Coach Development, with more coaches attending than previous seasons. We were able to offer a wide range of workshops spread across the County.

Events have taken place across several locations in the county; it has been great to see coaches engaging with these events and being able to offer them face-to-face support, particularly with the move to online courses. The success of these events has only emphasised the need to engage with coaches as much as possible, in turn having a positive influence on matchday behaviours and environments for players across Somerset.

Coach CPD Topic	Date	Number of Coaches Attended
Unlocking Potential: Maximising Player Development	Monday 4 th September	31
Developing a Positive Environment	Monday 25 th September	27
Club Philosophy: Putting team principles into practice	Wednesday 11 th October	25
5 Steps to Practice Design	Monday 23 rd October	14
The Essence of Coaching	Wednesday 8 th November	36
Warm Up: More than just a preparation tool	Thursday 30 th November	42
Managing Behaviour	Friday 8 th March	28
How to Manage and Observe Difference	Monday 18 th March	8
Endurance Training for Youth Football	Thursday 18 th April	26
FUNdamentals for Coaches	Monday 22 nd April	15
Linking Players to Units, to Teams	Sunday 28 th April	13
Coaches Conference 2024	Sunday 9 th June	36

The Coach CPD Calendar finished in style with the Coaches Conference held at Huish Park. The day was a great success and demonstrated the growth of Coach CPD across the county.

In addition, we have continued to offer the Female Coaches Corner CPD sessions. These have been mixed, with low numbers but a real impact on the coaches that have attended. This is something we hope to improve on in the coming seasons.

The participation and engagement of the coaches during these events highlighted the success of coach CPD and we look forward to organising more next season.

Grants/Funding

The New Team Grant proved yet again to be successful with the funds successfully given to clubs to support the development of new teams. The most common of which was female/disability teams which is great to see. We are supporting clubs with the growth of these alternative pathways so that this links with the England Football Accreditation and increases the number of 2- and 3-star clubs in the county.

Youth Council

The Youth Council has had another successful season, with the integration of new members who have all settled in well and made an impact on some of the Youth Council projects.

Most notably, the Youth Council are preparing for their second SFA Future Leaders Day. Following the resounding success of our first event last summer, we are thrilled to announce the return of the Future Leaders Day on Sunday 7th July 2024 at Strode College Sports Centre.

From 10 am to 4 pm, young people aged 13-16 will engage in a series of interactive workshops aimed at fostering personal development and enhancing leadership abilities. This will be a mix of classroom activities as well as physical activity and games. All workshops will be delivered by the Youth Council members. Notably, we have some of last year's attendees helping in a mentor capacity with the hopes they will join the Somerset FA Youth Council.



It has been enjoyable working with the Youth Council this season and recruitment for next season is already underway. With several of our long-standing members leaving, the Youth Council will need to recruit some younger members. A huge thank you to co-chairs Alex Caird and Georgia Ferdinando who have contributed massively to the Youth Council in their time and will unfortunately be leaving us this summer.

RESPECT / Matchday Experience

Whilst the benefits of children playing football in a positive matchday environment are clear, this is not always seen by volunteers and unfortunately, we have had numerous incidents of poor side-line behaviour again this season.

The Matchday Experience campaign was successful again this season, with over 100 forms completed. This has dropped off since the first launch in 22/23 so another promotion of this will be needed in the 24/25 season.

From consultation with our youth leagues, they were clear that more communication on discipline cases were needed, as well as more sanctions for low level behaviours that negatively affect the game. Therefore, the last 6 months have been spent putting together the Somerset FA Traffic Light Behaviour System. This will be piloted across all youth leagues for the upcoming season:

The Traffic Light System is a County wide behaviour system that has been developed to empower and assist you as clubs to improve behaviour across grassroots football.

	All teams start on green. Good respect scores, no reported problems. Nothing to worry about. Good role models. Positive environment.	
	Reported incident. Poor practice or misconduct. Details passed onto SFA.	The duration spent on amber is 3 months (unless immediately actioned e.g. manager/player removed from team)
	Referee incident. Zero tolerance for referee abuse. Serious incident. Escalation from amber.	If a second incident happens whilst on amber this triggers a red status. Teams remain on red for a maximum of 6 months - this is reviewed by the league monthly, and changes can be made depending on track record/circumstances. Red status = 3 months before returning to amber.
	Meeting with league / CFA with possible removal from the league via SGM.	Two reds = blue OR another report whilst a team is on red.

League has a tracker of cases that are sent to the CFA. This is updated on a weekly basis. If charged, team remain on red unless positive action shown to be taken. May be moved back to amber and on rare occasions back to green (e.g. removal of manager).

League officials deal with reports as appropriate and can resolve or escalate depending on the nature of the incident.

