



English Schools' Football Association

Membership Matters

A message from the Chairman

Don't forget...

RSVP to the AGM via email directly to Andrea Chilton by 21 July 2021.

The ESFA AGM (part 1) is scheduled to take place online, via Microsoft Teams on Monday 26 July 2021 at 7:00pm

ESFA Champions Cup draws for season 21/22 will be published before the end of June and shared with you via email

I recently had the privilege to attend the Southern Counties Finals Day at Oxford City FC - a real celebration of all that is good about schools' football. For me, there was an element of nostalgia, evoking memories of watching, refereeing and organising university football at the club's former home – the famous White House ground – back in the seventies. It was great to see how the club has progressed since then and to experience its wonderful facilities. And the football on display from Under 11 district teams really demonstrated what a quality experience so many districts provide. I was especially pleased to see Bob Owen, who organises these competitions as well as running his own amazing district set-up in Gloucester, and to meet and chat with many other managers, coaches and other volunteers who are giving young people a fantastic introduction to schools' rep football at this age group, as well as lifelong memories. It was also good to chat with parents, who very obviously valued and appreciated the opportunities being given to their sons and daughters.

Of course, we all have similar memories, and we like to reminisce about people, games and events from the past. The past is important, but we cannot live there. Until relatively recently, the ESFA ran one international team, one inter-district competition, and two inter-school competitions with restricted entries of just 64 schools. Times change and will continue to change – the ESFA must adapt, evolve and innovate in order to continue to provide more opportunities to more young people. The ESFA's competitions portfolio has progressively expanded to provide those opportunities. That journey has sometimes been challenging - competitions have been added, replaced by new ones, and different formats introduced. Despite initial protestations when entry fees for schools' competitions were introduced that they would be "the death knell for ESFA competitions", the competitions have flourished.

We are now embarking on a new stage along that journey with the introduction next season of an enhanced competition structure for districts and counties, the ESFA Champions Cup, underpinned by a new and different financial model. As things stand, over 5000 young people will have the opportunity to take part, to experience schools' rep football at its best, and to create their own lifelong memories.

Across different parts of the country, schools' football has had a mixed season. In some areas, colleagues took the decision not to offer any activities, and that was entirely understandable. Elsewhere, the season got underway, endured an enforced five-month hibernation, and then resumed. Just as the Southern Counties Finals were an excellent example of what was possible, so too were others – the north-west in particular has had plenty of inter-district activity, and the ESFA's inter-district and inter-county competitions have also progressed successfully to the final stages. I am grateful to everyone who has made it possible for young people to have some good experiences this season, despite the difficulties.

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Chairman's Message continued...

I am also grateful to colleagues who worked so hard to enable our two international squads from the 2019-20 season to get together one last time, after a gap of 15 months, and to receive their international caps. Owen Aiston was instrumental in securing the excellent facilities at Newcastle University for a match for each squad, and I know from the feedback received that parents and players appreciated the opportunity.

Off the field, it has been a challenging time for staff, Council and Trustees. After several months of negotiations with the FA, which commenced with us having real fears about the future of the ESFA, we have been able to secure a funding agreement for the next four years. We are grateful to the FA for their continued support in difficult times, and for the cordial and constructive way they engaged with us, listened to our concerns, and responded positively. Of course, we would have liked more money, but we can at least plan accordingly. As always, funding comes with strings attached, in particular the need to conform to the FA's new Safeguarding Operating Standards, which in the case of the ESFA are education-specific. When we received these a few weeks back, it very quickly became clear that the scope and scale of the requirements were immense, and the CEO has spent virtually all her time endeavouring to ensure that we can meet them. At the Council meeting on 1st June, members received the mandatory FA safeguarding training from our NCWO, as well as a detailed update from the CEO. In view of the need to prioritise work on meeting the standard, and the very tight schedule to do so, Council unanimously agreed to delay the AGM until later in July. Council also unanimously agreed the content of the AGM agenda paper.

Another challenge that has recently emerged, and which we had not anticipated, is the decision of Danone (UK & Ireland) to terminate their global commitment to the U11 Nations Cup that has borne their name for some years, and with it the cessation of their sponsorship with the ESFA. This results from a change of global leadership and strategy. Initially, having been made aware of the decision, we were bound by commercial confidentiality from sharing it with Membership or seeking replacement sponsors; we are now able to do so. The current season has seen us run inter-district competitions under the Danone banner on a different format than hitherto; this is a temporary arrangement to suit the current circumstances and has proved very popular. Two 9-a-side national knock-out competitions have seen over a thousand players represent their districts, and we know from the feedback received that many colleagues view this format as preferable to the county-based one. Indeed, the latter was in urgent need of reform, not least because some counties have no districts running representative teams and others have just one. We now have an opportunity to address those issues, and to seek new sponsors, but we need to be flexible in our approach. For the districts, maintaining two national knock-out competitions, one for boys and one for girls, or adopting the Champions Cup format, may require us to be able to terminate the existing competitions and introduce new ones - and to do so quickly in time for the start of the 2021-22 season. The same may also be true of the inter-schools' competitions. In order to be able to promote these to potential sponsors, and to give our Commercial Manager full scope in his negotiations with them, it is essential that Council has the flexibility and agility to make decisions rapidly to give young people the opportunity to take part in national competitions. Creating the nostalgia of the future.

