



# Membership Matters

## A Message from the Chair

As my year as Chair draws to a close, I just wanted to use this month's piece to thank and congratulate Membership on another great season of schools' football.

I have to say, this year has flown by. One that has seen record numbers of participation, new levels of engagement and our willing volunteers championed with our new Reward and Recognition Awards.

It was my pleasure to hand out the awards at our National Finals at Stoke City to individuals who have gone above and beyond to ensure schools', District and County football thrive in their areas. Many congratulations to Aaron Boyd, Colm Rafferty, Alfie Hobbs, Kevin Laundon and Craig Smith who were our first recipients. Congratulations also goes to the Michael Syddall Girls' Football Team and Ollie Sachdeva who won the Schools' Football Team Achievement Award and the Schools' Football Player Award respectively. Well done to all.

July, 2023



The National Finals were, as always a wonderful advert for schools' football, played with in the true spirit of school sport, effort, attitude, determination, good sportspersonship and fair play. It was a privilege to attend and see the endeavours of all culminating in a wonderful spectacle. A huge thanks to Stoke City, West Bromwich Albion and all of the other venues for allowing us to hold our finals in a fantastic setting, one that provides so many memories for pupils across England.

Schools' Football week in partnership with Pro:Direct Sport was, as always another roaring success with 235,235 students taking part in a SFW activity and 15,228 teams taking part. This initiative was backed by the DfE and nearly 2,000 schools took part. I had the pleasure of being at one event at Hewens Primary School in Middlesex and the joy and enthusiasm from students, staff and parents/carers was marvellous to see.

Our recent AGM on Saturday 8th July was well attended and thank you to those who were there at our online meeting. As you are aware, the meeting was due to be a hybrid one, but as there were issues with National travel that weekend, it meant we were solely online. We originally planned for some of our Membership to share their good practice in a variety of areas and I would like to thank Nicole Mountford, Bruce Vause, George Hounsell and Bob Owen for offering their services to deliver these workshops to membership. We will instead share their outstanding practice with membership in the not too distant future.

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## A Message from the Chair (Continued)

The International season was another highlight with the teams enjoying success on the pitch with the Centenary Shield going down to the final fixture. Our two home internationals were fantastic occasions and I would like to thank both Billericay Town FC and Hednesford Town FC for hosting and supporting the ESFA in such a fantastic manner. The hospitality, generosity and support from both clubs was a testament to them and their communities. The attendance for both fixtures was amazing with full grounds really adding to the marvellous atmosphere.

The Girls had a similar season with their competition, The Bob Docherty Tournament, going down to the final fixture. Again, the generosity from the Scottish Schools' FA in hosting the tournament was fantastic and all matches were played in the right spirit – another wonderful advert for schools' football. I would like to thank Sian Lingham and her coaching team and Luke Hampton and his coaching team for the way they have prepared their squads for the matches and competitions this season.

I am indebted to my Council Colleagues and I would like to place on record my sincere gratitude for their support and contributions this season. They work so hard in their regions, ensuring activity happens and that the messages and information are passed on to our Membership and concerns or questions are passed on for discussion at Council.

The season has not been without its challenges but the ESFA is in a strong position and this is down to our CEO Andrea Chilton and her wonderful team of staff. Darren, Sarah, Dawn Ian, Jacob, Josh, Dan, Jack, Ben, Joe, Haydn, Sarah DC and Martin go above and beyond ensuring our competitions are in place and well organised, our International programme is in order, communication reaches the right audiences, the Trustees and Council are kept up to date with financial matters and that schools' football is played in a safe environment so it is enjoyed by so many. I would like to place on record my sincere gratitude for the support and contribution of all of the wonderful staff at the ESFA.

I would also like to place on record my sincere thanks to all of the schools' football volunteers from all over the country in helping us to achieve what we have in creating quality experiences and lifelong memories for our young people. It would not be possible without your dedication to ensure players are prepared, kits are washed, transport is organised and fixtures are created to create those memories for all involved.

It seems only correct and fitting for my final thank you to be to my family for supporting me in my year as Chair and at times accepting that they go days without seeing me either due to meetings or other commitments that have taken me away from them.

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## A Message from the Chair (Continued)

Also to the Chief Executive Officers at my Academy Trust and Senior Leadership colleagues for allowing me the time away from school and for covering my work. Without this small band of crucial people, it would never have been possible for me to assume and subsequently enjoy my year as Chair of this wonderful organisation; thank you!

I look forward to seeing you at events and meetings in future and to working positively and productively with you as we to continue to drive the ESFA forward into 2023-24 and beyond.

Have a very restful, safe and enjoyable summer.

Best wishes,  
Stuart Botham  
ESFA Chair 2022/23



## ESFA Council Report- July 2023

Council welcomed new member Ian Latta, representing the North, to his first meeting following his appointment at the AGM.

Council Members reflected on the AGM and agreed that a technological solution to voting in online meetings, given the relative complexity of voting rights, should be established before the November meeting of Council.

Council heard from the Captain of the U15 international girls' team who attended the meeting online. Ella commented on the quality of the trials process, including the venues and the quick decision making about selection. She reflected that the preparatory training camp was a good way for the players to get to know each other and to prepare for the Bob Docherty. Ella was clear about safeguarding arrangements and knew who to contact in the event of concerns, as the opening meeting had introduced the Team Welfare Officer. Ella felt that she and her team mates benefitted from good quality coaching and that she particularly liked the reflection and evaluation after each session, led by the Team Manager, which allowed players to be clear about what they could focus on to improve their game. Ella believed the best part of the international programme was working as a team and creating a special bond with fellow players, which has left her with fantastic new friendships. She also reflected that her time in schools' football had helped her to grow in confidence and to increase her skills. Ella challenged Council, when invited to comment on improvements she would like to see in the programme, to find a way to have a longer playing season with more fixtures, to which Council remain committed. The U18 Boys' Captain was not able to join Council but it is hoped that an interview with him can be recorded and published in the near future.

