



House of Commons
Culture, Media and Sport
Committee

Women's Football

Fourth Report of Session 2005–06

Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence

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The Culture, Media and Sport Committee

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Introduction

1. If a random sample of 100 people were to be asked which competitive team sport was the most popular among women and girls, how many would supply the correct answer: football? Probably not many, despite the tremendous growth of the women's game in recent years. The expansion of the women's game, however, is being hindered by various barriers, many of which are rooted in cultural attitudes. The resulting mismatch between enthusiasm and opportunity provided the stimulus for our inquiry, which took place amid a wave of popular enthusiasm for football generated by the FIFA World Cup taking place in Germany. We hope that this report will open a window onto the sport and give some impetus for change where needed.

2. The inquiry was announced in March, and a single day of oral evidence was held in late June, when we took oral evidence from each of the main bodies funding or otherwise supporting the development of women's football, namely the Football Association (FA), which is the governing body for the sport for both men and women; the Football Foundation, a charity set up in 2000 and funded by the FA, the FA Premier League and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (through Sport England), offering grants for football projects; Sport England, a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport which provides core funding to the FA under the Whole Sport Plan, which we discuss later; and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), which provides Grant-in-Aid to Sport England and which promotes the benefits of sport within Government and to the general public. We also took oral evidence from the Central Council for Physical Recreation, the Women's Sports Foundation and from players and others with knowledge of the game at grassroots level. We would like to thank all those who contributed to the inquiry, including those who sent written submissions.

The rise of women's football

3. Women's football in England is not a new sport. As early as 1895 a representative football match between northern and southern women's teams was recorded in London. By the 1920s, women's football in England was attracting considerable interest, although in 1921 the FA banned women from playing on any pitch which was under FA control, arguing that the game was "unsuitable for females".¹ Women continued to play football between the wars, but there was no league structure and there were few dedicated facilities for women. The Women's FA (which was independent of the FA) was founded in 1969, and in 1972 the FA - with the encouragement of UEFA - lifted its ban on women playing on Football League grounds in England. The FA assumed governance of the women's game in 1993.

4. There is no doubt that coming under the wing of the FA in 1993 was of enormous benefit for women's football. It allowed women's clubs to draw fully on the development opportunities offered by the FA; it gave clubs an incentive to improve their standards and gain the FA Charter Standard status, which signifies that a club has achieved a quality

¹ See *Kicking against tradition* by Wendy Owen, page 17, ISBN 0-7524-3427-6

benchmark and which demonstrates to the public, club members and parents that the club is well organised; it has assisted – albeit with limited success – in promoting women’s football to the wider public; and it has enabled links to be built with professional men’s clubs (although not all links have prospered). Sue Lopez, a former England player at international level, told us that the FA had “done all those fantastic things which needed to be done”,² and the Women’s Sports Foundation attributed the recent “massive” growth in women’s football to the “distinct and dedicated initiatives and investment from the FA”.³ Praise also came from the Football Foundation, which stated that the FA “deserves considerable credit for the work it has led on promoting the female game”.⁴ **We strongly endorse witnesses’ praise for the more recent efforts of the FA to develop and give higher profile to women’s football. Without these efforts, it is likely that far fewer girls and women would now be participating in football.**

5. The increase in interest, in raw numerical terms, has been exponential.⁵ In 1993, there were 80 girls’ teams, but by the 2004-05 season there were over 8,000.⁶ More women and girls take part in affiliated competition – structured competition under the aegis of a governing body – in football than in any other team sport. Netball was overtaken in 2002.⁷ According to the FA, 1.6 million women and girls take part in recreational football.⁸

6. Public awareness of the women’s game is still limited; but it has been boosted by television coverage of domestic and international games, particularly the Women’s FA Cup Final, which has been broadcast live by the BBC each year since 2001, the FA Nationwide Women’s Premier League Cup Final, televised live on Sky Sports every spring since its inception,⁹ and the 2005 Women’s European Championships, during which the BBC broadcast live the three games involving the England team. Three million people watched the England versus Sweden game live on BBC2.¹⁰ The Women’s Sports Foundation described the televising of England matches at the Euro 2005 tournament as a “real breakthrough”.¹¹ The film *Bend it like Beckham* has also played a part – the Minister for Sport had “no doubt about that”¹² – and we were told that it had projected a glamorous image which “made the sport look good”.¹³

7. Despite these achievements, we heard that there were major obstacles to further expansion of women’s football. These include the lack of a clear pathway for girls to play football through primary school to secondary school and beyond, variable quality of coaches, not all of whom understand the distinct needs of women and girls in training and

² Q 18

³ Ms Donohoe Q1

⁴ Ev 30

⁵ Football Foundation Q 63

⁶ FA, Ev 34

⁷ Ev 34

⁸ Ev 34

⁹ Ev 39

¹⁰ BBC, Ev 59

¹¹ Ms Donohoe Q 6

¹² Q 116

¹³ Ms Coccozza Q 14

developing skills, an ailing league structure at semi-professional level, and a lack of access both to pitches of acceptable quality and to suitable facilities. Above all, there are cultural barriers which have far-reaching ramifications and which underlie many of the problems listed above. They are also probably the hardest to overcome.¹⁴

Girls' football

8. Girls, like boys, can start playing football competitively in under-seven teams.¹⁵ Sue Lopez stated – correctly in our view – that opportunities at an early age are key to helping girls develop.¹⁶ Some primary schools promote the game for girls and act as local hubs, but others do not. Much depends on whether or not there is an interested teacher at the primary school.¹⁷ Provision of sport for primary school children is an issue which extends beyond the scope of this inquiry and we do not reach a conclusion on it in this report; but, although we are aware from constituency experience of very good provision in certain areas,¹⁸ we note worrying evidence that some core staff at some primary schools are ill-equipped to develop sporting potential. One witness (Wendy Owen) suggested that PE in general in primary school was “in crisis” as it was no longer a compulsory ingredient of training courses for primary school teachers.¹⁹ She believed that, as a result, primary school teachers often felt ill-equipped to take PE classes and that they chose PE time to undertake planning, preparation and assessment work, with PE lessons being taken by contracted staff. Mr Baddeley, Interim Chief Executive of Sport England, was also concerned about primary school PE provision and saw scope for improvement in the training of primary school staff.²⁰

9. For talented girls, the FA licenses Centres of Excellence in parallel to those established for boys. Centres for girls provide weekly quality coaching and a fixture programme for girls aged between 8 and 18. Grant funding is entirely through the FA, which provides over £1 million per annum.²¹ Sue Lopez described the Centres as “fantastic” even though the numbers of girls involved were small,²² and we were told that they exist to provide a technical and educational programme which allows players to develop to the highest possible level.²³ We are, however, concerned at the limited resources available to Centres of Excellence for girls and the disparity between public funding available to them in comparison to that available to Centres for boys. The FA told us that “the boys had eight years of funding at £2.5 million a year through Sport England into [the Youth Development Programme] and the girls’ Centres of Excellence have never had any external funding”.²⁴ Sport England is in fact now withdrawing its support for boys’ Centres of

¹⁴ Ms Donohoe Q 11

¹⁵ Q 106

¹⁶ Q 1

¹⁷ Ms Owen Q 6

¹⁸ Q 45

¹⁹ Q 18

²⁰ Q 45

²¹ Q 91 and Ev 37

²² Q 1

²³ Football Development Officer, Batley Football Centre, Ev 57

²⁴ Q 91

Excellence, having already prolonged it beyond the expected funding term;²⁵ but the Programme will nonetheless continue.²⁶ The cessation of funding is regrettable, but Sport England's policy in providing support for Centres of Excellence for boys but not those for girls was inequitable in any case. **We are extremely concerned that the disparity in funding for boys' and for girls' Centres of Excellence existed for eight years. All funding bodies for sport – not just for football - should ensure that there is equitable access to funding streams for both genders.**

10. The FA funds full-time football development staff in each County Football Association to deliver its development programme. These include 47 Women's and Girls' Football Development Officers "working strategically across the country to introduce the playing opportunities required".²⁷ Emma Wake, the Women's and Girls' Football Development Officer for Essex County FA, told us that having a specific Development Officer had "clearly been of benefit in developing the female game at a grassroots level"; it had fostered an enthusiasm among school clusters for football development programmes specific to girls, and it had led directly to "an increase in activity at all levels, stages and ages of the female game".²⁸ The Football Development Officer at Batley in West Yorkshire added that these posts were "of great value to the female game".²⁹ The posts are funded jointly through the Active Sports Programme by Sport England, the Football Foundation and the FA.³⁰ The Football Foundation has nonetheless decided to reduce, over the course of three years, funding for each partnership from £10,000 per year to £4,000. The FA told us that the decision would put "a massive strain" on partnerships and that it was appealing against the decision.³¹ It added that resolving the situation was "absolutely critical to continuing the growth of the game that has gone on so far".³² Emma Wake told us that there was uncertainty about funding for her post beyond January 2007.³³ **The decision by the Football Foundation to reduce funding for Women's and Girls' Football Development Officers is perverse and detrimental to the development of women's football, and we have written to the Football Foundation to ask that the decision be reversed, particularly in the light of significant historical under-investment in the development of women's and girls' football.**

11. The numbers of women gaining coaching qualifications in 2005 showed an overall increase upon the numbers in 2004, with a healthy rise at the base level (Level 1).³⁴ Emma Wake saw the increase as welcome and "crucial" to female sports development, and she pointed out that coaches were accessible local role models.³⁵ The increase in female coaches

²⁵ Mr Caborn Q 118

²⁶ Q 91

²⁷ Ev 37

²⁸ Ev 13

²⁹ Ev 57

³⁰ Q 103

³¹ Q 102

³² Q 103

³³ Ev 13

³⁴ FA, Ev 38

³⁵ Ev 11

is to be warmly welcomed. We note in this respect the statement by Sue Lopez on the importance of having coaches who understand girls' needs and aims, which do not necessarily correspond to those of boys.³⁶

12. The current FA rules have the effect of prohibiting boys and girls beyond the age of 11 from participating in the same match.³⁷ Most countries do have a rule about the age range in which mixed football is allowed, but there is no consistency about the cut-off age, and the FA's maximum is one of the lower ones.³⁸ The rationale behind the FA's rule is that it has a duty of care to provide safe football for all and that there could be an unacceptable risk of injury to girls after the age when there is a marked difference in the power, strength and speed of males and females.³⁹ However, we note that the FA itself says that "the pace of change in the girls' game means that the technical differences between boys and girls are continually decreasing".⁴⁰ The top age was increased from 10 to 11 following a review a few years ago. The FA is undertaking a further review, to report in September, this time including the Children's Commissioner and young people in the consultation.⁴¹ We heard from players and others how the prohibition could be frustrating both for talented and less able young girls. Wendy Owen told us that she had been one of the best players in her local mixed team but that the rule had "suddenly relegated her to the sidelines", and the standard of play in a newly formed girls' team had not been high enough to develop her ability.⁴² Little appears to have changed: we heard of young girls in the same position today, with no suitable girls' team for them to play for within easy travelling distance. One player told us that she had captained her local boys' team until she was 11 but then had not played for a team again until she went to university: she had missed out on playing, quality coaching, physical development and training and, most importantly, her chance to enjoy herself in a game she loved.⁴³ Faye White, the current England women's team captain, played in an adult women's team from the age of 13.⁴⁴

13. The Women's Sports Foundation described the rule as an artificial barrier to the potential development of girls, and it argued that the separation of young players in coaching and matches should be based on more sophisticated criteria such as weight, height and ability.⁴⁵ Wendy Owen also believed that the rule was "artificial" and unnecessary, since managers and parents would plainly not put children at risk; and she agreed with the course proposed by the Women's Sports Foundation.⁴⁶ The Minister for Sport told us that DCMS had already made representations to the current FA consultation. In his view, although safety and other factors had to be taken into account, selection should

³⁶ Sue Lopez QQ 1 and 18

³⁷ FA, Ev 38

³⁸ Ms Simmons QQ 100 and 98

³⁹ Ms Simmons Q 104; FA, Ev 38

⁴⁰ Paragraph 2.11, Ev 38

⁴¹ Q99 and Ev 41

⁴² Q20

⁴³ Lucy Mills, Ev 62

⁴⁴ Ms White Q 86

⁴⁵ Ev 9

⁴⁶ Q20 and Ev 4

be on merit.⁴⁷ **We recommend that the absolute prohibition on mixed football over the age of 11 should be removed and that an informed assessment by team managers and coaches of individuals' capacity to play in mixed teams should govern selection policy.**

14. As the Minister for Sport told us, this country has a poor record in continuing participation in sport after school-leaving age: he described this as “one of the big fault lines”, noting that 70% of young people in the UK did not continue an active sport on leaving school, as against 20% in France.⁴⁸ The Central Council for Physical Recreation and Sport England echoed this point.⁴⁹ One of the aims of the Government’s PESSCL⁵⁰ programme is to strengthen links between schools and local sports clubs, thereby increasing the number of children who are members of accredited sports clubs and potentially encouraging the thread of participation to continue beyond school.⁵¹ The logic behind the programme is sound but is presently less relevant to girls’ football, which currently struggles even to make the transfer from primary to secondary school, let alone the move from secondary school to community club, or to further or higher education. Wendy Owen pointed out that there is a huge potential in further and higher education to “develop leaders and coaches, to educate them within the education sector and to then have them feeding down into the schools and into the clubs”.⁵² It seems that the disincentives to girls to play football after the age of 11 may have very far-reaching consequences.

Women’s football

15. Football has traditionally been seen as a male sport, and the women’s game has to deal not just with indifference but actual hostility. There are deeply entrenched cultural attitudes to the game, and breaking down the barrier is a slow process.⁵³ Courage and determination have been required: we heard from one witness that not a season went by without her hearing intimidation or some form of derogatory language from the sidelines, whether from groundstaff or passers-by.⁵⁴ Players may have to overcome their own concerns that what they are doing is “marginal” or “a bit weird”.⁵⁵ One witness identified a perception that women “did bad things to football pitches” and a reluctance in some men’s clubs to let women have pitches when they were in a good condition.⁵⁶ **We would hope that the FA would combat prejudice against women in the same way as it has successfully tackled racism in football.**

⁴⁷ Mr Caborn QQ121-2

⁴⁸ Q 115

⁴⁹ QQ 25 and 27

⁵⁰ Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links

⁵¹ DCMS, Ev 46

⁵² Q 18

⁵³ Q 11

⁵⁴ Ms Donohoe Q12

⁵⁵ Ms Donohoe Q6

⁵⁶ Ms Coccozza Q 10

16. Most women's matches, including those of the Premier League, are played on Sunday afternoons, and pitches will often be in poor condition after having been used by several other teams over the weekend. As a result, games may be called off or rescheduled, making it difficult for clubs to market their games and attract larger audiences.⁵⁷ Women's Premier League teams normally play on pitches owned by men's clubs, but they have little influence on those clubs' decisions on scheduling of matches.⁵⁸ Even at these higher levels postponements are common, so the League is disrupted and the season loses impetus and "narrative".⁵⁹ Besides, Sunday afternoon is not a popular time for families and potential spectators, nor always for the players themselves. Recreational players find that they have to choose between playing themselves or watching elite players perform.⁶⁰

17. In England, 75% of football pitches are owned by local authorities.⁶¹ Not all of these are of the same standard as pitches owned by clubs, and we heard directly from one women's team that had difficulty in finding a pitch which was of decent quality or which had not already been booked by a men's team.⁶² We note that section 84 of the Equality Act 2006 requires a public authority, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. The Women's Sports Foundation told us that it would examine the impact of this duty on the allocation of local authority sports facilities.⁶³ When we asked the Minister of Sport whether he would draw local authorities' attention to their responsibility and track the result, he was not certain whether the Department already had such a strategy.⁶⁴ **DCMS should examine the scope for using section 84 of the Equality Act 2006 to guide local authorities in taking a stronger line in achieving a more equitable allocation of their pitches between men's and women's teams.**

18. Even when pitches are available, there is a strong chance that facilities will be unsuitable for women. The Football Foundation funded an assessment of England's football facilities (the Register of English Football facilities – "REFF") and found that, in 2003, 94% of changing rooms had no facilities for girls and women.⁶⁵ The FA estimates that £2 billion would be needed to bring current facilities up to an acceptable standard.⁶⁶ Where there are facilities, they range from good to very poor, with perhaps only one female toilet between 30 players and officials. Teams using school pitches sometimes opt not to hire the associated facilities or toilets because of the extra cost.⁶⁷ We were not surprised to hear that

⁵⁷ Q83

⁵⁸ Ms Simmons Q96

⁵⁹ Paula Cocozza Q 15

⁶⁰ Women's Sports Foundation, Ev 8

⁶¹ Football Foundation Annual Review 2003/04

⁶² Stephanie Cannon, Ev 61

⁶³ Ev 8

⁶⁴ Q 120

⁶⁵ Ev 27

⁶⁶ Q 93

⁶⁷ Q 7

research by the Women's Sports Foundation had found that poor playing, changing and showering facilities actually deterred some potential female players.⁶⁸

19. The Football Foundation has made a strong start towards the improvement of facilities for women's teams, by stipulating that all new facilities which it funds must cater for both male and female participants; and it also explores with applicants what use the local community will make of the facilities. In doing so, the Foundation questions applicants on when women's and girls' teams would have access to pitches.⁶⁹ The Foundation also helps by supporting provision of hard-wearing synthetic pitches.⁷⁰ **The provision of adequate pitches and facilities is essential if team sports are to prosper. The Football Foundation is undertaking valuable work in improving that provision, and we support wholeheartedly its approach in making financial support for facilities and pitches conditional on equal access for men and women.**

20. The Football Foundation told us that 70% of sports facilities are owned by local authorities.⁷¹ There are incentives for local authorities to improve these facilities. The Minister for Sport pointed out that part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment for local authorities included a leisure block, of which sport was part, and he said that it would "now be in the interests of local authorities to continue to invest in that because it will be against their quality marks that the judgment [on performance] will be made".⁷² **We believe that local authorities have a social responsibility to provide sports facilities fit for use by all sections of the community. The Government should lose no opportunity to remind local authorities of their responsibilities in this field.**

Elite women's football

21. The top women's teams in the country compete in the Women's Premier League, which has a National Division and two feeder divisions, Northern and Southern. Each division has 12 clubs. The League is not, however, flourishing. The dearth of very talented players makes it difficult to sustain a core of high-performing clubs; and the best players gravitate towards the few consistently successful teams, leading to a wide gap between the best teams and the rest. Faye White, who plays for Arsenal Ladies FC, told us that the league was becoming "unstable" and that the lower clubs were struggling to keep up. Top clubs are not truly challenged, and it is more difficult to attract spectators to uncompetitive games.⁷³ Sue Lopez confirmed this picture, describing the standard of play by teams other than those in the top handful as "poor". In her view, women's football is not presently a realistic spectator sport, and she viewed attempts to professionalise the women's game as misguided, noting that clubs which had gone down this route had generally not been the most successful in the League.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Ev 8

⁶⁹ Ms Fitzgerald Q66 and Ev 27

⁷⁰ Q 66

⁷¹ Q 68

⁷² Q 108

⁷³ Q 81

⁷⁴ Ev 2

22. The FA acknowledges a “severe imbalance” in the League and has concluded that a thorough review is required. A working group is currently assessing the case for a new Super League, which the FA suggested would raise the quality of competition, maximise revenues through sponsorship, gate receipts and media rights and provide visible role models.⁷⁵ The FA argued that public funding of £3 million each year for five years would be required to carry this proposal forward.⁷⁶ **While we can see significant benefits in the FA’s proposal for a Super League for women’s football, we do not believe that the case has yet been made for this to be resourced from public funding, and we expect the FA to make a financial commitment in line with its emphasis on women’s football as one of its priorities.**

Sponsorship and other support

23. Since 2002, the Nationwide Building Society has been the FA Partner for Women’s Football, supporting the England Women’s Team, the FA Women’s Cup, the Nationwide Women’s Premier League Cup and the Nationwide Women’s Premier League.⁷⁷ As the FA’s sponsorship cycle ends in July 2006, it is negotiating with other potential sponsors and expects to make announcements in August.⁷⁸ Some clubs in the FA Women’s Premier League are now attracting their own sponsors.⁷⁹ At lower levels, many women’s clubs seek sponsorship from local companies, but they meet with varying success, sometimes depending on club members having parents or relations who own businesses and are willing to help.⁸⁰ One Football Development Officer said, however, that there was always a local business keen to be associated with a positive, thriving area of the game and that girls’ and women’s football was seen locally as being not so cynical or tainted as the boys’ and men’s game.⁸¹

