IN THE MATTER OF THE APPEAL BOARD OF THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

BETWEEN

WEYMOUTH FC WOMEN

Appellant

and

THE FA WOMEN'S FOOTBALL PYRAMID PROJECT TEAM

Respondent

DECISION AND WRITTEN REASONS OF THE APPEAL BOARD

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1. The Appeal Board conducted a hearing on Monday, 24 June 2024, to determine an appeal by the Appellant against a decision of the Respondent, dated 3 June 2024.

2. This hearing was conducted as a Correspondence Hearing.

3. The Appeal Board consisted of Mr Paul Tompkins (Chairperson), Mr Robert Purkiss MBE, and Mr Glenn Moulton. Mr Nathan Greenslade, the Judicial Services Administrator, acted as Secretary to the Appeal Board.

The Hearing

4. The Respondent, on 3 June 2024, notified the Appellant of their decision that the Appellant was to be moved to the South West Regional Women's Football League Division 1 South for the 2024/25 season.

5. The Appeal Board, having taken into account the submissions of the parties' careful consideration, noted the following.

6. The Appeal Board thanks both parties for the manner in which they made their submissions.

7. The Appeal Board noted that the Appellant was appealing on the following ground:

    a. Came to a decision to which no reasonable such body could have come.

8. The Appeal Board unanimously dismissed the appeal on this ground.

9. The Appeal Board reached this decision considering the following:

    a. The following is a summary of the primary considerations of the Appeal Board, however the absence in these reasons of any particular point, or submission, should not imply that the Appeal Board did not take such point, or submission, into consideration when it considered the matter and reached its findings.
    b. On considering the single ground of appeal that the Respondent had come to a decision to which no reasonable such body could have come, the Appeal Board took careful consideration of the Appellant's geographical location, likely mileage to be travelled in the forthcoming season, the time it was likely to take for such journeys and the availability of an alternative solution proposed by the Appellant. The Appellant had previously played in the South West Regional Women's Football League Eastern Division up to season 2023-24 but the League had reorganised for next season meaning the Appellant would now have to make several very lengthy journeys, especially down to Cornwall. This was something that was unknown to the Appellant on 31st March. 2024, the time deadline for applications for a lateral move to their preferred league, the Southern Regional Women's League. This was likely to have a severe detrimental impact upon player retention and recruitment as players would not have the time for the extra travel.
    c. By way of response, the Respondent explained that it had considered this specific move at its allocations committee meeting. The Appellant's arguments were understood but did not in themselves demonstrate that the decision to allocate the Appellant to South West Regional Women's Football League Division 1 South for the forthcoming season was either

wrong or, at least, so unreasonable that no reasonable such body could have come to it. The perspective of the Respondent was nationwide when populating the various leagues and moving clubs has an implication on many other clubs and can have a knock on effect for other leagues and divisions.

d. The Appeal Board reminded itself that it is unable to impose its own preferred solution in such cases and is only empowered by the FA Appeal Regulations to review the original decision of the Respondent. This ground for appeal only allows the Appeal Board to intervene when it considers the Respondent has come to a decision to which no reasonable such body could have come.

e. When looking at league allocations objectively, and the South West Regional Women's Football League in particular, the Appellant finds itself in a location where it is a club close to the border of two leagues and must be allocated by the Respondent in its task of populating the leagues at Tier 6 on a nationwide basis. The South West Regional Women's Football League had asked to be constituted after reorganisation for the 2024-25 season. Placing the Appellant club in the South West Regional Women's Football League Division 1 South was not perverse, irrational or wrong. To do otherwise could have overridden the principle of objectivity and fairness when applying the Regulations and would have risked preferring the Appellant's case over other clubs in a similar position. The Respondent had to consider the integrity of the FA Women's Football Pyramid therefore the Appeal Board is unable to find that that the allocation of the Appellant to South West Regional Women's Football League Division 1 South for season 2024-25 is a decision to which no reasonable such body could have come.

f. For its own purposes the Appeal Board also considered whether the Respondent had "*misinterpreted or failed to comply with the Rules and/or regulations of the Association relevant to its decision*". The Appeal Board took note of the fact that the South West Regional Women's Football League had requested reorganisation through a process open to it in the Regulations and the Respondent's actions had followed that reorganisation. There was a technical argument that with

the league being reorganised this was, strictly speaking, not a lateral move but the Appeal Board still took time to consider whether the FA Women's Pyramid Regulations had been properly applied. The league had requested reorganisation and the Respondent had reacted accordingly thus applying the relevant criteria appropriately and the Appeal Board was unable to find that the Respondent had erred.

10. The Appeal Board considered the matter of costs and decided that there would be no order as to costs.

11. The Appeal Board order that the appeal fee be forfeited.

12. The Appeal Board's decision is final and binding.

Paul Tompkins
Glenn Moulton
Robert Purkiss MBE

24 June 2024