Council reflected further on the international programme and agreed to propose a rule change/special resolution to SAFIB to ensure that venue risk assessments for away fixtures were always shared with the opposition. The ESFA has the role of Vice Chair of SAFIB for 23/24 and expressions of interest for the role were invited from within Council. The incoming Chair proposed to Council that, for the furtherance of the international programme, it may need a Council Committee dedicated to the subject and asked for views. A separate Committee to consider District and County football would also be needed.

With regard to rep football, Council confirmed that play on a Sunday was acceptable, this was considered particularly helpful for the girls' programme where limits on playing opportunities had existed.

The calendar for 23/24 was updated in preparation for the publication of the 23/24 Handbook. Council thanked the outgoing Chair, Stuart Botham, for his service to the ESFA and wished the incoming Chair and Vice Chair, Marvin Robinson and Nick Loftus, every success for 23/24. The meeting closed with good wishes to all for the summer break.



## Council/ Trustees personnel changes

Going into the 23/24 season, we have some personnel changes on the ESFA Council and Trustees:

- Welcome to newly elected Ian Latta, from Knowsley St Helens in Merseyside
- Welcome to newly elected David Burns, from Wiltshire
- Congratulations to Paul Jackson, who has been appointed to the role of Board Safeguarding Champion and succeeds Nick Loftus, who has become the Vice Chair of Council.
- Thank you to Dave Woollaston for his long service as a Trustee, which concluded at the end of 22/23. Dave continues in his role as Council Member.

## Association good practice presentations

We have had a number of Associations produce some presentations with examples of good practice within their Associations. Click the links below to view.

[Gloucester Primary Schools' FA- Financing our district squad](#)

A big thank you to Bob Owen for sharing this presentation

[Hertfordshire CSFA- County girls' football](#)

A big thank you to Nicole Mountford for sharing this presentation

## Date for your diary- Membership Briefing

On Thursday 6th September we will be holding our bi-annual Safeguarding Briefing for Association Secretaries and Welfare Officers. This meeting will focus on the mandatory requirements for playing representative football in 2023/24, whether as part of ESFA National Competitions or in your local activities. Click the link [here](#) to access the meeting. This will be circulated once again to Secretaries and Welfare Officers closer to the date.



## ESFA National Finals

April, May and June 2023 saw the ESFA host 62 National Finals across representative and schools' football from the U11-U18 age groups. 15 National Inter District and Inter County Finals were hosted at Stoke City FC between 30th April and 13th May with the 10 U16-U18 Schools' Cup and ESFA Super League Finals also being hosted during this time. The PlayStation Schools' Cup celebrated its 10th anniversary with the finals once again being hosted at West Bromwich Albion FC from 22nd-25th May. 40 teams competed for the title of National Champions over the 4 days at WBA, with plenty of fun activities alongside the football, including the return of the PlayStation Schools' Cup FIFA championships. Special guests included England Lioness, Ella Toone, who was able to present medals to two mixed National Finalist squads, reminiscent of her own schools' football journey.

On Wednesday 14th June, the ESFA hosted the inaugural Pokémon Primary Schools' Cup Finals at Leicester City FC's King Power Stadium. The finals saw teams from all over the country compete to win in the U11 Schools' Cup, U11 Girls' Cup and U11 Small Schools' Cup competitions. The event, which saw a special guest appearance from Pikachu himself, was a landmark event for the ESFA's partnership with the Pokémon Company International and created a very memorable day for all players, teachers, spectators and supporters involved.

The ESFA went on to host the Champions' Cup plate finals at the Sixways Stadium, Worcester alongside 6 finals for the new Girls' Development competitions, which were launched earlier this year to expand the ESFA's girls' football offering.

For full recaps and results from these finals, please see the links below. You can also head over to the ESFA's YouTube Channel, [ESFA TV](#) to watch full match replays and highlights from this season's biggest events.

[Pokémon Schools' Cup Finals](#)

[PlayStation Schools' Cup Finals](#)

[Stoke City Schools' Cup and Rep Finals](#)



## Reward and Recognition

The ESFA was delighted to launch its inaugural Reward & Recognition Awards for the 2022/23 season, with 7 awards up for grabs for schools and Associations alike.

This new campaign saw the Association reach out to the army of volunteers that continue to dedicate their time to provide opportunities for school pupils across England to participate in local schools' football activity – whatever that may be. After consulting with Membership and the ESFA Council, the Association created four awards for Association Members and three for schools, to recognise the work carried out by individuals across the country and then to reward them for their continued efforts.

The number of nominations and votes that were received across the campaign were much higher than expected, showing that the R&R campaign is a well-received and necessary addition to the ESFA's calendar. Over 40,000 votes were registered across the categories, with the webpages receiving unprecedented levels of visitors.

For a full list of awards and winners, [click here](#) to read the roundup on the website.

The R&R Awards will be returning for the 2023/24 season, so look out for more information on the relaunch, which will be shared in September.



## Power up to play- The importance of a warmup

Power Up to Play is an initiative from the SKIPP charity, set up by medical professionals. Their aim is to improve young player welfare in grassroots sport through prevention of serious knee injuries.

Youth knee injuries requiring surgery have increased 29 fold in the last 20 years. 50% of these could be prevented by the regular use of a simple warm up programme. SKIPP are offering free courses to educate coaches on safety and prevention. Click [here](#) for more information.





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