24. Sportsmatch (England), which is the Government’s business sponsorship incentive scheme for grass roots sport, said that it had traditionally been difficult for women’s sport to attract sponsorship at a senior level and that a lack of serious media coverage (both nationally and locally) had been cited to it as the prime reason. At grassroots level, however, Sportsmatch had found that local sponsors do not usually differentiate between men’s and women’s sport and that they often stipulate that their investment programmes should involve both boys and girls.⁸² The number of awards made by Sportsmatch to women’s football increased from 45 in 2000-01 to 55 in 2005-06, but the total value of awards actually fell during that period from £759,000 to £490,000, apparently because more

⁷⁵ Ev 36

⁷⁶ Ev 36

⁷⁷ Ev 39

⁷⁸ Ev 39, FA Press notice 3 July 2006

⁷⁹ Ev 39

⁸⁰ Emma Wake, Ev 13. In Kirklees, most clubs have secured support from the local business community: see submission by Sports Development Officer, Kirklees Council, Ev 58

⁸¹ Football Development Officer, West Lothian Council, Ev 59

⁸² Ev 68

applications are being made for match funding for smaller, more locally based sponsorship.⁸³

25. We also heard that support from men's clubs, both financial and otherwise, was very patchy, with some offering little help other than with provision of team kit.⁸⁴ Arsenal FC serves as a positive example: Faye White (who plays for the Arsenal women's club) recognised the financial commitment from the men's club as having been "very good over the years and ... always improving", which had been a factor in the women's team's success. The gains were not just financial ones: the team had access to good facilities, the men's training grounds and occasional use of the Highbury stadium.⁸⁵ At the other end of the scale are a number of men's professional clubs such as Manchester United and Fulham FC, which have withdrawn funding from their respective women's teams.⁸⁶ The Minister for Sport described this approach as "very short-sighted".⁸⁷ In his view, clubs which were in a position to pay high wages and which benefited from substantial funding from sponsorship and broadcasting rights deals had "a bit of social responsibility" to share some of those proceeds with women's football clubs.⁸⁸

26. Money may not in fact be the most valuable form of support that a professional men's club can offer to a women's club. Both Sue Lopez and Wendy Owen were wary of women's clubs being too heavily dependent on men's clubs, and Sue Lopez acknowledged that professional clubs could not be seen simply as charities.⁸⁹ Paula Coccozza pointed out that the FA had encouraged closer links between men's and women's clubs, with women's clubs taking on the prestigious names of the men's clubs; the women's clubs had gained prominence but had lost some of their independence, and the men's teams had not always been willing to provide the funding to "bring women's teams under the umbrella".⁹⁰

27. The Premier League described forms of support offered by its clubs, including community schemes providing opportunities for girls of all ages to play, school and after-school coaching programmes, occasional access to grounds, links with County FA development programmes, and sponsorship of Centres of Excellence. Some clubs offer publicity on match programmes for women's team matches, which is an effective form of endorsement. Questions remain, however, about whether these efforts are confined to a few clubs which take a vigorous approach to outreach. The Premier League memorandum described efforts by clubs to promote the women's game on their internet sites,⁹¹ but a brief glance at five top clubs' sites in early July (when this report was prepared) found that some made no mention of women's football, either of the local women's professional team or of women's football in the local community. Typing "women" into the Premier League

⁸³ Ev 68 and Sport England, Ev 26

⁸⁴ Wendy Owen, Ev 5

⁸⁵ Q 78

⁸⁶ FA, Ev 36

⁸⁷ Q 116

⁸⁸ Q 117

⁸⁹ QQ 4,5 and 18

⁹⁰ Q 3

⁹¹ Ev 61

website search engine generates no results that offer any information about women's football matches or development.

28. Not all professional men's football clubs are rich: some indeed are in severe financial straits and are not in a good position to subsidise women's teams. In any case, giving funds may not be the answer, as levels of support would differ and the present polarisation of ability could increase. **We recommend that the FA should encourage professional men's clubs to make it standard practice to share training pitches and facilities and grounds with elite women's clubs. It is in the interests of professional clubs to be more imaginative in their approach to building links with women's clubs and publicising their matches in match programmes. By doing so, clubs can expect to increase their support base.**

Governance

29. The Football Association itself still has some way to go in helping to change culture. The Structural Review of the FA by Lord Burns in 2005 identified a need for the FA Council to become more representative of the diverse interests in the game, and these "diverse interests" clearly include women players and supporters. The Head of National Football Development at the FA told us that some changes had been made in response to Lord Burns's recommendations and that there were now some female heads of department;⁹² but the general perception remains that there is little female representation, particularly from those who have gained knowledge and experience from playing and coaching at the highest level.⁹³ Sport England agreed that many governing bodies were still "traditional" in their make-up, and it encourages all sporting bodies to look at their own governance structures.⁹⁴ The Minister for Sport noted that there was not one woman on the FA Board and that there was only one female member of the 90-strong FA Council. He was clearly unimpressed.⁹⁵ We were also disappointed that the FA did not think it necessary to send either the Chief Executive or any member of the Board to give oral evidence to the Committee. **The FA should demonstrate that it recognises the value of drawing women into governance and promoting female role models as a way of increasing recognition and widening the fan base, thereby benefiting the sport as a whole.**

Media coverage

30. The FA and the Premier League are better placed than any to develop broadcasting opportunities for women's football. The televising of matches involving the England team at the Women's European Championships in 2005, at prime-time and live on BBC2, turned out to be more attractive to viewers than many had anticipated. The Women's Sports Foundation described the coverage as "a real watershed" and it commended the FA for its work in media liaison, which had ensured wide coverage of the tournament by

⁹² Q 97

⁹³ Sue Lopez, Ev 1

⁹⁴ Mr Baddeley Q 32

⁹⁵ Q 114

national daily newspapers.⁹⁶ The FA, for its part, was grateful for the support shown by BBC Sport and for DCMS's role "in ensuring that the BBC was as supportive as possible".⁹⁷ Clearly, media coverage will promote awareness, and awareness will drive media coverage. The FA served the women's game well in co-ordinating media coverage of the Euro 2005 tournament, but this should not obscure the fact that support for grassroots football and a stronger women's league will be necessary if the initial flare of media interest is to be sustained over the long term.

Looking to the future

31. We have been impressed during the course of this inquiry by the commitment of players taking part in a sport which they enjoy, despite prejudice, lack of encouragement and practically no money. The Football Association, as guardian of the women's sport, has also shown commendable and increasing awareness of what needs to be done. This is clearly demonstrated by the very stretching targets for levels of female participation and numbers of women coaches which it has agreed with Sport England under the Whole Sport Plan, which serves as a funding agreement.⁹⁸ **Women's football needs to carve a niche for itself and establish its own territory where it can shine and attract support. A women's summer league, when teams would face limited competition for pitches and spectator support, seems a promising way forward. A home nations championship would also raise the game's profile and might well be attractive to broadcasters and sponsors.** The British Olympic Association pointed out that the football competition at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be the largest international football event to take place on UK shores since 1966. We share the BOA's view that the presence of a GB women's football team competing in 2012 "will encourage thousands of girls and young women to take up the sport, not only as players but as coaches, referees and volunteers".⁹⁹ **We therefore urge that every effort should be made to ensure that our top women players have the opportunity to compete in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We very much hope that the success achieved in developing women's football over the last ten years will continue for the next ten years and beyond.**

32. The popularity of football is growing quickly and there seems no doubt that this will continue into the foreseeable future. The men's worldwide professional game may well be the inspiration for the majority of youngsters but it is the pleasure and satisfaction from playing that makes the game so attractive. It is clear that women enjoy playing just as much as men and the only reason for the difference in numbers participating has been the culture and the lack of opportunity to start playing at primary school and beyond. It has been recognised in recent years that participation in sport by people of all ages improves health and well-being. It is clear that women's football is a sport with enormous growth potential. **It is recommended that a task force be set up involving the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Department for Education and Skills and the football authorities, to produce a blueprint for the future of women's football.**

⁹⁶ Ev 10

⁹⁷ Ev 39

⁹⁸ Ev 35; Q 22/23

⁹⁹ Ev 66

Conclusions and recommendations

1. We strongly endorse witnesses' praise for the more recent efforts of the FA to develop and give higher profile to women's football. Without these efforts, it is likely that far fewer girls and women would now be participating in football. (Paragraph 4)
2. We are extremely concerned that the disparity in funding for boys' and for girls' Centres of Excellence existed for eight years. All funding bodies for sport – not just for football - should ensure that there is equitable access to funding streams for both genders. (Paragraph 9)
3. The decision by the Football Foundation to reduce funding for Women's and Girls' Football Development Officers is perverse and detrimental to the development of women's football, and we have written to the Football Foundation to ask that the decision be reversed, particularly in the light of significant historical under-investment in the development of women's and girls' football. (Paragraph 10)
4. We recommend that the absolute prohibition on mixed football over the age of 11 should be removed and that an informed assessment by team managers and coaches of individuals' capacity to play in mixed teams should govern selection policy. (Paragraph 13)
5. We would hope that the FA would combat prejudice against women in the same way as it has successfully tackled racism in football. (Paragraph 15)
6. DCMS should examine the scope for using section 84 of the Equality Act 2006 to guide local authorities in taking a stronger line in achieving a more equitable allocation of their pitches between men's and women's teams. (Paragraph 17)
7. The provision of adequate pitches and facilities is essential if team sports are to prosper. The Football Foundation is undertaking valuable work in improving that provision, and we support wholeheartedly its approach in making financial support for facilities and pitches conditional on equal access for men and women. (Paragraph 19)
8. We believe that local authorities have a social responsibility to provide sports facilities fit for use by all sections of the community. The Government should lose no opportunity to remind local authorities of their responsibilities in this field. (Paragraph 20)
9. While we can see significant benefits in the FA's proposal for a Super League for women's football, we do not believe that the case has yet been made for this to be resourced from public funding, and we expect the FA to make a financial commitment in line with its emphasis on women's football as one of its priorities. (Paragraph 22)
10. We recommend that the FA should encourage professional men's clubs to make it standard practice to share training pitches and facilities and grounds with elite women's clubs. It is in the interests of professional clubs to be more imaginative in

their approach to building links with women's clubs and publicising their matches in match programmes. By doing so, clubs can expect to increase their support base. (Paragraph 28)

11. The FA should demonstrate that it recognises the value of drawing women into governance and promoting female role models as a way of increasing recognition and widening the fan base, thereby benefiting the sport as a whole. (Paragraph 29)
12. Women's football needs to carve a niche for itself and establish its own territory where it can shine and attract support. A women's summer league, when teams would face limited competition for pitches and spectator support, seems a promising way forward. A home nations championship would also raise the game's profile and might well be attractive to broadcasters and sponsors. (Paragraph 31)
13. We therefore urge that every effort should be made to ensure that our top women players have the opportunity to compete in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We very much hope that the success achieved in developing women's football over the last ten years will continue for the next ten years and beyond. (Paragraph 31)
14. It is recommended that a task force be set up involving the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Department for Education and Skills and the football authorities, to produce a blueprint for the future of women's football. (Paragraph 32)

Formal minutes

Tuesday 18 July 2006

Members present:

Mr John Whittingdale, in the Chair

Philip Davies
Paul Farrelly
Mr Mike Hall

Alan Keen
Mr Adrian Sanders
Helen Southworth

Draft Report (Women's Football), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 32 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the report to the House.

Several papers were ordered to be appended to the Minutes of Evidence.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 25 July at 10.15 am

Witnesses

Tuesday 27 June 2006

Page

| | |
|--|-------|
| Sue Lopez MBE , former England international footballer, Wendy Owen , former player, Helen Donohoe , Women's Sports Foundation, Emma Wake , Girls/Women's Football Development Officer, Essex County FA, and Paula Coccozza , Guardian journalist | Ev 14 |
| Steven Baddeley , Interim Chief Executive, and Lisa Wainwright , Head of National Sport, Sport England, and Brigid Simmonds , Chairman, Central Council for Physical Recreation | Ev 21 |
| Paul Thorogood , Chief Executive, and Clare Fitzgerald , Senior Development Manager, Football Foundation | Ev 31 |
| Kelly Simmons MBE , Head of National Football Development, and Faye White , Captain of England Women's Team and Arsenal player, The Football Association | Ev 40 |
| Rt Hon Richard Caborn MP , Minister for Sport, and Paul Heron , Head of Sport, Department for Culture, Media and Sport | Ev 51 |

List of written evidence

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| 1 | Sue Lopez MBE | Ev 1 |
| 2 | Wendy Owen | Ev 3 |
| 3 | The Women's Sport Foundation | Ev 6 |
| 4 | Essex County FA | Ev 11 |
| 5 | Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) | Ev 20 |
| 6 | Sport England | Ev 26 |
| 7 | The Football Foundation | Ev 27 |
| 8 | The Football Association | Ev 34 |
| 9 | DCMS | Ev 45 |
| 10 | Professional Footballers Association (PFA) | Ev 55 |
| 11 | Oli Winton | Ev 55 |
| 12 | Institute of Sport and Recreation Management (ISRM) | Ev 56 |
| 13 | BBC | Ev 59 |
| 14 | The Premier League | Ev 59 |
| 15 | Stephanie Cannon, Battersea WFC | Ev 61 |
| 16 | Lucy Mills | Ev 61 |
| 17 | Anne Ellwood | Ev 62 |
| 18 | Minnie Cruttwell | Ev 64 |
| 19 | Harry Smith, Team Manager, Crosfields Under-11s "A" Team | Ev 65 |
| 20 | British Olympic Association | Ev 66 |
| 21 | Sportsmatch (England) | Ev 67 |

List of unprinted written evidence

Additional papers have been received from the following and have been reported to the House but to save printing costs they have not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Record Office, House of Lords and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to the Record Office, House of Lords, London SW1. (Tel 020 7219 3074). Hours of inspection are from 9:30am to 5:00pm on Mondays to Fridays.

David Taylor Partnerships Ltd

Wiltshire Women's and Girl's Football Development Officer

Norfolk County FA

Worcestershire FA

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership

Phil Johnson

SkillsActive

Reports from the Committee since 2005

Session 2005–06

| | | |
|----------------------|---|-------------------|
| First Special Report | Maritime Heritage and Historic Ships: Replies to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2004-05 | HC 358 |
| First Report | Broadcasting Rights for Cricket | HC 720 |
| Second Report | Analogue Switch-off | HC 650 I, II |
| Third Report | Preserving and Protecting our Heritage | HC 912 I, II, III |

Oral evidence

Taken before the Culture, Media and Sport Committee on Tuesday 27 June 2006

Members present:

Mr John Whittingdale, in the Chair

Philip Davies
Mr Mike Hall
Alan Keen

Mr Adrian Sanders
Helen Southworth

Memorandum submitted by Sue Lopez MBE

Women's football received the full support of the FA in 1993 after being handicapped by a 50 year ban (from 1921–71) and receiving scant support when it was run by the Women's FA (organising body from 1971–93). The game has benefited from the FA input of resources and development initiatives. In particular, compared with pre-1993 days, participation figures have grown massively, especially at youth level, which was almost non-existent before, and the international team now receives unimagined support.

There is even an international talent identification and development pathway now, with Centres of Excellence for girls aged eight to 16 mostly licenced to men's professional clubs. Some female coaches, too, have benefited by being "fast tracked" through their FA coaching awards and now work with England international teams, though most women's teams are led by male coaches and managers.

In 1993 the FA in some ways "bolted on" women's football and 13 years on, development and governance need a more modern approach and fresh ideas. Some of the issues which need to be addressed to assist the modernising process and raise standards in all areas are as follows:

1. GOVERNANCE

The significant power in the women's game essentially remains with the top FA administrators. There is little representation from females, especially those who have gained knowledge and experience from playing and coaching the game at the highest level. Undoubtedly there are still echoes of the pre-1971 days permeating the women's game which can be best summed up by the feeling that it is a "man's game and women are allowed to play under certain conditions, . . . and women have to seek approval and support from the male establishment for the continued development of the women's game". (see Scraton S, foreword to Lopez S, 1996 *Women on the Ball, a guide to women's football*).

Question: Why isn't the FA Women's Committee more inclusive of former women players especially those with experience in leadership roles in development and coaching?

Recommend:

Modernise governance of the game and introduce fresh ideas and approaches to a development model more suited to the modern women's game.

Involve in positions of genuine leadership and power, former players and coaches with knowledge of player development and coaching knowledge and insight into the particular nuances of the women's game.

2. PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Pre-1993 there was little or no organised opportunity for girls to play club or schools football. Subsequent FA investment and English Schools FA involvement improved the situation (The Theresa Bennett case in 1978 helped improve opportunities for primary school aged girls to play football—see *Bennett v the FA in Women on the Ball op cit*) but development is patchy with variations in standards of coaching, training, and competition. Much of the development is based on the boys/male model, which can handicap girls because some girls have different developmental needs than boys. Physically, socially and psychologically girls can be different. Also, they tend to take fewer opportunities to develop "game sense". Boys are likely to hone fundamental movement and game skills in informal (playground) "street games" and are more immersed in the traditional male "football culture". Girls can also be disadvantaged because Primary school sport often relies on outside football coaching which may not have the necessary skills suitable for the development of girls' sport.

As a result of the foregoing, the pool of elite girls' talent is very small and some struggle to find teams who can provide appropriate standards to develop further, which is often why these girls prefer to play with boys of comparable standard rather than with lower ability girls.

FA Centres of Excellence (52 across country) identify and develop talent and usually provide more highly qualified and experienced coaching than at girls' clubs, plus sports science support. However, most Centre Directors and coaches are part-time and need more and better professional development to meet the needs of developing talented girls. Centres are mostly staffed by men, but continuity is difficult to maintain because the higher qualified male coaches often gravitate towards the more lucrative male coaching arena.

Recommend:

Consider more funding for Centres of Excellence to lay down the vital quality player, coach and sports science development foundations:

Use Centres as Beacons of good practice for the development of players, female coaches and officials (referees officiate Centre matches to provide a less hostile training experience for newly qualified referees) and as examples of good practice to local clubs.

Develop a female coach mentoring system for all Centres for newly qualified coaches.

Adopt LTAD principles for coaches at Centres of Excellence and girls teams asap. (see sports coach UK Coaching for Long Term Athlete (player) Development to improve participation and performance in sport 2005) to provide optimal training, competition and recovery going through the LTAD sports child centered development framework, which is based on human growth and development and teaching Fundamentals of movement applicable to all games.

Develop the girls' Academy system to continue Centres' good practice at 16+ and to develop female players, coaches and officials.

Consider allowing girls to play with boys at both elite and grassroots level in a controlled, safe environment to raise standards of play, as is the practice in other countries.

Schoolgirl football

Provide more support for Primary school teachers to deliver the Fundamental movement skills (6-9 years) according to LTAD principles and assist them with generic "invasion game" skills in the Learning to Train phase (8-11). In this way children develop movement literacy and "game sense", to better enable participation in "multi sports" and meaningful physical education which in turn provides a sounder base for later specialisation in football or any other game.

3. ADULT CLUBS AND FUNDING

Apart from a handful of women's teams, (currently eg Arsenal, Charlton, Everton, Bristol Academy) the standard of play is poor. The huge gap in playing standards and economic viability between the top FA Premier League (FAPL) and the rest is too great—illustrated by Arsenal outplaying fellow FAPL team Leeds in this season's televised Cup Final, resulting in it being a poor advert for the game.

