



English Schools' Football Association

Membership Matters

Chairman's Statement

The current crisis has certainly brought about a sense of perspective and what is really important in the world. Sport in general and schools' football in particular will always be important to many of us, but in the wider scheme of things they certainly should not define us or the young people with whom we work. Staying safe and healthy is the immediate priority for everyone.

We have set up an "ESFA COBRA" Committee to manage the current situation. It comprises Andrea Chilton (CEO), Mike Coyne (Chair of ESFA Trustees), Owen Aiston (Chair of Rep Football Committee), Stuart Botham (Chair of Competitions Committee), Mike Spinks (Chair of Development Committee) and me as ESFA Chairman. We invite ESFA staff members to join us as appropriate. We met for the first time at the Council Meeting on Saturday 15th March and convened via a conference call on Tuesday of this week.

The current situation with Covid-19 is constantly evolving but as things stand:

1. ESFA staff are working from home. If you need any advice or support, please e-mail and they will respond as soon as possible
2. We have taken the decision, in principle, to complete this season's ESFA competitions if at all possible. We fully recognise that this will not be easy and indeed may not be possible. It may be possible to complete some competitions but not others. It may not be possible to offer stadium venues for finals. Only time will tell, but we feel that, in the interests of players and staff who have worked hard to reach the latter stages of our competitions, we should do everything we can to offer them the experience of a national final if it is practical to do so. We will of course only be able to proceed when the relevant authorities consider it is safe.
3. The remainder of the international programme for our U18 Boys' and U15s Girls squads has been cancelled. We will actively pursue the possibility of a get-together for both squads when the current crisis is over.
4. Plans for next season will continue as normal and schools, districts and counties will be able to enter the ESFA competitions shortly – the opportunity to do so will be supported by a wide-ranging PR campaign.

(continued)



Chairman's Statement (continued)

These decisions have been taken with the safety and well-being of our staff and membership in mind and above all have been driven by a player-centred approach. We will of course further update everyone via the usual channels of communication, but equally importantly we will very much welcome your suggestions, questions, concerns and advice.

Locally, many of you will be wondering how to complete the current season. It may or may not be possible to re-schedule postponed finals, to hold end-of-season presentations, or to complete leagues. You'll also be trying to make plans for next season and to schedule dates and venues for district and county trials. Contrary to the views of some, I did not know the late S F Gill, who was Chairman of the ESFA the last time there was a National Emergency in 1939. Then, as now, schools' football faced unprecedented challenges. It returned several years later and enjoyed a "golden age" with a resurgence in participation at all levels. Together, we can ensure that, when the current crisis is over, there is a similar boost to all our activities. Indeed, with the "Champions League" format being introduced into our inter-district and inter-county competitions next season, we will be able to offer unrivalled and regular opportunities to players to enjoy the best footballing and educational experiences in the game.

Meeting challenges is part of the ESFA's DNA. We are at our best when we are seeking and finding solutions. I pray that you and your families and friends stay safe and stay healthy.

ESFA Statement - Grassroots Football

Members will have seen that the FA have issued a release stating that the grass roots football season is now closed. Following discussions with The FA, the ESFA's position can now be clarified as follows:

- It remains the ESFA's intention to put on finals for national schools' and inter-District/County competitions for the 19/20 season if it is at all possible, even if this means a set of early autumn finals. We strongly believe that pupils and their teachers have earned this honour and it is incumbent upon us to do our utmost to see these competitions through to a fruitful conclusion. We accept that, ultimately, this will be an issue of timing and logistics
- For local, county or regional competitions, you will undoubtedly have rules which state whether you will share a trophy in certain circumstances, or whether you expect a title to be awarded on results: you may therefore be able to extrapolate from that. If your rules are ambiguous in this matter then you may wish to consult with your members before determining how to proceed
- Should you have any local, county or regional leagues which are still in operation, please contact the ESFA for advice



Report of Council—March 2020

Phil Harding, Chair for 2019/20, opened the meeting by welcoming all members present and inviting Council to consider the implications of the Covid-19 outbreak, particularly on the international programme and for national competitions.

Much of the discussion held at Council has subsequently been overtaken by events, so members are directed to the ESFA's website and social media channels for the latest updates.

Outside of Coronavirus discussions, Representative Committee shared the very positive feedback received about the international squads' joint trip to Eindhoven, courtesy of inspiresport.

Also outside of Coronavirus discussions, Competitions Committee shared the equally positive feedback about the PlayStation F.C. Schools' Cup "Next Level Live" event, held at West Bromwich Albion in February, where schools had enjoyed a variety of educational and footballing activities.

Association Development Committee fed back on the detailed discipline report provided to them, showing that 294 cautions had been processed to date this season, with 50 dismissals/standard red cards. 24 of the cautions were "sin bins". Plans, subsequently on hold, for disability festivals were also reported with thanks to Ray Ashley, co-opted disability adviser, for his specialist advice on developing this provision.

Trustees reported on the good progress with the development of the ESFA's new IT system; on the Commercial Director's live negotiations with potential sponsors; on the setting of a prudent budget and on the drafting of a new business plan. Council endorsed the recommendation of Trustees to formally co-opt Marvin Robinson to Council at the end of his three year tenure as Independent Council Member, retaining his valuable skills whilst allowing for the Honorary Auditors to appoint a new ICM.

Council members held further discussions about the Player Passport and agreed that some written guidance should be provided to Membership on implementation. Council members felt that local and regional opportunities (subject to Coronavirus restrictions) should be taken to help Membership understand and adopt the Player Passport.

Council received a report on the state of sanctioning across ESFA's membership and commissioned further detailed work to clarify, simplify and better communication sanctioning expectations.

Council agreed a timeline for recruiting elected members, noting the retirement at the end of the season of John Martin, SW Council Member and 18/19 Chair, with thanks for his concerted efforts on behalf of the ESFA



Council Vacancies

The ESFA has a number of Council vacancies for the 2020/21 - 2022/23 seasons in all four regions.

Following the letter sent to Membership by Andrea Chilton earlier this month, we would be grateful if you could consider nominations for Council within your area.

Nominations are being accepted until 3 April - so if you do have an individual in mind, please ensure their nomination is forwarded to Andrea by this date.

You can find the nomination form and further information on our website [here](#).



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