Any reports involving disciplinary matter that is an aggravated case (discrimination), referee abuse etc sent straight to CFA and DSO. Team advised on red pending CFA outcome.

Any movement on the TLS will be supported by the CFA.

Rebecca Snelling
Football Development Officer (Leagues & Clubs)



Disability Football Development Report

Grassroots Disability Football

Affiliated Teams

Current disability affiliation figures for 2023/24 season:

- Adult male: 9
- Adult female: 0
- Adult mixed: 10
- Youth: 11
- Total affiliated teams: 30 (increased by 5 from 22/23)

Disability Football

We have affiliated the highest number of teams since I have started the role in 2019. The main increase has been through the introduction of the youth sections.



Recreational football has once again been a struggle however with the launch of Comets in January 2024 this has slowly started to pick up again with 3 of the 5 allocations from the FA being filled. Allocations from the FA are expected to increase however we have yet to have this confirmed.

Ability Counts League

We have hosted 6 festivals of fixtures for entered teams with our last meeting on Sunday 19th May at Strode College with 11 adult teams competing across 3 divisions. After some initial discussions with other clubs, we may have an additional 2 teams to enter the league for next season.

We have also been successful in launching our first ever Youth Ability Counts division. This division will sit within the Ability Counts League structure and began in February 2024 with 5 teams in the end competing within the U16 division. The plan is to launch an U12 division as well for next season with around 4 teams declaring interest in this. This will be the first time ever that the Ability Counts League will have a full player pathway in its structure.

Recreational Football



This has looked a lot different this year and unfortunately has had a bit of a slow start due to the delay of launching Comets until January 2024. Each County FA was given an allocation of Comets centres with Somerset FA receiving an allocation of 5 centres. 3 of these have been taken up by various organisations with room for more to come on board. We will hopefully hear what allocation we will receive for next season over the course of the summer. With Comets now introduced this will mean that England Disability Football Recreation Centres (Turn Up and Play)

will now only cater for the 12-16 age bands. These will still be funded by Somerset FA with clubs/providers already engaged to deliver these sessions across the county.

Inclusive Schools League

Once again, this competition has gone from strength to strength with this season seeing the most number of teams ever entered into the competition. We held fixtures across March, April and May with nearly all teams attending.

The competition will now be run by Somerset Schools FA with support still from Somerset FA in terms of on the day logistics and financial support.

CPD Event

The newly refreshed Coaching Disabled Footballers course has now launched online making it more accessible for coaches to complete. We unfortunately were not able to arrange the face-to-face CPD element of this due to time constraints on the FA Coach Developers but plans will be made for next season to deliver this.



Impairment Specific Football



All of our impairment specific disability football clubs are still going strong.

Bristol City CP continue to train weekly and engaging other CP clubs to play friendlies against across their U12, U14 and U18 teams.

Bristol Frame Football are still going strong training on Saturday mornings and once again looking to play friendlies against other Frame Football clubs within the region.

Frome Falcons Powerchair Football Club are growing stronger every season with 3 teams now currently affiliated. The club entered the Southwest Powerchair League this season with their development team now also taking part in matches against other development teams in other clubs.

Disability Football Officer

Unfortunately, the person appointed to be the apprentice role gave their notice in February 2024 in which the activities they managed to create being delivered by the trust until the end of this season. After reviewing the remaining budget and timelines it was decided to evolve this role into a full time post based within Bridgwater United Community Trust on a two year fixed term contract.

The officer will create, sustain and transition disability football activities within Bridgwater and its surrounding areas. They will deliver in school and community sessions for disabled children and adults with impairment specific sessions to also be looked at.

Nick Hawkins

Football Development Officer – Disability



Referee's Development Officer Report

Firstly, I would like to thank Matt Eva for his work as RDO before he moved back to teaching in December 2023.

From my point of view the first 'big' project was to engage with all the referees as I think since Covid it was a struggle to engage with referees. Since January 2024 there has been 2 face to face meetings with referees. I have a plan to hold a couple more face-to-face meetings over the coming months.

Given my role begin in January 2024 I am primarily focussed on 2024/2025 season and hope to bring in the

following for referees:

Coaching groups which fingers crossed my aim is to split them in to following group

- Female only
- Promotion Patchway Candidates
- Youth (14- to 17-year-olds)

I am working closely with my counterpart at GFA to try and ensure SFA try and recruit more referees from a diverse background and South Bristol being the main target.

The promotion pathway has been a success this season with a lot of work being undertaken to ensure we try and recruit more match day coaches. Whilst we are talking about the promotion pathway I would like to add my



thanks to Ian Harley for his outstanding work in supporting myself and SFA in the work that has taken place since January 2024.

In terms of 'new' referees there is now a more focus on ensuring they have mentors after they have qualified and again a massive drive has been made in to recruiting more mentors.