Good attendances at "one off" highly promoted internationals and cup finals cannot be replicated in the FAPL and therefore cannot reflect potential reliable income streams for clubs. There needs to be an acknowledgement that women's football is not a realistic spectator sport and therefore marketing it based along the lines of the top men's teams is flawed. In fact, for many players the main priority is to play for fun and recreation and there is little ambition to attain a high playing standard. This is highlighted in a study in Scotland, and has some parallels in England too. (see The "Pals", the "professionals" and the "conformers": The meaning of football in the lives of women footballers in Scotland; Jessica MacBeth in *The Bountiful Game? Football Identities and Finances*, University of Lancashire International Football Institute, 2005). MacBeth's study found there were sub cultures within the football sub culture: mainly those who wanted to participate for fun and to socialise and be with "pals" while another group took playing very seriously and had a very "professional" attitude and kept their social life separate rather than linked as was evident from the "pals".

The unrealistic expectation that a lot of players are good enough to be professional still prevails partly as a result of the FA's proposal in 2000 that the game moves to professionalism. In reality, players need to be encouraged to take more responsibility for running their own teams as was the case pre-1993 when even England players received only travelling expenses for international matches.

Recommendations:

Develop a realistic Business plan for the FAPL and other leagues not solely based solely on spectator nor sponsorship income streams and investigate realistic partnerships with men's clubs, and in particular community programmes.

Learn from the successful models (Arsenal, Charlton, Bristol Academy, Doncaster Belles) and the unsuccessful "professional" models (Fulham, Birmingham, Southampton Saints).

Devise and offer County FA workshops to help players and clubs develop realistic budgets and business plans.

Encourage local boys and men's clubs to work closer with women's teams, with incentives, in the same way Charter Standard currently encourages boys clubs to take on girls' teams.

Until clubs can be financially viable, consider north and south league only with top teams playing off to produce a champion club.

19 June 2006

Memorandum submitted by Wendy Owen

INTRODUCTION

Wendy Owen was a member of the first official England Women's squad at a time when the sport really took off. They played their inaugural international match against Scotland in 1972, were the first to train on the pitch at Wembley Stadium and to travel to Europe to play countries such as Holland, France and Italy.

Appearing in 16 out of 18 internationals in the mid-1970s, after finishing her playing career, Wendy was in the first group of women to gain the FA Coaching Certificate. She has since spent 25 years coaching and teaching sport and now a University Lecturer, she holds the UEFA "B" Licence and is a coach educator.

Wendy's autobiography entitled "*Kicking Against Tradition—A Career in Women's Football*" was published in June 2005 by Tempus.

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AT ALL LEVELS AND THE RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT WIDER PARTICIPATION IN AMATEUR AND ELITE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

The path of progress in women's football in England

1.1 When I started out in 1969, women had been banned for nearly 50 years from playing on any pitch that came under FA control; in 2005 the England Women's team kicked off the UEFA European Championships in the City of Manchester Stadium, home to a Premier League side.

1.2 When the WFA was formed, in 1969, to govern the sport in England, there were 44 registered clubs;¹ by the 2003–04 season (when the sport had been governed by the FA for 10 years) there were around 7,000 teams in England, including 1,000 for women and 6,000 for girls.²

1.3 In 1974, there were only five qualified female coaches in this country; in 2000, there were 201 at Preliminary Certificate Level and above.³

1.4 In 1973 (when I set up my first college team at Dartford) there was no inter-collegiate women's football; in the 2003–04 season, 105 teams took part.⁴

1.5 In 1975, when I participated in the very first International women's football tournament to be staged in this country, there was no television coverage at all; matches during Euro 2005 were broadcast live by Eurosport and the BBC.

1.6 In 1972 when the very first England match took place, there was only one open age England team and no development programme for promising young players; by 2004, there were England squads at U15, U17, U19, U21 and Senior Levels, a National Player Development Centre, 19 Academies for 16–19 year olds and 51 Centres of Excellence for talented young girls.⁵

1.7 Great progress has obviously been made on many fronts but in my opinion there is still a long way to go to achieve equity for women's football in this country.

¹ From the WFA Mitre Cup Final programme, 1973.

² From information supplied by Kelly Simmons, FA Head of National Football Development, 2004.

³ Football Association Coaches' Association. (2000) *Membership details*, in Williams, J (2003). *A Game for Rough Girls? A history of women's football in Britain*. London: Routledge.

⁴ From information supplied by Stewart Fowlie, BUSA Sports Programme Manager, 2004.

⁵ From information supplied by Kelly Simmons, FA Head of National Football Development, 2004.

Development needs

1.8 Expansion of Opportunities for Girls to Play and Develop Skills in Football in Both Schools and Local Clubs provision seems to vary both within and between geographical areas. In schools, provision is often dependent on having an interested teacher. In some areas even when girls have been introduced to the sport in school they struggle to find a local club. There is a need for funding to establish and develop more girls' and women's teams and to train and develop female volunteer and professional coaches to work in both schools and clubs.

1.9 Mixed Football

Opportunities for girls to play competitive football are further constrained by the FA rule that prevents girls from continuing to play mixed football after the age of 11. I have received personal correspondence from several parents of young girls in this position, since the publishing of my autobiography. They are concerned that there is no suitable girls' team for them to play for within easy travelling distance and that their daughter's skill development and motivation level will be adversely affected by being banned from playing alongside boys in their current team in which they are often one of the strongest players. This is an issue that the FA could look at again. With girls maturing earlier, on average, than boys they are often physically capable of playing mixed football well beyond the age of 11. Matching children for height, weight and ability may be a better way of organising sport competition.

1.10 Women's Football in Higher Education

1.10.1 Women's football in Higher Education is in my opinion under-developed. The FA did put some money in during the mid-1990s in the form of grant aid to colleges to assist them in paying for the services of an FA coach to help develop a women's team. The FA has also helped BUSA (British Universities Sports Association) to secure a small amount of funding through the FA Youth Trust and has put some money into subsidising coaching award courses in HE.

1.10.2 There is huge potential however to develop women's football right across the Higher Education sector in this country where sports facilities, residential accommodation and courses in Sport and Exercise Science abound.

A growing number of institutions are currently investing (or have imminent plans to invest) in the improvement of their sports facilities, are appointing Directors of Sport and putting into place strategies aimed at both increasing participation and supporting elite sport (three quarters of institutions, for instance, now offer sports bursaries to elite performers). This overall trend was recently identified by Sport England who now recognises the sector's potential and in 2004 stated its intention to raise the profile of Higher Education and Sport.

1.10.3 With the Government aiming to get 50% of young people aged 18–30 into Higher Education; this represents a big potential talent pool of bright young females that could provide the players, coaches and development managers for women's football in the future.

1.10.4 HE is a sector that Sport England, the Government and the FA should consider as ripe for future investment. University Sports Volunteer schemes, for example, if supported by additional funding for training and development, have the potential to fill the skills gap in qualified female football coaches and organisers to work in schools and clubs throughout the country, thus providing role models for girls and more opportunities for them to participate and develop.

1.11 Equitable and Sustainable Funding Arrangements for Girls' and Women's Football

Women's football has received public funding as part of community sport initiatives during recent years but these funding packages are often for a fixed term. Whilst the idea is that any project developed will become self-sustaining after that time, in reality this is sometimes not the case. I have witnessed at first hand (and heard of other examples from colleagues) cases where successful Coaching Centres for girls' football that have been set up and run for several years, giving females valuable playing and coaching opportunities, only to be wound up once the funding cycle has come to an end. The funding is often then switched into the next new initiative. This issue needs to be addressed by those concerned with the distribution of public funds for sport.

2. AVAILABILITY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PLAYERS TO DEVELOP SKILLS, STAMINA AND PERFORMANCE

2.1 As previously mentioned, provision for the development of elite women's football has improved considerably ("by 2004, there were England squads at U15, U17, U19, U21 and Senior Levels, a National Player Development Centre, 19 Academies for 16–19 year olds and 51 Centres of Excellence for talented young girls.")

2.2 It remains to be seen, however, if this investment can translate into results at major tournaments. The England Women's team is currently ranked 12th in the FIFA world rankings. Our best finish in a major competition in recent times came back in 1995, when the team reached the semi-finals of the UEFA European Championships. At Euro 2001 and 2005, England qualified for the finals but failed to progress from the group stages. England's best finish in the World Cup again came in 1995, when they reached the quarter-finals in Sweden. The team failed to qualify for the finals of subsequent competitions, which were won by the USA (1999) and Germany (2003). The team however remains unbeaten since Euro 2005 and is currently at the top of its qualifying group for the 2007 World Cup.

2.3 There is still room for greater investment in elite development as we are still playing catch up with the top ranked nations.

2.4 One of the problems is that it is only comparatively recently (1993) that the FA took control of women's football in England and it was not until 1997–98 that the funding and the talent development structures began to be put in place. The top ranked nations have had all these things for considerably longer. Germany (the current European and World Champions) for example, started later than us but from the inception of the National team in 1982, it was brought under Germany's governing body of football and was well funded and resourced with the aim of becoming a world leader.

2.5 The USA players spent five months together in a full-time training camp before the last Olympics, during which time they were on salary. To all intents and purposes the USA team is professional and whilst the England team retains its essentially amateur status, it is going to be difficult to match the world leaders in the game.

2.6 The structure and funding of elite women's football clubs is in need of urgent review. Most of the teams in the National Division of the FA Women's Premier League have in recent years tried to develop links with their professional men's club (which is something that the FA has been keen to encourage). Arsenal Ladies for instance are fully integrated into Arsenal Football Club and are funded by them. Whilst a few women's teams have similar set ups, others get little more from their professional men's club than some help with the provision of the team kit. With little financial incentive for them to get involved, we are seeing a worrying trend for top clubs to withdraw their funding from their women's teams (Manchester United, Birmingham and Fulham are cases in point).

2.7 For women's football to develop to its full potential in this country, the FA needs to explore ways in which a more competitive, stable and professional elite club structure can be developed. This needs to be one that will ensure better facilities for both players and spectators and attract sponsorship and media attention.

3. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE GAME INCLUDING COACHING AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 Whilst more women have qualified as coaches in recent years, the number of women to have achieved qualifications at Level 2 and 3 remains very low (402 in 2005, compared to 6,505 men).

3.2 My own personal experience of attending the UEFA "A" Licence course (the highest level of coaching qualification) in 2000 and 2001 was that two weeks at Lilleshall National Sports Centre as one of only two women in a group of 36 candidates, on a residential course staffed entirely by males, was a really tough test of both physical and mental endurance. The course is demanding for everyone but for a woman (struggling not to let herself and other women down, as one of the few female candidates on a predominantly male course) it is doubly difficult.

3.3 The FA has now introduced a mentoring programme for female coaches who are working towards the "A" Licence, which should help. In my opinion it would also be really beneficial if at some point in the future (when there are enough female candidates to do so) the FA could run a women-only "A" Licence course, as they have done in the past for the Level 2 Coaching Certificate. Getting more female tutors involved in the delivery of "A" Licence courses would also, in my opinion, be desirable and could really help to give a much needed boost to the number of qualified female coaches at the top end of the coaching ladder in this country.

3.4 Women in the Scandinavian countries and the USA benefited from better equal opportunities policies in sport in the 1970s, which boosted female participation in football and saw women becoming top administrators and national coaches from far earlier than has been the case in England. Social attitudes towards women playing football were also very different. Football in those countries has been seen as a sport for all and not primarily as "a man's game". The situation in England has improved in this respect; it is currently more acceptable for females to play football than it has been at any time in the past. We now have women in high positions in the FA (Kelly Simmons, as Head of National Football Development and Hope Powell, as the Women's National Team coach). There is still room for far greater representation of women in Senior Management roles within football in England, however, as these roles are still primarily male dominated.

4. MEDIA COVERAGE AND SPONSORSHIP OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

4.1 Media coverage and sponsorship of women's football are inter-related topics. If the game is going to attract the sort of crowds and sponsorship that will be necessary to make a professional women's league viable in the future, then the sport is going to need to become far more high profile in the media than it is currently.

4.2 The content and the extent of coverage both in the national press and on television has improved considerably since I was playing for England in the 1970s. In the 2003–04 season, five games were shown on Sky and The Women's FA Cup Final was transmitted live on BBC1, attracting an audience of 2.2 million. Four national newspapers currently cover women's football on a weekly basis. This represents a great improvement on the situation that existed as recently as three or four years ago. Compared to the pages and pages of coverage devoted to men's football in every tabloid and broadsheet on every day of the week, it is still a drop in the ocean, however, and, if you don't know when and where to look for the few reports that are written on the women's game, they are easily missed.

4.3 In order to increase participation, spectatorship and sponsorship in women's football in this country, raising the profile of the game in the press and broadcast media is still going to be very important for the future. Young girls need some female icons to look up to and the media has the power to create them. There are plenty of candidates in the current England women's squad and Euro 2005 put them momentarily in the spotlight. The game needs more consistent media coverage however in order to keep them there.

Memorandum submitted by The Women's Sports Foundation

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Football has an enormous amount to offer. It stands in a uniquely privileged position with regard to financial power, media coverage, infrastructure, participation and national affection. This powerful position makes football ideally placed as a delivery mechanism for a whole myriad of public policy priorities ranging from social inclusion to literacy to health. To that end it has already contributed a great deal however it is within women and girl's football that the full potential has yet to be realised.

1.2 As the figures in this paper illustrate women and girl's football is growing and is now the number one sport for females in England. It is easy therefore to assume that all is well and that no changes are needed. It is important to note however that this growth comes against a backdrop of poor and falling participation amongst women and girls across sport. Furthermore it is also a level of growth far short of its potential.

1.3 We therefore believe that football has a critical role to play in maximising the opportunities for women and girls to get active. A survey of 2000 young people in 2002 found that as many as one in three girls want to play football. As things stand they will not all have the chance, and that needs to be addressed.

1.4 Football has already delivered many layers of benefits for boys and for men. If it is to do the same for women and girls more work is needed. This paper will outline what we believe to be the priorities for moving forward:

- Fair and equitable investment in women and girl's football, at the very least comparable to that given to other minority sectors in the sport (eg disability and BME) and ultimately on a par with boys;
- An increase in the quantity and an improvement in the quality of facilities;
- Commitment from England's richest football clubs to invest in community and in particular women and girls football.

1.5 We strongly welcome the Committee Inquiry and believe a thorough review of the investment into women's football is timely. Our perspective has been compiled from consultation with colleagues and other sports organisations, individual grassroots participants and from desk research. The following is our written evidence in accordance with your stated terms of reference.

THE WOMEN'S SPORTS FOUNDATION

2.1 Founded in 1984, the Women's Sports Foundation is the national independent organisation committed to improving opportunities for women and girls in sport and physical activity in all roles and at all levels. We work across the UK through a combination of advocacy, information, education, research and training.

2.2 Despite a perception that gender inequality is no longer an issue, women and girls still continue to fall behind in all aspects of sport and physical activity; not only in participation but in funding, media coverage and in all aspects of management and professional development:

- Even by the age of seven girls are expressing negative attitudes towards physical activity and sport [Sport England 2002].

- 40% of girls have dropped out of sports activity by the time they reach 18 [Youth Sports Trust 2001].

2.3 We believe that all women and girls should have the chance to experience the myriad of benefits that sport can bring:

- Young girls who play sport have a more positive body image and higher self-esteem;
- Playing sport enhances an active lifestyle and encourages a healthy approach to diet;
- Girls who participate in sport are less likely to have unplanned pregnancy, or to smoke or use drugs;
- Sport is an effective tool for girls to reduce the symptoms of stress and depression;
- Playing sport teaches girls to be assertive, confident and strategic;
- Sport teaches girls leadership skills as well as teamwork;
- Playing sport generates energy and improves work and educational achievement.

SECTION A

The development of women's football at all levels and the resource requirements to support wide participation in amateur and elite women's football

3.1 In summary

- While one in three girls want to play football, there is a postcode lottery of actual opportunities to play.
- Funding and investment in football leaves women and girls by far the poorest relation, receiving less than one tenth of the ring fenced money allocated to BME and disability football through the Football Foundation.
- Facilities across the country are of irregular and often extremely poor quality. Women and girls are more likely to be put off sports participation by poor playing, changing and showering facilities.

MODEL FOR SUCCESS

3.2 More women and girls are playing football, record crowds are watching the elite game (29,000 attended the England versus Finland game) and Women's Euro 2005 was an unprecedented success. This success has come through specific investment in the infrastructure of women's football and programmes such as Active Sports. It is a model for development that is without a doubt working as far as it can. There is however enormous scope for improvement.

3.3 According to FA figures there were 132,000 affiliated female footballers in England in 2004–05. However this is still only 9% of all affiliated footballers (male membership is around 1.27 million). By contrast, in Germany there are as many as 860,000 female German Football Association (DFB) members. Furthermore a comparison with Sweden reveals the extent of the imbalance of female to male player registration in England (as of December 2005 there were 56,328 registered female players in Sweden compared to 187,042 registered male players. This equates to 30% of all registered players).

3.4 Furthermore, there is little doubt that girls want to play football. A survey of 2,000 young people in 2005 found that more than one in three girls list football as their favourite sport to play and that 83% of children believe girls should be "allowed" to play "boys" sports such as football or rugby.⁶ Research by Sport England has also found that the proportion of girls taking up the chance to play football in school at least once a year has increased from 24% in 1994 to 37% in 2002.⁷

3.5 However for far too many girls the opportunities do not exist to play football at school or for a local club. Unlike boys and men's football where a breadth and depth of football opportunities exists for all levels of ability (from pub team to semi-professional), in women and girl's football there remains a postcode lottery. Access to football depends heavily on luck, individual teacher attitudes and on parental ability to travel long distances. Furthermore where clubs do exist there are limited opportunities across a diversity of experience and aptitude resulting in the exclusion of girls of lower confidence and ability who are far less likely to try football, stay playing football or to return to it later in life.

⁶ Tesco's Sport for Schools and Clubs, 2005.

⁷ Young people and sport in England 1994–2002, Sport England.

FUNDING AND INVESTMENT

3.6 Over the last 10 years the financial injection into football as a whole has been astounding—football has never been wealthier. It is well documented however that, even when the investment comes from the public purse, not everyone in football is getting a fair share of the riches.

3.7 In the period following the Taylor Report millions of pounds of public money has been invested in football. Women and girl's football has not seen their fair share of that. For example, each year £2.5 million of National Lottery money is given to a Youth Development Programme running centre's of excellence that only cater for boys. The Football Foundation has a budget of £45 million to dedicate to the grassroots of football each year of which £15 million is derived from the public purse. However while they have specific investment targets for funding into disability football (£2.794 million invested to date/target £3.4 million) and ethnic minorities (£4.055 million invested to date/target £3.9 million target) they do not currently have a target for women and girls football. Their current investment into women and girl's football via the Active Sports Programme is a paltry £450k.

3.8 Football itself (eg the FA Premier League and FA) has made a significant contribution to grassroots football—amounting to community projects worth £200 million over three years. We would like to see more of that invested in women and girl's football. We also believe that more can be done directly by central government to facilitate further football participation amongst women and girls. Figures from the CCPR indicate that central government investment in sporting infrastructure is the lowest per capita of the major countries in Europe. In 2003–04 it equated to a mere £2 per head of the population; less than half that invested by France.

3.9 Women and girl's football remains the poorest relation with regard to investment in football. We believe that even a small increase in funds could make a significant difference in stabilising the infrastructure of women's football. This is a straightforward issue of parity, in particular through organisations such as the Football Foundation who are charged with distributing public money.

FACILITIES

3.10 In 2002 the FA and Football Foundation conducted an audit of football facilities in England. This survey found a need for an investment of over £2 billion to bring current facilities up to an acceptable standard for existing levels of participation alone, before any desired increases.

3.10 WSF research highlights that women and girls are particularly likely to be put off by poor playing, changing and showering facilities.

3.11 The lack of football pitches is of particular significance to women and girls. Too often pitches and training facilities are simply not available and women's leagues, even the National FA Premier League, are confined to the least desirable time allocation available—Sunday's at 2 pm. This means that women's football is almost universally exiled from the mainstream of football participation. At this time pitches are of a poor quality having been played on all weekend, many families and potential spectators use that time for other activities and the opportunities for publicity and reporting of games is limited. What's more, as all women's football is played at this time, recreational players are denied the opportunity to watch the elite players perform. Women's football is therefore caught in a viscous cycle in which it is marginalised and unable to fulfil it's complete potential.

3.12 We will be examining the potential impact of the Public Sector Gender Duty on the allocation of local authority sports facilities however we would also like to see greater investment in modern football facilities such third generation pitches.⁸

SECTION B

Availability of opportunities for young players to develop skills, stamina and performance.