I am very conscious, as are Council colleagues, of the concerns that some in Membership still have over the changes that are taking place and the process that has led to their adoption, and I fully understand those concerns. We are also very much aware of the desire of others for the ESFA to change and modernise the competitions it offers to make them more attractive to players and their parents, to counter the perceived attractions of Saturday club-based football, and to facilitate the move towards local financial sustainability. Balancing this pragmatism with principles is achievable if we all demonstrate goodwill and tolerance, work constructively together and commit to seeking solutions that are in the best interests of the young people involved in our activities.



Chairman's Message continued...

Finally, I want to thank our wonderful staff and my excellent Council colleagues who, in extraordinary times have been extraordinary in their commitment to the ESFA, to you, our membership, and to the young people who we work for and with. I am pleased to welcome to the staff Chris Parkin, who joins us as our Governance Manager – he joins a first-class team, who work closely with a Council that works tirelessly on your behalf.

With best wishes
Phil Harding

Association Restructure

The ESFA's Association restructure process has now concluded and CSFAs have been informed of the final outcome from their submissions. CSFAs have been invited to inform their Members accordingly.

Some Associations have taken the option to become "Local Football Organisers" and some, who have not yet been able to provide the documentation necessary to be recognised as a Formal District, will default to LFO status. A reminder therefore that LFOs are not Members of the ESFA and will therefore not be able to cast votes at the AGM.

Any LFO can convert to a Formal District, with their County's support, at any time through the submission of the relevant documentation, and those who continue to seek Formal status are invited to contact Kieren Laverick at the point at which they are ready to proceed.

Thank you for your time and effort in concluding the restructure process

Child Welfare

Our National Child Welfare Officers have been conducting occasional reviews of Members' social media presence with a view to supporting Members to ensure content is appropriate and child welfare information is prevalent. Whilst in the early stages of sampling, it is clear that not all of our Membership publicise ESFA safeguarding policies on their websites and it is therefore recommended that you link your website to the ESFA's child welfare pages, found here, for ease of player/parent/coach/manager reference:

[Child Welfare Policy Downloads – English Schools' Football Association \(schoolsfootball.org\)](https://schoolsfootball.org)

As usual, our NCWOs are available for support should you have any queries.

REMINDER: £30 fee payable for safeguarding training after 30th June - book early to avoid the fee!

Football Development Officer, Kieren Laverick

After 5 years with the ESFA, Kieren will leave the Association in August to pursue a career in football coaching, having been offered a post at South Shields FC.

Kieren has made a tremendous contribution to the ESFA and has done so with great spirit, fortitude and humour. I'm sure you will join us in wishing Kieren every success in his new role.



ESFA AGM - Part 1

Part one of the ESFA's 2021 AGM is scheduled to take place on Monday 26 July 2021 and will, once again, be hosted online via Microsoft Teams.

Notice of the upcoming AGM and relevant paperwork has been sent to Membership this week, please remember that you must confirm your attendance by emailing Andrea Chilton directly by 21 July 2021. Please also ensure you include names and email addresses of all attendees for your Association, as well as highlighting the voting delegate.

Meeting invitations will be sent out around 2 weeks prior to the 26th - all attendees are requested to log onto the meeting at 6:30pm for a 7:00pm start and reminded that there will be a wait once logged on for ESFA staff to register your attendance.

We look forward to welcoming you along and hope attendance figures will be as large as they were in 2020.

Rep Team National Finals 2020/21

As mentioned in the Chairman's message, the ESFA has been delighted to be able to host 9 x Inter Association Cup competitions in 2021, for boys and girls, in district and county cup competitions. Unfortunately, the conclusion of the competitions have coincided with a time of year when suitable Premier League, Football League and higher level non-league stadia have undertaken renovation work on their respective football pitches. As appropriate alternatives are not available, the ESFA Emergency Committee met on Friday and made the decision to postpone hosting the following unplayed finals until September, in order to try and offer the best possible experience for the players involved:

Boys' Under 11 Inter District Cup
Wolverhampton v Lewisham

Girls' Under 11 Inter District Cup
Woking v Liverpool

Boys' Under 13 Inter District Cup
Liverpool v Aldershot and Farnborough

Boys' Under 14 Inter County Cup – played at Southampton FC on Wednesday 16 June
Kent 1-2 Sussex

Girls' Under 14 Inter County Cup
Gloucestershire v Middlesex or Kent

Boys' Under 15 Inter Association Cup
Chester-le-Street, Washington & Derwentside v Croydon

Boys' Under 16 Inter County Cup
Cleveland v Kent

Girls' Under 16 Inter County Cup
Merseyside or Lancashire v Middlesex or Gloucestershire

Boys' Under 18 Inter County Cup
Gloucestershire v Sussex (subject to both teams being able to raise a team following the initial cancellation of the fixture on Tuesday 15 June)

Full results can be found at www.esfa.co.uk/competitions