Well done to all appointments officers around the County who have worked hard throughout a very long season!

Finally, thanks to all referees in Somerset who have contributed to grassroots football by being there to referee! I can honestly say I appreciate all the referees and the role they bring to the game.

Martin Peters

Referee Development Officer





Designated Safeguarding Officer Report

As we come to the end of the season I hope that it's been overall a positive and enjoyable experience.

All our courses are available [online](#). This season we saw the addition of the [Player Welfare in Open Age Football](#) course, this is a mandated affiliation requirement for all welfare officers and team officials in the adult game – managers, coaches, assistants, physios and first aiders. The course will help team officials to support their players welfare by covering a range of topics that can affect an adult's wellbeing. The course takes around 45 minutes to complete and is free to do. The other change this season is compliance with FA Safeguarding Regulations that relate to needing an accepted DBS. As teams start to register players if any are under 18 this will trigger the need for a DBS, for all the team officials. These individuals must submit their application, meet with a verifier to have their identity documents checked and pay for the application within 21 days of the player/s being registered. Failure to do this will result in a suspension.

The Safeguarding Children Course and the Recertification are both valid for two years now and for youth team officials is a requirement for affiliation so must always remain in date – this will be monitored for compliance throughout the season. 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. If you require any support with this process, please don't hesitate to get in touch by emailing safeguarding@somersetfa.com. We are looking to support clubs with this requirement however if there's a failure to engage we will need to sanction and suspend team officials.



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 always have an in date accepted DBS check. Clubs or leagues using a referee on a regular basis must ensure that if this is for youth football there is a valid DBS in place.

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 encouraging the use of our Matchday Experience QR code to report experiences of anyone involved in the game. Essentially, we want to hear about your match day experience – good or not. 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 continue to address is the offensive, insulting, or abusive behaviour towards anyone under 18 whether that be a referee or a player where the adult is 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 because of an adult's behaviour towards them isn't acceptable.

Throughout the season we have requested that 4 individuals be removed immediately for a period of two weeks, following their alleged behaviour towards a young person, all clubs have agreed. Leagues have been informed of this and when the individual can return to their role. We will continue with both these initiatives through 24/25.

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. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us if we can help in anyway – safeguarding@somersetfa.com

Shirley Needham

Designated Safeguarding Officer





Communications, Marketing and Partnerships

SFA Marketing Report - 2023/24 Season

Executive Summary

The 2023/24 season marked a significant success for SFA marketing. Growth in brand awareness, audience engagement, and partnerships fuelled positive results across the organisation. This report highlights those achievements and outlines areas for further development in the upcoming 2024/25 season.

Key Accomplishments

- **Expanded Reach:** SFA marketing ventured into new avenues, collaborating with local radio, press, and businesses to broaden its audience network. This strategy proved highly effective and offers exciting potential for future seasons.
- **Event Marketing:** The CMP team actively participated in various events, both sports-related and general public gatherings. This established valuable connections and will continue to be a focus area moving forward.
- **Departmental Collaboration:** SFA departments increasingly leveraged the CMP team's expertise for marketing their events and activities. Streamlining these collaborations will be a priority in the coming season.
- **Partnership Success:** The commercial partnership program experienced a boom year, with more active partners contributing to increased investment and positive outcomes for both SFA and its partners. The team identified areas for improvement and remains optimistic about continued growth.

Areas for Development

- **Communication Engagement:** While audience engagement has grown, the report acknowledges the challenge of adapting to evolving platform algorithms. The CMP team recognises the need for continuous strategy adjustments to maximise communication effectiveness.

Looking Forward

The 2022/23 season laid a strong foundation for SFA marketing, and 2023/24 started to build upon them. The CMP team is committed to further building upon these successes by optimising communication strategies, fostering departmental and external collaborations, and expanding the reach of SFA's marketing efforts.

Key Stats Summary

Social Media Audience:

- **Facebook:** 485,833



- **Instagram:** 11,534
- **LinkedIn:** 27,683
- **Website and X:** data unavailable due to technical issues

Engagement:

- **Overall Engagement Rate:** 5% (a significant increase from the previous season)
- **Audience:** Lower total follower count than the previous season but with higher relevance and interaction

Key Takeaways:

- While overall audience numbers are down, the quality and engagement of the audience have significantly improved.
- The platform algorithm changes have impacted reach, but the remaining audience is more relevant and drives better results for other departments.

Looking Forward:

- Investigate strategies to improve reach on platforms like Facebook and Instagram (given account type limitations).
- Consider continuing to focus on engagement and audience quality, even if follower numbers don't increase dramatically.
- Once website analytics are fixed, analyze website traffic data alongside social media data for a more comprehensive picture.

Paul Coltman

Communications, Marketing and Partnerships Manager

Somerset FA / ASGUK





www.somersetfa.com