4. In summary:

- Elite women's football has improved however it's existence remains fragile.
- While the FA has invested in 51 centres of excellence funding for girls academies is still only one tenth of that for boys.
- Too many of the biggest football clubs in England are letting women's football down.

4.1 The England team are improving steadily and have a real chance of qualifying for the Fifa World Cup Finals in China in 2007. They are currently ranked 12th in the world.

4.2 The establishment of 51 licensed FA Centres of Excellence has supported this improvement, however, as is highlighted above there remains a postcode lottery for starting, staying and excelling in women and girl's football. While player affiliation as a proportion of the population is increasing in England, it still falls

⁸ Third generation pitches are synthetic turf pitches that are low maintenance and allow for multi-sports, all year round use.

a long way short of other successful football nations. Greater choice and a diversity of opportunities through an increased number of clubs, increased number of female coaches and improved facilities is critical for building upon progress made to date.

ESTABLISHED PROFESSIONAL CLUBS

4.3 As with men's football, professional football clubs provide a focus for the elite of women's football. However with little inducement or specific incentive for them to invest in their women's and girl's football there is a very thin layer of elite level competition and development. Arsenal FC and Charlton Athletic FC lead the way in the women's game and their dominance in all competitions is evidence of that. Other clubs have started to invest however over the last two seasons a number of big professional clubs have withdrawn all funding from their women's teams. Premiership clubs such as Manchester United, Birmingham City and Fulham have all recently taken this decision. This leaves a fragile league structure. It inhibits competition, professional development and supporter loyalty and therefore seriously limits media exposure and marketing potential. Again women's football is caught in a vicious cycle.

4.4 We would like to see a greater proportion of the wealth within professional football (eg the recent £1.7 billion Premiership television rights deal) dedicated to community development and women and girl's football.

4.5 With a relatively small but consistent injection of public investment each year a stable and competitive women's elite league could be established. We believe this foundation could be the springboard for the future of the game. If football can achieve this and establish women footballers as role models for future generations of women and girls it could be the start of a revolution in how women's sport is perceived across the UK.

ARTIFICIAL AGE BARRIER

4.6 There has recently been a considerable amount of media attention with regard to the lack of opportunities for girls to play mixed football beyond the age of 11. At present the FA rule stipulates that from the age of 11 boys and girls must play football separately.

4.7 We believe this is an artificial barrier to the potential development of 11 years plus girls and that the separation of young players in coaching and matches should be based on more sophisticated criteria such as weight, height and ability. The separation from age 11 accentuates the perception that women and girls play an inferior version of the sport and prevents young women and girls developing to their physical and technical peak.

SECTION C

Women's participation in all aspects of the game including coaching and management.

5. In summary:

While progress is being made there are still far too few female coaches across all sports, including football.

Women's football is either entirely unrepresented or extremely poorly represented in the decision-making structures across football.

COACHING

5.1 Women fall desperately short of their coaching potential. As the table below illustrates, while the situation is improving, there is still a very long way to go.

| <i>Figures for numbers of qualified football coaches at each level in 2004</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>Proportion of female to total</i> |
|--|--------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| Level 1 | 27,716 | 3,072 | 11.08% |
| Level 2 | 5,768 | 404 | 7.0% |
| Level 3 | 814 | 31 | 3.8% |

This reflects the poor situation across sport where, for example, only 10% of the British Olympic coaching team for the Athens Games was female.

MANAGEMENT

5.2 Women's football needs more champions in places where decisions are made and funds are allocated. The women's game is poorly represented across the decision-making structures of football with, for example, the Football Association having no direct representatives of women's football on its Board of Directors and no women in its senior management team. Likewise the Football Foundation has no formal representative of women's football at Board level or on its respective Panels.

5.3 There have always been exceptional women that have found their way to the top levels of football hierarchy. In 1994 for example, Pat Smith was appointed as Deputy to the Chief Executive of the FA and Vicky Oyston, the then Chair of Blackpool FC, was once famously banned from the Tranmere Rovers boardroom because she was a woman. Progress for women is easier in 2006 but they are still vastly outnumbered by men.

5.4 Women's football should be considered a valued component of the national game. It should therefore be given formal representation at the highest level of the game's governance.

SECTION D—MEDIA COVERAGE AND SPONSORSHIP OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

6.0 *In summary:*

- WSF research indicates that as little as 5% of sports media coverage is dedicated to women's sport.
- Women's Euro 2005 proved that there is a national appetite for media coverage of women's football.

6.1 Football dominates media coverage of sport above and beyond all other sports put together and this dominance is unlikely to subside. However the media success of Women's Euro 2005 provided a real watershed for time and space committed to women's football.

6.2 The England versus Finland game attracted a peak audience of 2.9 million and 8.9 million people watched England across the duration of the tournament. The BBC coverage brought women's football into homes and work place discussions like never before and along with the work of The FA, the marketing of the team and players meant that names like Karen Carney and Rachel Yankey became topics of everyday conversation. Furthermore the FA investment in media liaison meant that the tournament was covered by every English national daily on at least one occasion - unprecedented for women's football. This success really did prove that it is a myth to assume there is no interest in or desire to watch women's football.

6.3 This support for the women's game has made a real impact on public perceptions of women's football however it was a one off event. There is still a very long way to go before the entrenched culture of sports journalism accepts women's football and gives it the consistent coverage and support that it needs in order to flourish.

SPONSORSHIP

6.4 In line with other governing bodies such as the ECB, the FA have kept sponsor investment in the England men's team and FA competitions closely linked with their female equivalents in combined packages. This innovative use of contractual obligations has made a significant difference. The challenge will be to ensure growth in this area and attract further independent sponsorship for women and girls' football.

SECTION E

Conclusions

7. There is an opportunity within football to capture a huge growth market. Women and girls could and should represent the future of supporters (at least one in seven Premiership club season ticket holders is now female), players and coaches.

7.1 The transition is not happening organically however. Strongly gendered cultural attitudes still prevail from parkland pitches to powerful Boardrooms and distinct and direct interventions and specific investments are still very much needed to ensure that the momentum of the last 10 years is not lost, wasted and forgotten.

7.2 Women's and girls' football is on the threshold of a potential revolution, while it also lies precariously on the edge of liquidation.

7.3 Therefore we are specifically calling for:

- Open, transparent and equitable funding of grassroots and elite level football with women and girls' football at the very least on a par with other "minority" funding streams and ultimately comparable to that for boys.
- A solid foundation for the development of elite women's football, bolstered by public investment and supported by commitment across England's biggest and richest football clubs.

- An increase in the quantity and an improvement in the quality of safe and accessible football facilities.
- Local and regular opportunities for women and girls to play and enjoy football regardless of their ability and experience and to train to be the coaches and officials of the future.

7.4 As stated at the beginning of this report football stands in a uniquely powerful position. No other sport has access to such vast finances, media coverage and public affection and it is within football that huge opportunities exist to get women and girls fit, healthy and engaged in life changing levels of activity. We commend the Committee for its decision to examine the state of women's football and hope that this can indeed be the threshold of a transformation in the women's game.

8 June 2006

Memorandum submitted by Essex County FA

1. INTRODUCTION

The following written evidence has been collated by Emma Wake, the Women's and Girls' Football Development Officer for Essex County FA. The content has been specifically prepared for the Culture, Media and Sport Committee.

Essex County are fortunate to have a full-time Girls' and Women's Football Development Officer who has been in post for nearly three years. Subsequently a great deal of time and resources continue to be given to developing the game at a grass roots level. The increase in participation figures demonstrated within the following paragraphs is a huge plus to the women's game; however, more crucial to female sports development is the increase of female coaches within the county who have become accessible local role models. Undoubtedly this has aided in increasing the profile and development of the game within the county.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AT ALL LEVELS AND THE RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT WIDER PARTICIPATION IN AMATEUR AND ELITE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

5,124 girls/women were involved in the Essex Active Sport/Essex County FA Girls' and Women's Football development program or general girls' and women's football in some capacity within the year.

This involvement could have been in any of the following; a taster session at school, a Three Lions Primary School Festival, a Three Lions FC 8-week coaching course, attending an FA Licensed Centre of Excellence trial, attending a coach education course or simply a female teacher taking part in a female only coaching taster session.

This figure does not include total number of girls/women competing within a team or league:

2.1 *Girls' and Women's Team/League Breakdown*

Approximately 120 girls' teams compete within the Essex County Girls League, Barking League or Thundermite League.

From U10–U16.

Twenty-seven teams in the Essex County Women's League—approx 435 players.

Eight Women's teams within Essex compete in Regional, Southern Combination or Southern National Premier Leagues, which equates to approximately 200 players.

2.2 *Schools football for girls' representative football*

There are currently Girls' specific Schools leagues being run in the following areas:

- Maldon—Secondary School Girls League—8 teams;
- Harlow—Secondary School Girls League—8 teams;
- Rochford—Rayleigh Raiders Girls Only Year 5 and 6 League;
- Thurrock—Futsal Secondary School League—8 teams;
- Southend—Primary School Girls League—16 teams.

- Essex FA—Schools Representative Football:
 - Under 13 Cup competition—40 teams;
 - Under 14 Cup competition—51 teams; and
 - Under 16 Cup competition—31 teams.
- Essex County Schools Representative Football:
 - 280 girls throughout Essex County attended trials to be selected for the schools representative sides.
- U14 Schools—one team.
- U16 Schools—one team.
- Women’s Representative Football:
 - One Team.

2.3 Breakdown of Stage 1—ie school club link work/festivals etc

- Fifteen “Three Lions FC” School Club link eight-week courses were delivered throughout the county.
- 363 girls took part in the Three Lions FC eight-week programs—our target was 310.
- 1,075 girls took part in a Three Lions FC Schools Festival—our target was 1,050.
- 2,410 girls took part in a Girls’ only curriculum time taster session—our target was 2,100.
- One female disability Three Lions School club link program was set up with 15 girls participating.
- 62 Female Coaches were employed and involved in some capacity within the Active Sport program.

2.4 Breakdown of Stage 2—coach education

- 68 Females took the Level 1 Coaching Certificate—target 50.
- 15 Females took part in the Level 2 Bridging Course.
- 18 Females took the Level 2 Coaching Certificate.
- 20 Females took the Referees Basic Coaching Certificate.
- Two Females took and passed the Level 3 Coaching Badge.

2.5 Charter Standard—accredited clubs

- 11 Girls’ and Women’s Clubs have now obtained the Charter Standard accreditation.
- 36 mixed clubs with established girls’ sections have achieved Charter Standard accreditation, Development Club status or Community Club status.

2.6 Links with clubs

The following links were made with clubs throughout Essex. Each club either delivered in school sessions, provided coaches for three Lions FC programs (School Club link) providing quality exit routes for new players, ran Three Lions FC programs, set up a new girls team within their club after a Three Lions program or assisted in organising a three Lions FC Festival.

Quality club links have been established with the following set-ups:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Hutton FC Community Club | Brentwood Town Girls’ and Women’s |
| Colchester Town | Clacton Town |
| Maldon Town CS Club | Colchester Athletic CS Club |
| Focus Ferrers Community Club | Benfleet Villa CS Club |
| Assandun Vikings CS Club | Catholic United CS Club |
| Mark Hall CS Club | Colchester United CST |
| Brandon Groves | Halstead Town Community Club |
| Billericay Town Youth Colts | Rayleigh Raiders |
| Chelmsford City L and G FC | Mark Hall Youth |
| Leigh Rockets YFC | Colchester Town LFC and GFC |

2.7 Stage 3—Assessments

- 130 girls took part in the Colchester Centre of Excellence trials. Our target was 100.

2.8 Stage 4—Centre of excellence/development centres

- 80 girls are involved within Colchester's FA Centre of Excellence program competing within a weekly fixture program.
- Colchester United Disability Centre of Excellence—two females attending sessions.
- Three Female coaches attended the Level 2 coaching certificate.
- One Female coach attended the Level 3 Coaching certificate.

2.9 Resources

Essex County is one of the largest within the country. Based on affiliated clubs we are undoubtedly the largest. The county is extremely diverse and ranges from extremely rural to incredibly built up the closer you get to London. Having a specific Womens' and Girls' Football Development Officer has clearly been of benefit in developing the female game at a grassroots level. Engaging with young females to increase participation and encourage an active lifestyle has been paramount within the development plan for female football development.

The extent of the work that has been ongoing over the last four years has been dramatic. Slowly but surely school clusters are becoming more enthusiastic about girls specific football development programs and are keen to use the FA initiatives to promote healthy living, strive to decrease obesity and are keen to see the increase of female role models within their school environment.

A specific Girls' and Women's Football Development Officer has led to an increase in activity at all levels, stages and ages of the female game. Working closely with partners from Local Authority's, School Sports Partnerships, Football in the Communities, Charter Standard clubs and volunteer sectors has seen a huge growth in both the popularity of the game and participation rates.

To sustain this interest and encourage further growth the Women's and Girls' posts will need to access future funding to secure employment. Most of the posts are currently funded by a combination of Football Foundation funding, The FA, and County FA contributions. This funding will come to an end within Essex at the end of January. If funding is not secured for these posts what will happen to the development work that has been ongoing for the past five years?

3. AVAILABILITY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PLAYERS TO DEVELOP SKILLS, STAMINA AND PERFORMANCE

The following opportunities are available via the Girls' and Women's Football Development program:

- Girls' only taster sessions within curriculum time (usually three weeks of one hour sessions).
- School Club Link—Three Lions Programs—eight-week coaching courses with exit routes to quality Charter Standard clubs.
- Three Lions School Festivals—a curriculum time Girls only school-based festival linked with a quality Charter Standard Club.
- Club football and competitive opportunities within local clubs and league structures.

3.1 Performance

- Player Development Centres for further playing opportunities/training sessions.
- Schools Representative Football/County Representative Football—players at U14 and U16 trial to represent their county and play fixtures within the South East England Schools Football Association fixtures.
- FA Centre of Excellence U10 to U16—elite players take part in Centre trials once a year to compete within the FA's AFA program with weekly fixtures against quality opposition.
- FA Colchester United Girls Academy—elite players aged 16—18.
- Women's Football.

4. MEDIA COVERAGE AND SPONSORSHIP OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Currently within the county media coverage for the women's game is generated by the County FA website, local papers and local radio stations. Many clubs run their own websites with match reports and the latest news. Many women's clubs seek their sponsorship from local companies but this proves to be extremely difficult. Club's that are fortunate to have sponsorship usually have a parent or relation who owns a local company who is willing to help out.

Most women's clubs generate their own funds through membership fees, match fees and registration fees which leaves many clubs in an extremely fragile state. Most larger clubs within the county, such as West Ham, Colchester United and Leyton Orient receive very limited support, if any, from their male counterparts. They hire their own pitches (at very expensive rates), organise their own transportation, pay referees, buy their own kits and organise hospitality for teams who travel for away games etc.

Generally many clubs therefore cannot afford to progress up the football pyramid as the financial implications are too steep and many clubs risk folding under this pressure.

March 2006

Witnesses: **Ms Sue Lopez MBE**, former England international footballer, **Ms Wendy Owen**, former player, **Ms Helen Donohoe**, Women's Sports Foundation, **Ms Emma Wake**, Girls/Women's Football Development Officer, Essex County FA and **Ms Paula Coccozza**, Guardian journalist, gave evidence.

Chairman: Good morning, everybody. This is a special one-off session of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, where we would like to examine the question of women's football. When we announced we were to do this it was greeted with a little surprise which, in a sense, is the reason why we are doing it. I hope this session will help to actually raise the profile of women's football. We are delighted to have a number of witnesses but, first of all, I would like to welcome our panel of experts to represent the independent viewpoints and the grassroots of women's football: Sue Lopez, a former England international; Wendy Owen, who is also a former player; Helen Donohoe from the Women's Sports Foundation; Emma Wake, from my own county of Essex, the Women's Football Development Officer and Paula Coccozza, who is a journalist with *The Guardian*. To start, can I invite Helen Southworth.

Q1 Helen Southworth: We have been given evidence that women's football is hugely growing in participation both by people playing and the audience and we thought we would like to ask you, first of all, what you think the key successes are in developing women's football over the past few years, and what your priorities would be over the next few years?

Ms Donohoe: If you look at all the submissions that have been made to the Committee there is clearly a massive growth in women's football, which is to be welcomed. There is not a day goes by that someone does not say, "Isn't it great, Euro 2005 was on television and there are clear and well marked successes that we have achieved". I would qualify that by saying that it depends where you draw your baseline and where you compare and how you put it into context, for example, to men's and boys' football. You will see in our submission, if you compare it to Germany and Sweden, in terms of participation we have still got a long way to go. I think the growth has come about through distinct and dedicated initiatives and investment from the FA, and fundamentally from the passion, belief, drive and education of volunteers, and women and girls themselves, because any football overcomes the biggest barriers there are in the world. I do not know if you saw the BBC website yesterday; there was an article about a small village in India that has its own women's football team. I think it is a combination of all things. I think it is important to put in context

that we have come a long way but, as I have said, we have got a hell of a long way to go and enormous potential to fulfil, but it comes down to investment, specific funds and specific ring-fenced initiatives, but fundamentally the spirit, belief and love of football.

Ms Lopez: I have been in the game for 40 years I hate to say, at all sorts of roles, not only as an England player but also as an A-licence coach. I have survived and it was a real pioneering spirit, as Helen alluded to, when I was younger; but now, thanks to the FA resources, it has grown fantastically but I think we do need to address lots of issues now. Since the FA took over in 1993 I feel the women's game has bolted onto the men's. It has done fantastically well but we need to look at specific things, like the development of girls' football at a young age. Centres of excellence have been fantastic for that but there is only a small group of girls. We need to also look at grassroots development because, as in boys' football, it is the youth that get the coaches who are not quite so experienced; and of course girls are a little bit different from boys and they do need, I feel, not special treatment but a better understanding. We need to understand that girls might feel a little bit inhibited in joining in. There are not quite so many opportunities for them to develop their skills and develop into league players, or to develop even their movement skills. If you do not get it at primary school, and it is not always possible at primary schools, that early age is key to helping the girls develop. They cannot all get into centres of excellence so youth club football needs a boost. We need to get more expert coaches in developing girls' football at youth level. I see a possible route as using the centres of excellence as a kind of hub, as a beacon, like schools, so that local clubs could use them as examples of good practice to develop more coaches, develop more referees and that kind of thing. I think a lot of stuff needs to go on at youth level and I am sure there are other people who would want to talk about it at the adult level. I was at Southampton Football Club and have been a victim of the boom and bust there. Obviously Fulham is another example of boom and bust. We need to address how best to fund and to get the clubs better funded and to help the adult women's game progress at all levels, not just the fortunate Arsenal and Charlton, obviously fantastic models, but it is all the other layers which need help.

Ms Coccozza: On the key successes, I think particularly from a media perspective, women's football has started to build a public and people are

27 June 2006 Ms Sue Lopez MBE, Ms Wendy Owen, Ms Helen Donohoe, Ms Emma Wake, Ms Paula Cocozza

happy to watch the game on television or at big matches, and that has been a huge success, as well as of course the growth in the number of players. There has been increased media coverage. Women's football has been on terrestrial television, Euro 2005 last year, and the FA Cup has been shown on BBC1 for the past few years. Another success I think is that a lot of work has been done towards building a pathway so that young girls who want to start playing football can find a club and have a pathway along which they can progress. For me their limitations would be that that pathway is not accessible equally in all bits of the country; that there is a lack of competition at all levels and games vary from region to region. While there have been large audiences for a number of key women's matches—such as the FA Cup, such as internationals where the FA puts a lot of money into getting people there, and a lot of people go on free tickets to get the numbers up—during the regular football season audiences are very low; sometimes as few as 50 people will turn up to watch a game, and there is no harnessing of these big crowds to try to sustain an audiences from Sunday to Sunday, week by week through the football season. Those would be my comments.

Q2 Mr Sanders: Do you think the audience for women's football is different from men's football in relation to that answer?

Ms Cocozza: I think there is much more resistance among football fans. I gather that the FA conducted some research a couple of years ago where they discovered that female season ticket holders at men's clubs were particularly resistant to the idea of watching women play. I think the audience at many a league match would be made up largely of family members, friends and the odd uninterested party who just wants to support their club in every way they can; and perhaps they are fans of the men's team and they also turn up to watch the women play. There are probably a higher percentage of people watching who are families and lots of children, and this is particularly true at the internationals where lots of school parties go and so on. Of your regular terrace crowd at the men's game only a tiny section would be present at the women's game.

Q3 Mr Sanders: Are there perhaps disadvantages in women's teams being closely associated with a professional men's football team? Is there actually scope for trying to broaden an entirely different network of women's teams that are not connected with the local established professional football team?

Ms Cocozza: I think it is very difficult because obviously men's football at least provides an infrastructure. It is a really important question, I think, because some years ago when the FA announced there would be a professional league within three years, women's teams were encouraged to hook up with men's teams and they kind of forewent a lot of independence in doing so but seemed to gain in stature; they would suddenly have a name that people recognised. Instead of being Clapton Orient they would become a name people

associated with football and so there were big games. What has happened, partly as a result of that, is that men's clubs do not seem to have been willing or able to provide the funding that is necessary to bring women's teams under that umbrella. Some teams have tried to find more independence and to detach themselves and be self-funding but obviously it is very difficult and there is no support structure.

Q4 Chairman: You have mentioned the shining examples of Arsenal and Charlton, but is the truth that most top clubs are not interested, and indeed the best known club in Britain (if not the world) Manchester United closed down its women's football club two years ago?

Ms Lopez: Yes, Chairman. As Paula said, it is a very interesting thing, and I have gone through the boom and bust with Southampton. I think we need to think about different models. There are the fantastic Arsenal/Charlton models where you have got a club and chairman and people of influence at the club who are willing to be supportive, and that is fantastic; but I think we do need to find other models that we need to use to not only sell to the professional clubs but I see it as a package we need to be selling to the clubs so that they can see some advantage in it. As Paula alluded to, Southampton brought into the professional model and of course was disappointed and was doubly disappointed when they got relegated, and wanted the funds they were giving to us for their men's structure. I think we need to build clubs that are a bit more independent and are into the local structure at a local level. If there is a professional club, I think we do need to build a little package for them so there is something in it for the clubs; and obviously, looking at the community side, so that the women players are involved in different ways in the community; so the clubs can actually see some benefits.

Q5 Chairman: If Manchester United cannot sustain and is not interested in maintaining its own women's football club then what hope is there?

Ms Lopez: With respect, Chairman, we cannot expect professional clubs to be a charity; we cannot expect them to be interested if they do not want to be; but where there are clubs wanting to be interested (and I am sure there are lots of examples around; if you ask the FA there are lots of good examples of good practice with professional clubs but that they have to be willing) I think the way we do it is important and we need to go and build a partnership with that club at whatever level, whether they are Manchester United, Crewe or just a little local semi-pro team. It can just be the local men's team.

Q6 Alan Keen: As Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Football Group, the Policy Group, can I welcome you. It is to Helen's credit that we have got this inquiry today. The Vice-Chair of my committee is a woman, and I promise you that we will give you access to Parliament from now on and I hope you take advantage of it. We will do everything we can to help. There are a growing number of women watching the professional game.

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Is there a way of tapping into that growing band of watchers of football, of women, to get them to realise it? We want to get young girls at school playing, so is there a way of doing that that will help?

Ms Owen: I think the media is a chicken and egg situation. If you can get the media coverage it spurs on the interest to watch and go just like the men's football. Just at an anecdotal level, when Euro 2005 was on in my place of work all of a sudden men who had never seen or been interested in women's football before were coming to talk to me in the senior common room to say they had watched it and started talking about the players and the tactics and really got interested and involved in it. It became a real office talking point and they were enjoying it. Unfortunately that was only a week or so and we were just getting that impetus and getting interested and then obviously it went out of the limelight. I think the problem is, you just get your FA Cup Final on the television, you get the odd game and you get the odd international and it does not sustain it. If we could get the women in the limelight for a little bit longer it would tap into a new audience. Paula is saying that it is mainly the family of the players, but clearly during that tournament a whole host of other folks were becoming interested in women's football. I think that is the problem, but I have not got any answers as to how you get that media coverage sustained. If you had got a stronger women's league that could get more attendance and more media coverage, so you did not just see the odd game at the end of the season on the television and the odd international, if you could get more sustained coverage you would get the chicken and egg situation but how do you get that, because the media perhaps are not going to get involved until the game gets up to a certain level.

Ms Donohoe: There are two issues here: there are women as viewers and women as participants of the sport. The BBC will tell you that almost 50% of the viewers of the World Cup and Match of the Day now are women, so it is clear that there is a big audience in sport generally amongst women; that is an established fact. The other matter is participation and, there again we quote some research in our submission, and one in three girls say they would like to play football. The fundamental thing is we know there is demand out there; there has always been a demand, it is nothing new and has gone on for a hundred years; but it is about providing the opportunities across the board at every level for those girls and those women to pick up a ball and play. The bottom line is now that it is great having Euro 2005 on the TV and was a real breakthrough, and the BBC were not too keen on taking that risk for understandable reasons, because there are still a lot of cynics who believe that women's football is just a little bit rubbish and does not deserve airtime on terrestrial TV; but they had the guts and showed it and were amazed that almost three million people tuned in on BBC2 on a Sunday evening; again proving the point that there is a demand out there. The opportunity to play is fundamental. It is all very well watching England play, loving it and thinking "I want to do that", but can you then go into school

and play football without feeling you are doing something which is a bit weird? Can you then go and join a club locally that you can walk to nearby, or your mum or dad can drive you to, where you can play and stay playing after 11 and carry on and enjoy and not feel as if you are doing something which is marginal or a bit weird. I think that is the fundamental. If you are unsure or unconfident, or do not have a mum or dad pushing and encouraging you, or you are just not very good, the opportunities are not there in comparison, for example, to boys' football and men's football.

Ms Owen: It is patchy in schools. In some areas it is good and it is a hub; but in other areas there is not anything. It depends on an interested teacher in a primary school. I have had a couple of correspondence from parents recently saying, "Where can my child go on and play later on?" At the moment they are playing for the boys' team and they are not going to be allowed to play for the boys' team next year; they want to but cannot find a girls' team without having to travel (and it is about *that* distance again), or a girls' team that is of the same standard. I think provision is patchy within primary schools.

Ms Lopez: Some schools are so varied. If you get a talented girl she cannot necessarily find a quality girls' team to go and play with, and that is why she wants to go and play with the boys. It is the exit routes once the school has done a good job where it is very variable.

Ms Owen: Exit routes, but even still in the schools it is patchy.

Ms Lopez: On the schools point, I notice increasingly it is outside provision that is coming in; it is not the primary school teacher unfortunately, who is not well enough trained sometimes to take games. Sometimes I have reservations there because, for instance, if you have got a local football club coming in with all the badged-up stuff so it is all great for the boys, the girls are thinking, "Gosh, what's this got to do with me?" If they have not got an empathy with the girls, they can feel marginalised even though the provision is there.

Q7 Alan Keen: Could I ask Emma as a Development Officer in the county, you are right at the grassroots, what are the problems? You have mentioned changing facilities and dressing rooms. That is one of the problems, is it not? Can you specify that and tell us about the other problems you have got, and the lack of coverage of the area so that a girl in one area cannot find somebody to play with, can you expand on that?

Ms Wake: I think in our county, because it is so diverse, it goes from extremely rural to extremely built-up, and the problems vary with each different area. When we talk about facilities from a female perspective, as you saw from the Football Foundation submission, again they can vary from good to very, very poor. At a local level, just speaking with my friends and players before I came here, you are talking about one female toilet between 30 females when they are playing a game; team showers; team baths; extremely boggy pitches. Often

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female teams are the third team of the weekend to use a facility and that is if they get to play at all. They often get pushed down the ladder of priorities to play. Certainly if they are not paying for that facility it can be, “You could get this team in and they’re going to pay £50 or £100 so we’ll take them instead of the women’s team”, so the women’s game will get rescheduled and so on and so forth. If clubs have to use school facilities there is very often no access to the toilets or changing rooms, because again that is another cost incurred, or team baths. If you are using local authority pitches there is no area to have refreshments or no bar. They are the kinds of issues we are dealing with at a local level.

Q8 Alan Keen: As an example, I have got two combined county clubs in my constituency near Heathrow Airport, and they have got their own bar and pay a lot of money to keep the club going and they have got kids playing on Sunday mornings. Have you got examples of these sorts of clubs? Is there a failure amongst some of these sorts of clubs to involve women because they are short of facilities, or have you had some success?

Ms Wake: It is extremely different as you move across the county. We have had some great success stories of community clubs looking to increase participation with girls, and they work really hard and their girls’ sections have increased. Again, they are very, very spread out. It is a matter of building up relationships, and every club is different and their perception of girls’ football is different. It is like everything, there are good examples and there are other examples where you have to work a little bit harder to get them to start a girls’ section.

Q9 Alan Keen: I know the Football Foundation are saying, “Look, if you want money you’ve got to provide women’s facilities”, so that is going to help change the culture; but can we do in other ways? How can we get clubs to realise that it is changing the culture, is it not?

Ms Lopez: We have got the Charter Standard clubs; I think if that could be enhanced—and this is where I see the County FAs playing a leadership role in encouraging all the local teams that are registered with them, the women’s and girls’ teams, to better understand the need to link in with boys’ clubs and vice versa- we need to do a lot more selling of the benefits of community clubs.

Q10 Alan Keen: It is frustrating because I would love to be able to play with people less than 30 years younger than I am. I am playing people coming straight from five-a-side football. I love to play with veterans for the parliamentary team rather than playing against people who are at least 30 years younger, so I see the frustration. This is the problem—there are not enough veteran sides of a certain age and there are not enough women’s teams. I understand the problem from that point of view. Afterwards you must get in touch directly with the All Party Parliamentary Football Group and we will do everything we can to provide links with people.

Ms Coccozza: Just to talk about changing the culture, which was touched upon just now, at all levels, from grassroots and from small clubs up to clubs that are in the men’s premiership, since the number of women at these clubs in managerial positions of whatever kind is so small, and that most football clubs are run by men, it is a very male environment, whether you are reporting on a match or whether you are playing or in the offices helping to run the club. I think there is a perception that women do bad things to football pitches. There is a kind of reluctance to let women have the pitch when the pitch is in a good condition. A pitch that is given for women to play on is a pitch that the rugby team played on the day before and perhaps the boys’ team played on in the morning. There was one instance I remember of a men’s club in the then men’s Division One whose women’s team was in the Premiership and the manager of the men’s club reportedly said that he was “. . . not going to let that bunch of dykes mess up his football pitch”. That is not a pleasant comment but I mention it because it is indicative of some of the views that are in men’s football clubs, and that something needs to be done to try and level things up. I think an educative programme is needed.

Q11 Chairman: Would you say that kind of comment would be the exception or would you say that was an attitude which is quite common?

Ms Coccozza: I think it is quite common.

Ms Donohoe: I think the cultural barrier is absolutely critical and, unfortunately, it is the hardest thing to change and it is the thing which takes longest. It can be changed and it is changing slowly and now we have more household names of female footballers than we have ever had, which is great.

Q12 Mr Sanders: Why is it not the case perhaps in tennis that those cultural barriers are there? Wimbledon prize money aside, I cannot think of many other sports in the world where women and men seem to command the same television audiences for games and the same rewards for games and the same amount of media coverage for the players. Is there perhaps a lesson to learn from the history and development of tennis as a model for where you want to take women’s football?

Ms Donohoe: Tennis has a very, very different cultural heritage from football. It is an individual sport and a sport where other factors contribute to a player’s popularity. Football goes back a long way, and there are very deeply entrenched cultural attitudes to the game, and passions, and that is what makes it the amazing sport it is and, unfortunately, it is what makes it difficult to change at all levels (and women’s football is just one part of that) but it can be changed. If you look at the work that is being done to eradicate racism, attitudes can be changed, and they slowly are changing as more and more women become season ticket holders and attitudes on the terraces are changing. As more and more girls get the chance to play football and turn around to their mum and dad and say to them, when they are

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young girls, “I want to be a footballer”, then attitudes will change. Peers and role models develop and you create that positive cycle of change, as opposed to the negative cycle we have at the moment where there is a lack of role models; where you do suffer intimidation. I have played football since I could walk and there is not a season goes by that I do not get from the sidelines, or do not witness at least, intimidation or some form of derogatory language whether it is from the ground staff or from passers-by, the man and a dog. I come back to my point where you have to be pretty gutsy to play women’s football still, and it is only the determined, the good or the ones with pushy parents that actually get through the system. We know that one in three girls want to play football and it is those girls who are getting let down.

Q13 Chairman: Did *Bend it like Beckham* help to change that at all?

Ms Lopez: A little.

Q14 Chairman: In terms of presenting an image of women’s football which is actually popular, attractive and encourages people to think this is not an extraordinary, weird thing that only freaks do—

Ms Cocozza: I remember the lead character’s mother thought that her daughter must be gay because she was playing football, and I think it raised that question which historically has been a very difficult question to raise. I think it glamorised it and made the sport look good. It made it look glossy and it suggested that there might even be a career in it if one could get a scholarship to the US.

Ms Donohoe: I remember *Blue Peter* showcasing a young girl who played for a boys’ team and I saw on TV suddenly another girl who played football. If you ask any woman who plays football they will all remember a single role model that gave them hope when they were younger—and that was 30 years ago! Small but positive imagery and pieces of popular culture are great, but if you have not got the grassroots and the basis to go around and tell your mum and day you want to be a footballer then it is worthless.

Q15 Philip Davies: Just following on from Adrian’s tennis analogy, is it perhaps the case that because the women’s tournaments are played at exactly the same time as the men’s tournament, and therefore televised together, in the same way that the Paralympics has raised its profile by actually taking place just after the Olympics in exactly the same city as the main Olympics, is there an argument that women’s football might be better promoted by having a women’s World Cup on at the same time or just after the men’s World Cup and that might generate more of the media coverage you seem to say is so important?

Ms Cocozza: I think the timings of the season and the competitions are important. Certainly that is something which needs to be worked on. In terms of the League, at the moment the Women’s League begins sort of August-ish and ends sort of April/May depending on the weather, the disposition of

grounds men and other things. I think it might benefit from having a tighter and a different structure. There is no narrative of the competition at the moment. It peters out and it stops and starts and matches get postponed or put off for one reason or another. I think if there was a way of doing it at a different time, having women’s football during the summer maybe when there is no men’s football, or else making sure that if it is on at the same time that it feels like it is somehow part of a similar competition. At the moment there is no identity for the League season. There is no League narrative because matches are played irregularly still.

Q16 Mr Hall: We have seen a massive improvement in Rugby League since it turned to summer rugby because of the quality of the grounds. The point you have just made is that it might well be that women’s football on better football pitches would allow it to prosper and have an identity of its own. I have a lot of questions from everything you have suggested but the big question is: there is no doubt that women’s football is growing in popularity; and more women and more girls want to play. The obstacles are: opportunity, facilities and funding, and there are load of other things around that. If you could change one thing, what would you change?

Ms Lopez: You cannot change the culture. I would just like to quickly go back to when we were talking about the States, because that is where the Beckham girl went, which I think tells a story. In the States soccer is not as popular, whereas here we are dealing with the most popular game for men; it has been traditional for years and is inbred in most guys; and it is a heck of a job to break that down. For us to go into the boys’ locker rooms over the last 40 years you sometimes feel you are treading on their territory, but it is breaking down. There are some good points: I think leadership. We talk about role models for players, but unless we have got leaders—and they do not have to be women, but they have to understand the women’s game. I do not think some of the people in leadership positions perhaps understand all the nuances in the women’s game; girls are different. For all these cultural things we have talked about, we need to create an environment for the girls and the players and the game that is not so associated with the men. I think we get seduced by the men’s game thinking we can copy it; we cannot and we never will, I do not think—not for many years.

Q17 Mr Hall: You do not need to.

Ms Lopez: Exactly, but I think we need to build our own women’s game (but we do not want to reinvent the wheel) and certainly engage the men. I have probably learnt more from the men’s leagues in the game than I have from some of the female coaches, for instance. We need to develop our own leadership style with women and men that understand the game. There is not enough deep understanding of the needs of women and the needs of the women’s game in this country.

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Q18 Mr Hall: In your earlier evidence you talked about, in 1993, being “bolted on” to the men’s FA. Would it be better if there were separate organisations?

Ms Lopez: No, I am not suggesting that at all. I am saying that because it was bolted on in 1993 (and there have been fantastic benefits) I am saying we have moved on now. The FA have done all those fantastic things which have needed to be done, but let us have a fresh look at the game and see the current needs. For instance, we have girls and women-only activities but it is not just about a girls’ and women-only coaching course, it is about the coach. Does the coach actually understand what those girls or women need? I do not think we think about that. As I said to you, in schools you get the outside agencies coming in to coach those girls, but are those coaches actually understanding what those girls need? They are not going to be the next Rooney’s, which is what the boys are hoping to be. The local men’s club think, “Wow, this is great”, and the girls are thinking, “What’s this got to do with me. I’m not going to be the next Rooney. What’s this guy on about?”

Ms Owen: From my point of view my frustration is, if it was me I would try and move women’s football more away from relying on the patronage of men’s football and men’s football clubs. I might be biased, but I work in higher education and what frustrates me is I think there are a lot of opportunities to develop women’s football in the education sector. I think it has been late to get into schools; it is still struggling to get into schools; but I think there is a big opportunity for higher education and universities where the government is aiming to get 50% of people between the ages 18 and 30 going into higher education; and I think there is a huge potential there to develop the leaders and coaches, and to educate them within the education sector and then have them feeding down into the schools and into the clubs; and to have a joined-up approach where you have got the universities feeding down into FE, down into specialist sport colleges, schools and down to the primary schools. Personally I am doing a lot of work at the moment with sports volunteers with my sports science students; and I run a women’s university team, and they are going to go out in the future and possibly become teachers; and I am trying to offer them the coaching opportunities to educate them while they are at college; and sending them out now for their sports volunteer scheme to go into working in the primary schools, because there is a huge need in primary schools. This is a totally separate issue perhaps but it is linked: primary school PE at the moment I think is in crises because they have stopped including it as compulsory to do PE in your training of primary school teachers, your classroom teachers. The PPA time, where the primary school teachers are now allowed time off for planning, preparation and assessment, what is happening on the ground is that the subject that is losing out is PE. Where primary school teachers are taking their PPA time off is from the PE lessons. They are taking those because they do not feel trained in it, and taking it as a time to go

and do their assessment and the schools, as Sue said, are increasingly now buying in coaches not just for football but are buying in coaches for any sport where they are desperate to get PE lessons to cover for their teachers. I have got a big demand on my students to go in and deliver all sorts of stuff because the primary school teachers do not have the expertise, and they are also taking their PPA times in the PE times. There is a problem in primary schools. I am running a scheme where we are trying to educate volunteers to go in if there is an opportunity there. I have got young women who have got their coaching awards who have been going in, and I have been mentoring them in schools, and mentoring their coaching development. More of that needs to be done but I feel that the FA perhaps has not yet discovered enough the potential of the higher education sector to actually train young women leaders.

Ms Lopez: That is where the American game flourished. In the colleges that is why they have got their basic grassroots soccer mums doing stuff and then they go into the colleges.

Q19 Mr Hall: Is there a case for raising the age limit at which girls can play mixed football? Is it 11 in schools?

Ms Lopez: Yes.

Q20 Mr Hall: Is that a barrier? Is that an artificial ceiling on the game that stops girls developing?

Ms Owen: Yes, I think it is. I do not actually see why you need to have that rule in place, because it would sort itself out. The managers would not pick players who were not able to play, whether it is male or female; the managers would not pick them; parents would not let their children be involved in a team or in an environment where they felt they were at risk; and the girls or boys themselves would not want to play in a team where they felt they were unable to hold their own. I think it is artificial. Also girls develop sooner than boys and are a lot stronger. Sue and I have both coached out in the States, and when you go to soccer camps out in the States it is mixed football. Often what they do is for the older girls they have them at camp with the slightly younger boys. They will have 14, 15 or 16 year old girls at camp at the same time as maybe 13 or 14 year old boys; and they match up in terms of strength, size and capability. They do not seem to have any problem and it is absolutely fine. I have worked at various mixed soccer camps over in the States and it is not an issue. When we started playing in the 1960s there was not any organised girls’ football and we played with the boys. I had exactly the same frustration as some of the young girls who have contacted me recently. In 1969 I was playing with my brothers and all the local boys recreationally and they all formed a team called “The Avenue”, which was the avenue where we lived. I had been playing with them for years and was one of the best players out on the green and then The Avenue team was formed and entered into the Slough Boys’ League and I was suddenly relegated to the sidelines. What that does to your self-concept as a young girl—I am getting upset about it now.

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Now we are 40 years on and we have got young girls contacting me saying, "I've read about your experiences in the 1960s, can you help us because we're going through the same thing now in 2006?" It gives them the message, "You're not good enough. You're discarded. You're not able to play with the boys". Often they are the better players and they are better than the rest of the boys and suddenly they are told, "Sorry, it's too dangerous for you now to play with the boys".

Ms Lopez: It is even worse if you then go and play for a girls' team you are much better than them and you are not being developed.

Ms Owen: Suddenly you go from playing at a really good standard and then you go along (which happened to me) and my Dad put a girls' team

together to shut me up because I kept saying, "Why can't I play for The Avenue team", which was a team he ran, so he set up a youth club team, a girls' team, just to accommodate me; but I could get the ball at the defending end, run the whole length of the pitch, dribbling through all the girls and score at the other end.

Q21 Mr Hall: I bet you were popular!

Ms Owen: So that was not developing me. 40 years on we have got young girls who are saying the same thing which is crazy.

Chairman: This is an issue we shall return in a subsequent session. Can I thank you very much indeed. We must move on because time is pressing. Thank you very much for your evidence.

Memorandum submitted by Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR)

INTRODUCTION

The CCPR is the representative body for 270 national governing bodies of sport and other national sporting organisations. Its mission is to promote the role of sport and recreation in creating a healthy nation, to protect the interests of sport and recreation, and to provide for the needs of sport and recreation organisations.

CCPR welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to this inquiry, which raises important questions about the opportunities for women to participate and progress not only in football but in sport and recreation in general.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT WIDER PARTICIPATION

Current participation

The role of sport and physical activity in improving mental and physical health is well documented, leading to the Chief Medical Officer's recommendation that adults should undertake 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity five times a week. However, the General Household Survey 1996 shows that whilst 54% of men took part in sport and physical activity, only 38% of women did so. This clearly illustrates the need to encourage and enable more women to take part in sport and physical activity.

The General Household Survey 1996 identifies keep fit, swimming and cycling as the most popular activities amongst women. Meanwhile participation by girls in football has almost doubled from 7% in 1994 to 13% in 2002. This demonstrates that in future football can play a key role in increasing and maintaining levels of participation in sport and physical activity amongst women. However, given that individuals have preferences for different types of sport and recreation it remains important that women can access as broad a range of physical activity opportunities as possible.

Resource requirements

The CCPR firmly believes that greater investment is required in the grass roots of British sport in order to provide quality participation opportunities for all. As an indication of the investment required, Sport England has identified that £134.6 million per annum is required to maintain existing public sector facility stock to a safe and acceptable standard, whilst £101.5 million per annum is required to bring it up to this standard. Whilst lottery funding is welcome, this alone cannot generate the level of facility investment required to meet the need for venues in which to participate.

CCPR therefore recommends that a substantive facility programme akin to Building Schools for the Future be put in place.

In addition to this recommended investment in new facilities, sports clubs also need adequate resources in order to continue to operate effectively. These resources are primarily generated through membership fees, merchandising and, in some cases, the operation of a club-house.

The Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) scheme established by the Treasury enables clubs to register with the Inland Revenue and to receive 80% mandatory rate relief and eligibility for gift aid. There are now 3,592 clubs registered as CASCs, which by 31 January 2006 had claimed an estimated total cash

benefit of at least £12.7 million. However, CCPR believes that up to 40,000 clubs could benefit from the scheme, thus keeping more hard earned resources within sport. CCPR is working hard with partners at DCMS, Sport England and the Inland Revenue to promote the scheme, and believes that adding further incentives to the scheme would result in greater uptake within sport. One such incentive might be to provide tax relief on junior clubs subscriptions, making sport more affordable for parents.

Resources are also drained from sport by regulatory measures that were originally intended for other industries. For instance the Licensing Act 2003 has resulted in significant increases in the cost of liquor licences for sports clubs, with just 10% falling in the lowest fee band. The CCPR has proposed that sports clubs have their licence fee calculated at 20% of their rateable value, building on the model of the CASC scheme. This would reduce the loss of much needed revenue to clubs, which they could then invest in development.

The CCPR would welcome the opportunity to discuss these proposals further with the Committee.

THE AVAILABILITY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PLAYERS TO DEVELOP SKILLS, STAMINA AND PERFORMANCE

Women's participation in all aspects of the game including coaching and management

CCPR believes that these two issues are intrinsically linked. A qualified and competent coach is absolutely essential to providing a high quality participation opportunity. The Football Association is one of 31 National Governing Bodies implementing the UK Coaching Certificate. This is a high quality qualification, and coaches undertaking it will assure participants of a safe and enjoyable introduction to the sport. The Football Association's qualifications are approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and therefore eligible for public funding. However, volunteers are not a priority group under the Government Skills Strategy, and as the majority of coaches are volunteers they do not therefore receive financial support for undertaking their qualification. This is a barrier not only to women's involvement in coaching, but as a result to participation also.

The CCPR urges the Government to recognise volunteers as a target group for qualifications funding.

CONCLUSION

The CCPR supports the developments of all aspects of sport and recreation, including women's participation in football. The CCPR believes a number of steps should be taken to facilitate this increased participation. These include:

- Initiating a significant facility investment programme akin to Building Schools for the Future.
- Enhancing the benefits associated with Community Amateur Sports Club scheme.
- Reducing the loss of earned income to sports clubs via the Licensing Act 2003.
- Prioritising volunteers for financial support to undertake qualifications.

The CCPR would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.

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Witnesses: Mr Stephen Baddeley, Interim Chief Executive, Ms Lisa Wainwright, Head of National Sport, Sport England and Ms Brigid Simmonds, Chairman, Central Council for Physical Recreation, gave evidence.

Q22 Chairman: Could I welcome Stephen Baddeley, the Interim Chief Executive of Sport England, with Lisa Wainwright, Head of National Sport, and Brigid Simmonds, who is Chair of the Central Council for Physical Recreation. Perhaps we could start off by asking Sport England, it has been suggested to us that actually there is quite a lot of funding available for women's football from a variety of different sources, although that may not be as well known as it should be. Can you tell us a bit about how much you, Sport England, put into women's football?

Mr Baddeley: There is quite significant investment going into football through Sport England. There is some investment into the Whole Sports Plan, which is how we invested in national governing bodies' of sport and that is a million pounds per year over four

years' (through the FA); and then there is investment through the Football Foundation which flows through us; and you will hear more about that later; but that is a tripartite arrangement between government, the Premier League and the Football Association to invest in community football. That clearly is both men's football, women's football, girls' football and boys' football.

Q23 Chairman: What about specifically women's football? You talk about grants which cover football as a whole, but to promote women's football?

Mr Baddeley: In terms of our Whole Sports Plan funding, we have agreed with the Football Association that will be focused on three areas: increasing participation (particularly), women's participation in football; increasing the number of

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women coaches in football; and also developing the club structure. Specifically the targets are to increase women's participation by 40,000 over four years; and to increase the number of female coaches who are active from 2,500 up to about 13,500, so about an 11,000 increase in female coaches over four years, and raising the bar from 2,500 as a starting point. Two very clear targets around increasing participation and putting in place the infrastructure to support the development of women's football. The targets around the club structure: to improve the quality of the club structure through increasing the number of accredited clubs; and increasing the number of community clubs. Community clubs are large clubs which need to have a minimum of at least 10 teams, both men and women, boys and girls, and have all the appropriate policies in place—so really a model club structure as a centre piece of the FA's club development programme.

Q24 Chairman: The targets you have set are notably ambitious. Are you confident that you can achieve them, and what happens if you do not?

Mr Baddeley: The FA's targets, which we have agreed with them, are ambitious. I think the Government would expect us to be encouraging the governing bodies to be ambitious, particularly the Football Association; because of course it is not just our million pound investment—they have their own resources; they have their own infrastructure; and they have an extensive network of development officers focussed on women's football solely. So they have the infrastructure in place to meet those targets but, yes, they are stretching and they will have to really push hard on the women's game. The people within the Football Association we primarily work with, the development department focussed on the community game, are very focussed on really riding this wave of the increased women's participation and the desire from our girls to get involved in women's football. There is really an opportunity there. From our point of view, our role is to drive participation across all sport and there is a real opportunity for women's football to be a key part of that.

Q25 Chairman: Brigid, you have an overview of all leisure and sports activity, particularly at grassroots level, across the country. How important do you think women's football is, and are we doing enough?

Ms Simmonds: I think women's football is hugely important. I think it is at a stage where you are seeing drop-off particularly after school, and that is particularly acute for women. If we have got a sport that people really want to participate in then we should be doing everything we can to encourage it. I think many of the problems actually are to do with, dare I say it, the burdens that are put on clubs which the CCPR is very keen should be removed.

Q26 Alan Keen: Presumably your funding is going in at a level above the education level?

Mr Baddeley: Yes.

Q27 Alan Keen: Do you liaise with the Department? For instance, you must see that there are masses of junior schools that have not got girls' teams. Are you involved in trying to get the Education Department to increase participation? What we all want is to give as many people as possible a chance to benefit from the game that we have all enjoyed so much over the years.

Mr Baddeley: There are three key agencies at national level: Sport England which has really focussed on community sport; UK Sport which does elite sport; and then the Youth Sport Trust, and their focus is school sport, and they work through the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and DfES to really promote school sport. You are probably aware of the PESSCL programme which has brought about quite significant changes in the amount of PE and school sport that is taking place now. We work closely with the Youth Sport Trust. We work on parts of the PESSCL programme; and our area would really be the boundary between school sport and club sport; because clearly that is a very important interface and there is a big drop-off as young people move out of school and into community sport. We have specific programmes as part of the PESSCL strategy and other work we do to focus on that interface and try to really build on the very good work that is happening within school sport and get more young people involved and try to hook them into a lifetime of sport.

Q28 Alan Keen: Are your officers on the ground actually proactive? Your job is to lose as few girls as possible who do play in school; and it is for the Education Department to make sure everybody gets the chance, which they are not getting; and your job is to get those links. Your officers on the ground will know which schools have got teams—do they go on the ground and say, "Right, this is the club you should link with". Are you doing this at ground level?

Ms Wainwright: Stephen went through the national investment stream that goes to the Football Association, the £4 million over four years. There is another funding stream that is a community investment stream that gets delivered through our regional infrastructure through the nine Regional Sports Board; and we have a county structure, and through that structure there is £2.2 million being delivered into girls' football as well, and that is where we see officers linking with the Football Association and clubs picking up the school children as they come through the programmes. There is a funding stream at a community level, and there is a national funding stream as well.

Q29 Alan Keen: There are obviously good clubs and bad clubs. What can your officers do on the ground to get those bad clubs; is there anything else that other people involved in the game can do to help encourage these men's clubs that are resisting involvement? What sorts of problems do you encounter?

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Ms Wainwright: The main challenge is around the number of quality clubs, and the Charter Mark is one of the standards we have been looking at, and how you ensure that the volunteers within those clubs can be recruited, trained and supported. That is where the investment programme at a local level, the community funding, can provide that support for them. We heard earlier about how we recruit women to help in these sorts of areas—it is a challenge with a new sport; it may be 30 years' old but it is still significantly quite a new sport—it is how we increase those volunteers. The main thing is to ensure that the environment young people are coming into is a quality environment, and the Charter Mark Standard does that for the Football Association alongside standards which every other sport works towards, which are standardised club mark quality standards.

Mr Baddeley: We work through governing bodies at our local level through local authorities, and all we are trying to do is drive good practice and to identify good practice and share that. Interestingly, much of what has been said already this morning, and discussion about the club structure and school club leagues, this applies to so many sports; and, as you will be aware, these are common issues shared by many sports,

Q30 Alan Keen: I was invited to the celebration of the 10,000th coach that McDonalds produced. Are there formal links between those coaches or are they completely separate? How does that work?

Mr Baddeley: They will be qualified coaches by the Football Association. They will be part of their coaching workforce. The extent to which they are deployed in the community will vary. That will often be down to their own motivation. Unfortunately people get coaching qualifications and do not do much about it afterwards. Obviously what governing bodies need to do, and the Football Association have been working on this, is to make sure those coaches are active and using their coaching qualifications.

Ms Simmonds: I think one of the burdens is that we do need more coaches, but one of the problems we have is that as part of the Government's skills strategy volunteers are not prioritised; and that means that funding for them to do coaching qualifications is not available. It is something the CCPR has been talking to DfES about, and should be a priority. We have got to make those links. If you look at the number of coaches but also the number of people who train as young people through Sports Leaders UK Awards, about 48% of those are women; and there is encouragement that needs to be given for a lot of those women to go out in football or in other sports and they will want to do that.

Q31 Helen Southworth: In terms of coaching, what do you think would be the most effective measures to support women who are coaching at the more junior levels working their way up the profession and getting to the top levels?

Mr Baddeley: Role models will clearly be important. Culture has been mentioned earlier, and clearly culture is absolutely crucial. There needs to be really genuine support from within the game of football to encourage women to come forward both as coaches and as volunteers within the administrative structure, within the FA's professional structure, within the FA's governing structure. The whole sport needs to embrace women's football and embrace the place for women and the role of women within it to encourage people forward.

Q32 Helen Southworth: Is there a role that you are able to play within that at the moment, or you looking at how you can perhaps enhance the role models, opportunities and leadership?

Mr Baddeley: Yes, certainly we have worked with the FA and there has been an open door approach in terms of our funding to be focussed very much on women's football and the development of that part of the game. We would encourage across all governing bodies good governance and to look at their own structures. Many governing bodies are rather traditional in make-up and there is work they can do involving more women in their decision-making structures, ethnic minorities and more disabled people; it is a whole inclusivity agenda and women are a key part of that.

Q33 Helen Southworth: Will you be able to use carrots as part of that process? Are you thinking of ways?

Mr Baddeley: Our funding is the carrot. Yes, we link funding into good practice. It is a question of building up relationships with our partner organisations and working together to improve the governance of sport.

Ms Simmonds: There is also a very good scheme which Sport England has called 'Sporting Champions' and that sends out youngsters from governing bodies into schools. I have seen them at work, they are real role models and they are the sort of people who really will encourage people and inspire them to go on and do sports in the future.

Q34 Helen Southworth: How many of those are women? How many of them are involved in women's football? Do you know?

Mr Baddeley: No, but we can certainly let you know.

Ms Wainwright: May I just add in terms of the wider coaching remit that this is obviously applicable to the Football Association as well, that we fund an organisation called "Sports Coach UK" which will be submitting to the Government a UK Coaching Action Plan very shortly which looks at a 12-point action plan over the next three, seven and 11 years to look at the professional development, support and infrastructure available for coaches and specifically for groups that are marginalised within coaching, of which women football coaches would be a part.

Q35 Helen Southworth: Could I also ask you about the Football Youth Development Programme. According to the Sport England annual report, there was £2,538,891 distributed in Lottery awards

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through the Football Youth Development Programme last year. Is that just available only to boys' centres of excellence?

Mr Baddeley: It was set up as a scheme to support talent development in football league clubs—

Q36 Helen Southworth: So it is just boys?

Mr Baddeley:—so that was clearly the focus.

Q37 Helen Southworth: Can I ask what the equivalent figure is for the girls' centres of excellence?

Mr Baddeley: It will be nothing approaching that. It will be very minimal, but I am not aware of the figure.

Q38 Helen Southworth: Is there any reason why you can say that with such confidence?

Mr Baddeley: You have to look at the genesis of the scheme which was set up for talent development in football league clubs.

Q39 Helen Southworth: For boys?

Mr Baddeley: Football league clubs are male clubs and that scheme was set up also, and I am not trying to defend it, just explaining the rationale for it, it was set up to put academies into all football league clubs with both government resource and their own resource. We are starting to put in place some strong academies to develop home-grown talent.

Q40 Helen Southworth: Yes, I agree absolutely with the academy programme, but I just want to make sure that girls who are our lead players do not have barriers put in their way. We are certainly being told that they are experiencing very substantial barriers, so it would be very helpful to know what the equivalent figure is for girls, if you could let us have that.

Mr Baddeley: Sure.

Q41 Mr Hall: If you sat through the evidence of the first session, there were a number of barriers to women playing football. We can have all the encouragement that we want, we can have coaching development, but if we have not got the actual facilities on the ground, women's football is not going to prosper. If women's or all-girls' teams are going to be the third or fourth to play on a surface over a weekend and we are looking at municipal sports facilities that only have changing rooms designed for men, women's football is not going to prosper. What is Sport England going to do about that?

Mr Baddeley: Probably the biggest investment into football facilities is through the Football Foundation.

Q42 Mr Hall: That is the next audience.

Mr Baddeley: That is the next audience, yes, so you will hear that all later—

Q43 Mr Hall: So you have not got any role to encourage facilities?

Mr Baddeley: Well, we distribute that funding to the Football Foundation, so we would want to make sure that the way they are then distributing the money forward is encouraging growth in all parts of the game. If they are distributing funding which is only focused in certain areas and ignoring key groups, then we would be looking to change that, but the Football Foundation have been insisting, for their facility development in terms of changing rooms, that they are built for both male and female players, as you would expect.

Q44 Mr Hall: What more can Sport England do then in terms of recognising that women's football is probably the fastest-growing sport in the UK, that there are barriers to girls and women participating in football and that there is a huge potential there which is going unexploited and in some cases there is absolutely no provision for that potential to be developed? What could Sport England do to overcome those three particular obstacles?

Mr Baddeley: I think that the way forward has to be working with the Football Association and other bodies involved in football. This is not for Sport England as a national agency to start to directly run or develop individual sports, so it is a question of working closely with the Football Association and with the Football Foundation to make sure that this key growth area is being maximised. I think in terms of our direct funding to the Football Association, you have seen how focused we are on encouraging and increasing women's participation, increasing the number of women coaches and increasing the quality of clubs. These are the key areas to ensure that the women's game can grow for the future.

Q45 Mr Hall: We have also heard some quite critical evidence about physical education in primary schools. In the primary schools in my constituency, there is a prospering physical education development and I am quite encouraged by that, but if the position which has been explained to the Committee previously is more universal throughout England and Wales and maybe Scotland as well, that is quite worrying. What can Sport England do to actually encourage physical education in schools and encourage participation not only in football, but in other sports?

Mr Baddeley: That directly is outside our remit, but, as an agency, we are trying to increase participation in sport amongst the adult population in particular. What happens at primary school level impacts on that, there is no doubt about it, and, as a parent, I am also concerned about it, so we do talk to other agencies. Clearly the investment in PE training for primary schoolteachers is an area which needs to be looked at and it could be certainly improved. There is very, very limited time spent on that area when primary schoolteachers are trained. Physical literacy is a key issue for primary schoolchildren and it is a key issue with the childhood obesity debate, the issue that is confronting society.

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Q46 Philip Davies: Can I ask what you mean exactly by “participation”? Participation can mean lots of different things to different people. What constitutes, from your perspective, participation?

Mr Baddeley: We have two broad measures that are agreed with the Government through our PSA targets. One is occasional participation, trying to get more people to participate in sport 12 times a year, not a terribly arduous measure. The other is to try and really improve the health of the nation by getting more people to be physically active in sport three times for 30 minutes every week and that is a very tough measure. There are two measures.

Q47 Philip Davies: In terms of sort of promoting women’s football, it is quite a meaningless kind of target. Presumably what is important in terms of promoting women’s football is giving girls the opportunity to play competitively against other schools or other clubs, whatever? Surely that is the most important thing if you want to set yourself targets and would you not agree that that would be a better target to measure in terms of giving girls the opportunity to play football in the way that boys have for years?

Mr Baddeley: Our PSA targets, agreed with the Government, reflect the Government’s very understandable concern to improve the health of the nation. We then need to work with sports governing bodies and other partners to see how we can work with them to impact on getting people more active. Yes, the Football Association is interested in people playing football. How do you keep people playing football, men or women? Part of that is competition, there is no doubt about it, so their targets will be about more women playing football, continuing football, and they use clubs, coaches, volunteers and competitions to drive that. We then translate that into our agreement with the Government which is more people being active so that the nation is healthy.

Q48 Mr Hall: Do you specifically fund tournaments for girls’ football?

Mr Baddeley: No, our investment goes through the governing bodies for sport in terms of sport-specific investment.

Q49 Mr Hall: You fund them to do that? You would be quite happy to fund them to provide tournaments for girls and things like that?

Mr Baddeley: Absolutely. Our funding goes to increase the number of female coaches, the quality of clubs and the number of participants, and competition is an integral part of club structures and an integral part of increasing participation.

Q50 Mr Sanders: But it is not direct funding?

Mr Baddeley: It is not direct funding.

Q51 Mr Sanders: It all goes through a sport’s governing body?

Mr Baddeley: It goes through the sport’s governing body, yes.

Ms Simmonds: But some of that funding which comes through the CCPR and allows us to help very much at that grassroots level for some of those clubs to grow. We have recently agreed with Sport England that they will actually have a champion on each regional Sports Board who will be responsible for the voluntary sector at that very grassroots end. If we do not start, what you were talking about earlier, with real participation, and this is really people playing everything in their back garden, at school, on the local pitches which you are seeing an awful lot of at the moment as you go outside after all the World Cup games, that is where we need to encourage participation and it is very much at the voluntary level where I think we will get the growth because you grow the bottom of that pyramid which then moves up.

Mr Baddeley: As Lisa has explained, we do also invest through our regional stream and that we invest in specific projects. There has been a considerable investment into community projects over the last years through our regions.

Ms Wainwright: Just a bit more on the competition side, we are working currently with 11 sports to look at the competition frameworks to integrate both the schools competition and the adult competition within the governing body and we are working with football on that. The other part of that process is to have competition managers at a local level to organise the competitions because it is quite clear that volunteers at this moment in time do not get the time to do that, and football is involved, as are another 10 sports in, in that programme.

Q52 Mr Sanders: I want to come back to this because I have always had difficulty understanding what Sport England is for and, I have to say, I am none the wiser this morning. If you just simply give money to sports governing bodies, what is the point of you? Surely the Government should just give the money straight to the sports governing bodies?

Mr Baddeley: Our role is to increase participation in sport and we do that through the governing bodies and we do it through our regional sports boards. Were the money to go directly to the governing bodies, the Government would not have the same leverage over the direction of those funds. I think part of the reason that investment into the governing bodies is driving up participation in women’s sport generally is because we insist that there is a focus on our investment being used to increase participation across priority groups, and that is women, black and ethnic minorities, disabled and the people in lower socio-economic groups. We impose that on the governing bodies because that is our agreement with the Government. I have worked for a governing body for the last eight years, the Badminton Association of England, and without quite strong encouragement and conditions attached to funding, I think the governing bodies would tend to go along in the same direction they have always gone which tends to be, and I am making a broad sweep here and not talking about football particularly, but across the whole governing body sector, it tends to be focused on the middle-class, male agenda and the

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governing bodies do need to be encouraged to develop and modernise, and there has been fantastic progress over recent years in achieving that. Sport England has been a key driver in doing that and I speak from personal experience, having been on the other side of the fence.

Q53 Mr Sanders: So you are answerable to the Government, not to the governing bodies of sport?

Mr Baddeley: Certainly.

Q54 Helen Southworth: Could I ask about SportsMatch. It is funded through DCMS, through Sport England, and it is sort of an incentive scheme. You have managed to increase in 2005–06 the awards made to bodies providing football activities involving women and girls from 45 in 2000–01 to 55 in 2005–06, but the total value of those awards actually fell from £759,000 down to £490,000. Have you got any ideas as to why it fell so dramatically and can you give us any kind of indicators as to how that relates to the equivalent to SportsMatch for football involving men and boys?

Mr Baddeley: I saw these figures late yesterday and the short answer is no. Obviously awards are dependent on schemes coming forward and they

need matched funding from private funding, so it has to be new sponsorship and it has to be funding from the commercial sector. This tends to go up and down, but, as new sponsors come on board and if they then stay with a sport, then actually they do not become eligible for SportsMatch in subsequent years and it needs to be new schemes, new investment that gets matched, but specifically as to why it has dropped over the five years, I cannot say.

Q55 Helen Southworth: It would be very helpful if you could give us a note, answering those particular things.

Mr Baddeley: We can do that.

Helen Southworth: Particularly bearing in mind Adrian's comments before and your answer which is about your desire to be able to direct and support initiatives, it would be very helpful to know, if there is a variance between those sets of figures for women's and girls' football and men's and boys' football, what you are intending to do about it and how you are going to address it.

Q56 Chairman: Perhaps you could let us have that.

Mr Baddeley: Sure.

Chairman: I do not think we have any more questions. Thank you very much.

Memorandum submitted by Sport England

Following the evidence session last week, I agreed to come back to the Committee with some additional information on three specific points; further information regarding SportsMatch, Sporting Champions and the Football Youth Development Programme.

SPORTSMATCH

The Honourable Member for Warrington South, Ms Southworth asked why there had been a reduction in the overall amount of funding given to football and women's football although there had been an increase in applications. The answer SportsMatch gave us is straightforward. The applications that were made were simply for lesser amounts of sponsorship for them to match. The applications now tend to be much more locally based and therefore smaller.

SPORTING CHAMPIONS

The Honourable Member for Warrington South, Ms Southworth asked how many of the Sporting Champions were footballers and more specifically female footballers. Four of the 89 Sporting Champions involved in the scheme are footballers, two of whom are women. The two female players are; Sue Smith who plays for Leeds WFC and has won 56 caps for England and Julie Fletcher who has won 30 caps for England.

FOOTBALL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND WOMEN'S ACADEMIES

The Honourable Member for Warrington South, Ms Southworth also asked for clarification in relation to the Football Youth Development Programme (FYDP) and funding for women's academies. The FYDP was set up to support the development of talent in clubs of the Football League, following the Premiership breakaway. There was no specific requirement to fund the women's game as a pre-requisite for funding under the programme. Women's teams, run through a separate league, have not received direct investment under the programme. Responsibility for management of the scheme has now transferred across to the Football Association, with Sport England no longer directly involved. This was the stated intention of Sport England. Our understanding is that the Football Association does make an investment from its resources of £1 million per annum into girls' centres of excellence, under a separate programme, as outlined in their evidence to the Committee.

As we highlighted at the Committee hearing, Sport England's national investment in the sport is channelled through The FA towards the objectives outlined in its "Whole Sport" four-year business plan. Beyond a modest £139,350 targeted at women's projects in London, there is no funding ring-fenced specifically for women's academies or indeed other aspects of the women's game. However, the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that we measure the sport's performance against are strongly focused on the women's game. The targets for the period 2005–09 include growing the number of regular women's participants (from 96,000–138,000); the number of active and qualified coaches (from 2,353—13,326) and increasing the number of FA community clubs (from 53–333). All clubs must include at least a women's team. These targets are designed to encourage emphasis on and investment in this area of the sport.

3 July 2006

Memorandum submitted by the Football Foundation

1. INTRODUCTION—ABOUT THE FOOTBALL FOUNDATION

1.1 The Football Foundation is the UK's largest sports charity, funded through a unique partnership between the FA Premier League, The Football Association, Sport England and the Government. The Foundation is playing a key role in revitalising grass roots sport, investing in our parks, schools and playing fields and harnessing the power of sport within our communities, to promote health, education and social inclusion.

1.2 Since its launch in July 2000 the Foundation has:

- supported over 2,200 projects worth nearly £400 million;
- secured over £190 million in additional inward investment;
- targeted 40% of funding into the top 20% most deprived wards;
- kept bureaucracy to a minimum—since launch, less than 1% of income has been allocated to administration costs;
- secured £30 million from Barclays Bank for a grass roots investment programme;
- funded 1,302 facility projects worth over £276 million;
- funded 378 community and education initiatives worth £133 million; and
- given over 100,000 girls and boys brand new football strips.

1.3 Almost all of the Football Foundation funding benefits both female and male participants. However, in addition the Foundation has supported 86 projects specifically for women, at a total cost of £9.8 million since 2000.

1.4 The Football Foundation recognises the different challenges that exist in engaging interest and then supporting women's football through appropriate kit, facilities, and coaching. The Football Foundation welcomes this inquiry and the opportunity to outline the work we have done to support the women's game.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AT ALL LEVELS AND THE RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT WIDER PARTICIPATION IN AMATEUR AND ELITE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

2.1 The Football Foundation is dedicated to revitalising the grassroots of the game, delivering the resources needed to support wider participation in amateur and elite women's football. In doing so, the Football Foundation helps develop interest in football amongst women, and creates the opportunity for talent to be recognised and nurtured into the elite game where appropriate. To achieve these aims, the Football Foundation funds.

2.2 *The construction of quality modern football facilities, specifically designed to support women's football.*

To make a thorough assessment of the extent of the challenge, the Football Foundation funded the most comprehensive assessment of England's football facilities, in the form of the Register of English Football Facilities (REFF).

This study highlighted that in 2003, 94% of changing rooms had no facilities for females. This shocking statistic illustrated the lamentable state of development opportunities for women who wished to get involved in football in England.

The Football Foundation is committed to reversing this situation and as a result, every grant we make to develop new changing rooms is now conditional on providing changing rooms that cater for both male and female participants.

2.3 *High quality coaching to engage, retain and nurture women in football.*

The Football Foundation has provided approximately £3 million to secure 83 football development officers who are dedicated to coaching girls' and women's football.

2.4 Kits that are specifically designed for female footballers.

The Football Foundation has distributed over 100,000 free kits to male and female footballers under 18 years of age through the junior kit scheme. With the right kit, more people are attracted to get involved and stay involved in football.

Since the beginning of 2006, the Foundation has introduced a special Junior Kit Scheme range specifically designed for women, which we hope will encourage still more women and girls to play football in the future.

3. AVAILABILITY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PLAYERS TO DEVELOP SKILLS, STAMINA AND PERFORMANCE

3.1 Developing the national game.

The Football Foundation believes it is essential that there are opportunities open to young players to develop skills, stamina and performance.

Firstly, this is important for the national game so that players can reach the highest level of ability. With women teams in the top leagues achieving the highest levels of skill and stamina possible, the standard of the female game is also likely to rise.

However, this can only happen if opportunities for self-improvement are there for young, female players. Ensuring there are sufficient sports facilities and areas is key to this, as is ensuring there is adequate professional coaching available to meet the demand.

As well as delivering higher levels of funding across the UK, the REFF enables the Football Foundation to pin-point where funding of women's football is most needed. The original survey identified Birmingham, East Riding, Lincolnshire, Manchester, Staffordshire, and West Riding as priority areas. The Football Foundation has sought to reverse this, ensuring that opportunities exist across England for young women and girls to develop skills, stamina and performance.

A trend the Foundation has noticed is the ambition for boys' and men's clubs to develop girls and women's teams. This is something the Foundation actively encourages and funds. It is very much hoped this trend continues and relevant stakeholders convey the benefits to clubs and communities of launching female teams. This has the benefit of young women players having access to experienced coaching and infrastructure that is already in place rather than starting from scratch, as a new club.

There are additional wider benefits to society through opening up opportunities and encouraging young players to improve skills.

3.2 Information for potential players.

REFF provides all people with an interest in participating in football with an online resource detailing facilities and opportunities to participate in their area. REFF is linked to activeplaces.com, which provides information about other sports facilities.

3.3 A skilled, motivated workforce.

Encouraging young players to improve their ability, skills and work-rate gives them a positive outlook in their sporting field. Football can help this attitude be transferred into other aspects of their life.

A host of Football Foundation-funded projects have armed young people up and down the country with skills and professional qualifications which can help them develop careers in football, as well as helping others enjoy the game. These can be official FA coaching badges that set up young men, and increasingly young women, with professional work in football.

The Foundation also funds many schemes which use football as a tool to encourage greater interest in wider education. These may take the form of after-school learning in a study centre based at a local football club. Premier League clubs, such as Bolton Wanderers FC run such schemes as do non-league clubs, such as Burton Albion FC.

3.4 A more cohesive society.

When young people are given a positive focus for their energies, they develop a sense of purpose and a keenness for self-improvement, which builds their self-esteem. They are subsequently less likely to become involved in anti-social activity and crime.

This is especially the case if they also pick up additional skills, such as coaching badges, or responsibilities, such as captaining a side or leading a younger group.

With Football Foundation funded projects successfully working in partnership with local Police constabularies, crime has been successfully reduced in areas.

Case-study—Workshop Boys for Girls

Workshop Boys Club JFC formed a girls' football section to complement their existing male section, with the help of a grant from the Football Foundation. The club was awarded £7,890 by the Foundation to support an ambitious club development plan. The club is offering more players each year the opportunity to participate in football and, in addition, the Club is progressing through the levels of FA Charter Standard in order to achieve FA Community Club status.

4. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE GAME INCLUDING COACHING AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 *Engaging women to branch out into other areas of the game.*

By encouraging more girls and women to participate in football, we hope to encourage more to get involved in other aspects of the game, whether coaching, management or administration.

4.2 *Boosting numbers of female football coaches.*

The Football Foundation funds many female coaches across the country who train players of all ages and abilities. This is important as it will in turn encourage more girls to play the game as the women coaches serve as role models and banish the mentality that football is a "man's sport". Equally, the keenest girls will aspire to become coaches themselves.

4.3 *Boosting the number of female officials.*

Refereeing is a crucial area of the game and should not be overlooked. The Foundation believes that a greater number of female officials in both the male and female game is another powerful way of attracting girls to the sport. Seeing women as the authority figure in a match demonstrates to girls that they can be as knowledgeable and professional about football as their male counterparts.

The Foundation is keen to encourage more women to become referees and assistant referees. As an example of the Foundation's commitment to achieving this, we ensure that all grants made to develop new changing areas must also support changing rooms for female officials as well as players, to encourage participation in officiating the game amongst women.

Case Study—Colchester United Female Football Academy

Following the ongoing successful development of the Female Football Development Programme at the Colchester United Community Sports Trust (CUCST) seed funding was secured from the Football Foundation to finance the project and the Academy was established with the support of Thurstable School and Sports College.

An Academy Manager is employed with responsibility for managing all aspects of the football programme, including supporting the students with any pastoral issues that may arise during their involvement within the Academy. The programme supports women to participate in coaching through:

- FA Football Coaching Awards/Sports Leadership qualifications—In the students' first year they complete the FA Club Coach Level 1 Award and the Community Sports Leaders Award (or equivalent). The second year sees all students complete the Higher Sports Leader Award (or equivalent), a second sport coaching qualification (eg Hockey Leaders, Basketball Leaders etc). In addition, the highly motivated students are encouraged to undertake the programme of learning required in achieving the FA Coaching Certificate (Level 2).
- Football coaching programme—The football programme is delivered by a coach possessing the minimum of an FA (UEFA "B") Coaching Licence and directed by an FA (UEFA "A") Advanced Coaching Licence holder. The programme is structured to improve all aspects of the students playing game with particular focus upon the development of "game understanding" and tactical awareness. This programme supports prior learning from a range of playing environments. The programme is also based at The Thurstable Sports College, making use of their third generation turf pitch and excellent grass pitch provision.

5. MEDIA COVERAGE AND SPONSORSHIP OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

5.1 *Media coverage of women's football.*

Participation in the game is driven by awareness and motivation, something led by positive role models and good quality coverage. You only have to look at the number of children playing tennis in the weeks in and around Wimbledon to see this in action.

In the past, coverage has been directed almost entirely at men's football and it has been very difficult for strong role models to be developed from the women's game. However, this has started to change recently and we welcome the higher levels of interest in the women's game in the last few years, notably from the BBC's coverage of the women's FA Cups and last year's European Cup.

The Foundation tries to encourage heightened awareness through promotional activity around our own work to support women's football. However, interest from the media cannot be counted on as readily as it can in the men's game. We therefore hope to see more support from the national press in future for this kind of activity.

5.2 *Sponsorship of women's football*

Sponsorship has the potential to greatly assist the growth and standing of women's football.

An increased and enhanced profile of the female game will in turn attract greater sponsorship, so the Foundation is keen that this area is encouraged. It is of course a matter for the women's game to decide which sponsors they might partner with in such a venture.

5.3 *Role models in women's football*

The Football Foundation runs an Ambassador scheme, where star players from the Premier League devote their personal time to community projects. They make appearances at events and pay visits to local schools and organisations in the towns near to where their club is based.

The Foundation is looking to introduce a similar scheme which uses women players at the top of their game as female ambassadors for the new season. This will have the two-fold benefit of engaging younger girls in the national game and providing a focal point for the media to convey the women's game.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 *Barriers identified to women's football*

- Tangible barriers—the Football Foundation's REFF study exposed the barriers inherent in the infrastructure of the grassroots game in England.
- Social barriers—traditionally football has been seen as a male sport, as opposed to, say, netball or hockey.
- The Foundation is helping to address both of these through investment. It is important this continues so that:
 - (i) girls and women can fully benefit from football;
 - (ii) society can benefit from how football can engage girls; studies are increasingly finding girls to be disaffected and engaging in anti-social activity traditionally associated with young men.

6.2 *Nevertheless women's football is the UK's fastest growing participatory sport*

FA figures show that:

- In the mid-nineties there were just 60 female teams in the UK. Now there are at least 3,820 registered, charter-standard clubs.
- Each week 1.6 million girls play properly coached and organised football, either through a club or school.

The FA deserves considerable credit for the work it has led on promoting the female game, resulting in this growth. The Football Foundation has also been able to make a significant contribution to the growth of women's football. This has only been possible due to the revenue put up by the Foundation's funding partners since 2000: the FA Premier League, The FA, the National Lottery, Sport England and the Government. It is vital this support continues if women's sport is to develop further.

June 2006

Witnesses: Mr Paul Thorogood, Chief Executive, and Ms Clare Fitzgerald, Senior Development Manager, the Football Foundation, gave evidence.

Chairman: Can I welcome the Football Foundation as our next witnesses and in particular the Chief Executive, Paul Thorogood, and Clare Fitzgerald, who is the Senior Development Manager.

Q57 Alan Keen: Thanks for all you do for football. If an application comes in to you from, let us say, again a combined counties club who would like a contribution towards building a new stand, what would your attitude then be with regard to women's football if an application came in?

Mr Thorogood: I will answer that question in due course, but would it be helpful if I very shortly explained exactly what the Football Foundation is and what we do?

Q58 Chairman: If you could give a very brief summary. I think most of us have a reasonable idea of what the Football Foundation is.

Mr Thorogood: I think the key point here is that we are the largest sports charity and there is a unique partnership between the FA Premier League, the Football Association, Sport England and the Government. Our job is to help revitalise grassroots football and use football as a power for good in terms of promoting health, communities, education and social inclusion. Since our launch, the Foundation has supported over 2,400 projects were more than £425 million. Specifically for women's football, although we do not support projects specifically for men and boys, we have supported 86 projects specifically for women and girls at a total cost of £9.8 million since 2000. As I said, since our launch, our support for the grassroots game ranges from million pound grants for new facilities through to providing new football strips for girls' and boys' football teams, and as of today we have given over 100,000 brand new strips. I just thought it would be useful to you for me to say that we are an organisation that does not discriminate at all and that anything we do is aimed at both women and girls and men and boys.

Q59 Alan Keen: I am sort of Chairman of a combined county structure and if I came to you and said, "We'd like a new stand. Can you give us some money for it?", would you say to me, "Well, are women involved in your club?" or would you just come down, have a look and say, "No, we won't", but not mention women?

Mr Thorogood: Clare has a lot of the detail, but just before I invite Clare to speak on the detail of what happens, the Football Foundation makes sure that in all the grants it gives and offers women's and girls' football is specifically included in them. As to your question, Clare has a lot of the detail on that.

Ms Fitzgerald: What would happen when we are actually looking at the application, if it was for a facility build, there are obviously a lot of technical areas which would be addressed through the application process, but the staff at the Foundation would very much look at the overall programme that you are looking to deliver and what development

plan you have to engage with the community as a whole, and that would include women and girls, and that development plan would be an essential part of your application process. If it was not robust enough and did not address some of the key issues, the staff would work with that applicant to encourage them to look down certain avenues and, if it was women and girls, for example, they would make sure they were doing that before it got through our processes. Then we monitor that as we go, so, even after an award, it is then monitored to make sure it is meeting its development plan that was agreed with the Foundation.

Q60 Alan Keen: If my club was in an extremely deprived area and it was one of the best cases to give money to in that particular area and no funding had been given within 10 miles of that place and you said to me, "What about women?", how would you tackle it?

Ms Fitzgerald: The staff are very experienced and have the expertise to work you through that process, and we would also work really closely with the county staff through the FA in the area to put you in touch with good examples, areas of best practice. It might be that you would learn from another club in another area, so we would actually put you in touch with that club so that you could see how that particular club has flourished and addressed some of its issues, offer training courses and awareness programmes to ensure that the club was sort of developed as it should be, so it is really through the staff's expertise and our links in the county.

Q61 Alan Keen: In the end if I kept saying, "What have women got to do with football?", would you say, "Right, you're not getting the money, full stop"?

Mr Thorogood: We make sure that all our grants are aimed at making sure that women's football is supported as part of that grant. One thing to mention also is that we do not just accept grants in, but we offer a mentoring service ahead of that process so that all the things that Clare was talking about, we would work with a particular organisation that wanted to secure grant funding from us.

Q62 Alan Keen: It is pretty obvious, from the range of witnesses that we have asked to come, that the funding of football is very fragmented. Have you recognised that, though I know you are pretty new to the position? Would it be better for what we are looking at today, developing women's football, if there were not so many funding bodies? I understand that obviously schools have to be funded separately from the clubs that you are looking at, but it is very fragmented, is it not?

Mr Thorogood: There is a lot of work to do in that area, but we have made significant strides in ensuring that we try and reduce duplication of effort in the particular regions. We do align ourselves very strongly with the Sport England regional structure and are working very hard. I have instigated, since I joined the Football Foundation, a strategy which is

working towards organising and making sure that we have, what I call, a recognised regional picture of requirement so that everybody, the regional development agencies, the schools, Sport England and ourselves, completely understands what the requirement is for a particular region in terms of investing in football and in grassroots football. Yes, there is some work to do, but I think we are working very hard to eradicate a lot of the duplication of effort.

Q63 Alan Keen: Have you got plans entirely of sport because in the end we want to see women's football right throughout the country and connected with every club because, despite what some women have said that it would be nice to be separate, it sometimes might not be better because, with community clubs, we want everyone in there together, veterans, women and the normal men players.

Mr Thorogood: I think it is important to state that we work very closely with the Football Association as the national governing body and it is the Football Association that drives the development of both the men's and the women's games. Our role is to make sure that we have the facilities there. We have seen an exponential increase of interest in women's football and one of the most important things is to make sure that the facilities are there for men and women to play the game because, in managing expectations, if we grow this expectation and women cannot play football, that would not be a very good thing to do. One of the very first things the Football Foundation did when it first started in 2000 was to do a complete survey of all football facilities in the UK, which is now known as the Register of English Football Facilities, and one of the alarming facts we found was that over 94% of the changing facilities were for men only and they did not provide at all for women. Now, what we are trying to do now is to drive improvement in that area. Now all our facilities that we provide grant aid to must have facilities specifically for women players, coaches and officials.

Ms Fitzgerald: From the community and education area of work that I come from, it is a key priority for us to work really closely with our facilities teams, so if my team know of projects that are looking to develop women and girls, for example, it is ensuring that they work closely with our facilities teams so that they are not bottom of the priority list.

Q64 Mr Hall: If I can follow on from the answer you have just given, you said that the survey which was carried out showed that over 90% of football facilities are men-only facilities and that the Football Foundation grant criteria state that they must be dual facilities, but how many sports facilities did you look at, the numerical number, and how many now have got improved facilities? Have you got those figures to hand?

Mr Thorogood: I do not have those figures, but I am quite happy to write a note to you immediately after this. It will be on the REFF, the Register of English Football Facilities database.

Q65 Mr Hall: So you will be able to see numerically how many facilities five years ago were for men only and how many are available now which have dual facilities?

Mr Thorogood: Yes.

Q66 Mr Hall: When I asked this question to a previous witness, he quite clearly passed the ball in your direction in terms of what more can the Football Foundation do to actually improve the physical facilities that are available. It is the same question: there are four games over a weekend and the women and girls play last, so they are going to play on pitches that are torn up, they are in poor condition, and they are never going to be able to develop the technical skills for the game if those are the kinds of facilities they are going play on, so what can we do to help that?

Mr Thorogood: I think the key thing, the root cause of this or one of the root causes is the state of the facilities when the women and girls actually get to play on them and when they actually play. We can help by providing third

-generation, multi-use facilities, so hard-wearing Astroturf-type sports facilities. We also make sure that every grant application is assessed along the lines of making sure that provision is actively made to ensure that women are not disadvantaged by the facility or the organisation we are funding.

Ms Fitzgerald: That is exactly what we would look out for on their development plan and their usage plan if they were coming in to the facilities team with a request for funding. It would be really digging into that plan and seeing when activity would be taking place on that facility, if it is for women and girls, and that it was not the last lot. We would have to make sure that it was adequate for the needs of the local community and we would also take advice from the FA on that as well.

Q67 Mr Hall: In terms of the facilities that are available, I can remember when I used to be a mascot of a local club in my home town and I used to go anyway to watch football matches, and I still do, that some of the facilities then were pretty grim. How many more football pitches do we need to ensure that we have got sufficient provision for the number of clubs that we expect to come through the girls' and women's game which is clearly growing at a fantastic rate? If we are actually going to allow this opportunity to reach its full potential, we will need more football pitches.

Mr Thorogood: Again I will refer to the fact that the Football Association are the lead as the national governing body and they have a very explicit and detailed plan. They have recently done independent research on the number of people playing football and who are likely to play football in the future. However, what I would say is that it is our role to make sure that we satisfy the requirement in terms of building facilities, we make sure, and you talked about archaic facilities, but we are really about making sure that we get 21st Century facilities to support the FA's development plan for both women and girls and men and boys.

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Q68 Mr Hall: What success have you had with local authorities because they are primarily the provider of municipal facilities? Are you getting a good response from local authorities or are you meeting with resistance?

Mr Thorogood: Well, 70% of the facilities are owned by local authorities in one way or another, parish councils or sometimes the MoD. It would be fair to say that some are very, very good and it would be fair to say that some are not so good, but we are trying to work very hard and again the Football Association has its regional development managers that we work very closely with. We ourselves, as I said, are pushing more of our staff out into the regions to work with the regional development authorities and Sport England and the Football Association development managers.

Q69 Mr Hall: In your opening statement you said you do not discriminate in terms of the grants that are available. Do you think you could have some positive discrimination to encourage women's football to grow and for the facilities to be developed properly and at an accelerated pace?

Mr Thorogood: From the evidence we have heard this morning, I do not think there is necessarily a problem with women and girls wanting to play football, so I do not think there is an issue there.

Q70 Mr Hall: There is a problem with them accessing the money and the money is a very important point for them, is it not? Without the money, there will not be any.

Mr Thorogood: I would return to our premise, that we do not discriminate across any kind of agenda and we make sure, if it is a multi-ethnic project or it is a disability project or it is an equity problem, that whatever grant aid we distribute is going to be used by women and girls and men and boys.

Q71 Helen Southworth: Can I ask you who administers the Football Youth Development Programme? I do not know who it is, so I was wondering, do you know?

Mr Thorogood: It is not the Football Foundation.

Q72 Helen Southworth: Some of the evidence we have been given is about the need for capacity-building, and I think certainly after the Women's Euro 2005 a lot of work was done into the need for capacity-building, but the bit I am particularly interested in is that it marked out the North West and, as a Member of Parliament for the North West with constituents who are telling me that they have very restricted access to women's and girls' football, I am very interested to know what you are going to do about it, well, whether you agree with it, first of all and, if you do, how you are going to address it?

Mr Thorogood: Are you asking me whether it is specifically for women's and girls' football or all facilities generally?

Q73 Helen Southworth: Women's and girls' football.

Mr Thorogood: Again I would refer back to the fact that we would not wish to discriminate. We have recognised certain areas and specifically where we have seen an increase of interest in clubs which are trying to generate women's and girls' football teams from within their own groups, we would support those. We have supported those and other specific women's facilities to the tune of £9.8 million.

Q74 Helen Southworth: I have not asked you the question extensively enough. What has been said to me is that there is an inadequate current provision in the North West and the implication is that it is more inadequate than perhaps in some of the other regions for women's and girls' football. I am wondering whether you have actually got an analysis of what current provision there is across the regions because you can discriminate accidentally and if your grants process is dependent on people making applications, you actually end up discriminating accidentally, so it is really to see how you are addressing that.

Ms Fitzgerald: We have recently, following on what Paul said, got more staff actually in the regions and also about, I think, eight months ago our monitoring and evaluation team invested as well because we have identified that that is a real key thing, to actually map what is going on, where the areas of need are, and it is essential for us then to be able to almost go out and be more proactive and identify that that might be the best region for our staff to really publicise the opportunities of the Foundation, so we are working on that process. We are also looking at investing in the community and education team and it is quite exciting that they have just agreed to four additional members of staff in our area of work, and that is what I am particularly passionate about, to actually go out there, map what is going on across the country and identify that for women and girls, for example, that might be the best place for us to focus our efforts, so we are in the middle of doing that at the moment.

Mr Thorogood: To support Clare, it is true to say that in the first few years of the Foundation's life, we were very much on a receive mode, reactive, and we launched the Foundation and the next morning the phone was ringing and has never stopped. I arrived and I think it was time to take stock. I think if you are in reacting mode, there is a threat that you will end up just giving money out as required if you meet the criteria and then you do get a mismatch across the country. We do keep records and we do keep monitoring and an evaluation of exactly how much we have spent in a particular region and on what, and we could provide that for you. As I said before, I have just initiated a strategic review of what the Football Foundation is about and where we want to place ourselves and there is absolutely no doubt that we will probably be more leaning forward, more proactive, in recognising that the North West requirement is probably different from the North East and the South and it is understanding by region exactly what the requirement is and not offering a cookie-cutter solution, if you like.

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Q75 Philip Davies: I do not know if you were here for the first session, but Wendy Owen, I think it was, was saying that people contact her and the situation that she described of facilities in the 1960s, they are still coming up against exactly the same problems now that they did back then. Given all this stuff that you are doing, is that an indictment of you, or is it a fact that the amount of money you have got to spend is only scratching the surface and making very little difference? Why are we still in that situation now given all the efforts that you have been making?

Mr Thorogood: The Football Foundation has been going for six years and, as I said, the first thing we did was map the UK in terms of facilities. I believe we have made huge inroads in providing modern facilities. There is still a huge way to go yet and there are undoubtedly facilities still out there which need to be upgraded. Whilst we are being proactive and

we are going out to actively encourage local authorities, regional development agencies and Sport England to come forward for grant aid, at the end of the day those people who run those organisations, whether it be local authorities or private clubs, are entitled to come to the Football Foundation and upgrade their facilities.

Q76 Philip Davies: When might they stop getting people ringing up, saying, “We’re facing the same problems now that we did in the 1960s”? How long is it going to take them to get rid of that particular—
Mr Thorogood: I would be quite happy to get together with Wendy and explain to Wendy that when she gets those questions, she should give them my business card and my number and we will try and help them as best we can.

Chairman: We will do that. Thank you very much indeed.

Memorandum submitted by the Football Association

INTRODUCTION TO THE FA

The Football Association is the Governing Body for football in England. The FA takes the lead in providing a structure for organised football, and is responsible for regulating, promoting and developing the game at every level, both on and off the field, for men and women, boys and girls.

The principal aims of The FA are to maximise participation through better and more opportunities, an increase in the quality of players, administrators, officials and coaches, and to give the England international teams the best chance of competing for honours.

Women’s football is an integral part of the national sport in England. The FA is committed to the development of the women’s game from grassroots to elite. We are very proud of what has been achieved in women’s football in recent years under our leadership, and are therefore grateful to the Committee for choosing to hold an inquiry into this subject. We welcome all Parliamentary and media attention on women’s football, particularly given the public spotlight on the elite men’s game which can often “crowd out” any positive focus on women’s football.

This submission provides evidence as per the inquiry’s four terms of reference.

1. *The development of women’s football at all levels and the resource requirements to support wider participation in amateur and elite women’s football*

1.1 Football is now the most popular sport for females in England, with more players competing in affiliated competition than any other team sport, and has been since overtaking netball in 2002. There has been a huge increase in the number of players, clubs, leagues and competition since 1993 when The Football Association assumed governance of the game.

1.2 In 1993 there were just 80 girls’ teams. In season 2004–05 there were over 8,000 teams. Women’s football is also the fastest growing participation sport in the country, with research indicating a total of 1.6 million women and girls taking part in recreational football. This growth in participation brings its own challenges.

Participation Case Study—Berkshire FA

There are 82 girls’ teams, playing in 28 clubs across the county, compared to just 11 teams in 2001. The formation of leagues, plus the increase in girls’ football activities in schools and the general promotion of the girls’ game, has been largely generated through the appointment of a full time Girls’ and Women’s Football Development Officer, funded by The FA, Sport England and the Football Foundation.

1.3 The FA’s Active Sports Programme, appended to this submission, sets out the work which has been done around the country to increase participation:

- improving the quality and quantity of female coaches;
- supporting the development of girls’ football in priority areas; and
- establishing a sustainable programme of development.

1.4 We are continuing to develop the game at grassroots level, and working with the County Football Associations, we are taking the lead in shifting the culture of the game to give equal importance to girls' football at a local level. The FA has set ambitious targets for the development of women's football at a grassroots level for the next few years, within football's "Whole Sport Plan":

Participation:

Increase the number of women and girls to be regularly playing affiliated football from 96,044 in 2005 to 138,354 in 2009. (NB this definition, and therefore the number, may differ from other estimates).

Clubs:

Increase the number of active accredited clubs within the sport from 490 in 2005 to 2,490 by 2009.

Increase the number of FA Community Clubs (clubs with a minimum of 10 teams, youth to adult football for males and females, qualified coaches, child protection policies and a football development plan) to from 53 in 2005 to 333 by 2009.

Coaches:

Increase the number of active qualified women coaches delivering instruction within the sport from 2353 in 2005 to 13,326 by 2009.

1.5 There is clearly lots of scope for further expansion of the female game. FA research in 2005 indicated that only one in 10 girls aged 10-15 who have played in the last year, have played for a local club. One in three playing opportunities for girls is at school, and at least half of all girls have had no football coaching in the past year. True equality of opportunity is still some distance away.

1.6 In order to meet our goals, significant investment is needed. The FA is making some of that investment, both directly with its own programmes and indirectly through the Football Foundation. But to fully reap the public policy benefits which football can provide for this traditionally hard-to-reach sector of the population, and to meet its own manifesto commitments of providing adequate sports facilities and opportunities, the Government must itself invest.

THE ENGLAND TEAM

1.6 In the most recent FIFA Rankings, England are ranked 12th in the world, and currently tops the World Cup 2007 qualification group which includes France, Holland, Austria and Hungary, with two games left to play. This is England's best chance of qualifying for the finals, to take place in China next year, since 1993.

1.7 The team went through the entire 2005–06 season undefeated, something they have not done in 13 years, including draws against Sweden and France who are ranked fifth and sixth respectively. The team is improving—closing the gap on the top nations, specifically Germany and Sweden who started their investment in the game 25 years prior to England.

1.8 The 2005 UEFA European Women's Championship was staged in the North West of England. The tournament provided a platform to show the world the advance in the women's game. England automatically qualified as hosts for Euro 2005 and went into the tournament 11-matches unbeaten. Despite performing well the team missed out on the semi-finals, losing to Denmark and Sweden after beating Finland in the opening game.

1.9 The National Coach is Hope Powell, a former England player who won 66 caps and scored 33 goals from midfield. Hope retired from playing when she took over as the first full-time manager (and The FA's first female national coach) in June 1998. She has received an OBE for her services to the game and was the first female coach to earn the UEFA Pro-Licence—the highest football coaching qualification available.

1.10 In order to further develop the most talented players, The FA also launched a National Player Development Centre at Loughborough University in 2001. This national academy takes applications from approximately 20 players per academic year on a fully-funded football scholarship for up to four years. The Centre provides coaching from Monday-Friday, as well as allowing the players to continue their education.

1.11 There has been a huge success rate of players at the Centre representing England from Under-17 through to Senior level, notably Casey Stoney, Amanda Barr and most recently Karen Carney, all of whom continue to make progress in their international football careers.

THE FA WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

1.12 At senior club level, women's football has a pyramid of leagues which culminates in The FA Women's Premier League (FAWPL), with the National Division at the top. Arsenal have won the league five times in the past 10 years and are the current holders. Below the National Division are the Northern and Southern Divisions, which both offer the winners each season a place in the top flight. 34 teams participate in The FA Women's Premier League's three divisions, and the league is administered from The FA's offices.

1.13 With over 1,000 women's teams, there are now leagues and competitions of all standards throughout the country. We have put in place a pyramid of football for adult women from county based recreational leagues through to regional, combination and FAWPL. There are also numerous girls' leagues to ensure that those playing for recreation and fun can do so in an organised way, and the number of these competitions is growing with the rates of participation.

SPECIFIC FUNDING INTO WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

1.14 Following the success of Euro 2005, The FA has created a working group to look at establishing a new Women's Football "Super League". The working group includes key FA Directors, and is driven from the top by The FA Chief Executive, Brian Barwick. The group is looking at how to address fundamental issues at the top of the women's game.

1.15 The current Women's Premier League clubs suffer from either poor facilities or restricted access to facilities, low levels of sponsorship, low levels of media coverage and varying support from men's professional clubs. Recently clubs such as Birmingham and Fulham have considered pulling out the league due to the withdrawal of sponsorship and women's club support. Women's teams rent men's facilities and are often the third match of the weekend resulting in a high number of postponements. All this has resulted in a severe imbalance in the league, with Arsenal dominating, as the Club (to their credit) has given the women's team their full backing.

1.16 The Euro 2005 Championships demonstrated that top quality women's competition, in good stadia, which is properly marketed, can attract significant interest from fans and the media. The current condition of the FAWPL indicates that a thorough review of the league is required. Early discussions for example have included the possibility of moving to a summer league.

1.17 The aims of a new "Super League" would be:

- (a) Create a high profile vibrant women's football competition at the apex of the game.
- (b) Provide top quality competition, enhancing England/GB medals at European Championship, World Cup and Olympic Level. Maximise opportunity of medals at 2012.
- (c) Create strong club structures with excellent junior and community programmes for girls and world class talent development programmes.
- (d) Provide visible role models for young girls—the first high profile female team sport role models in England, inspiring future generations of female players.
- (e) Maximise revenues into women's football clubs through media rights, sponsorship and gate receipts.
- (f) Offer "franchises" to organisations that meet quality criteria in stadia, marketing, community programmes, talent development etc.

1.18 The FA would like to take this opportunity to seek the Select Committee's support for this new and exciting proposal. It would necessitate the creation of a new Government funding programme for women's football, which could be the first ever in this country for women's sport. The relatively small amount of £3 million per year for five years, with the challenge that this is matched by football and other partners, could potentially produce this country's most significant step forward for women's sport.

PLAYERS AS ROLE MODELS

1.19 Like their male counterparts, high-profile women footballers can be excellent role models for increasing participation and interest in the game. They can also help promote policy goals such as education, public health and social inclusion. One example of this is the Key Stage 2 Education pack (appended) which The FA prepared for every primary school in the country around Euro 2005. This resource used the power of, and interest in, football to meet core curriculum lessons in geography, science, history, nutrition, citizenship, maths and English.

2. Availability of opportunities for young players to develop skills, stamina and performance

2.1 Women's and girls' football is a key part of The FA's Development Strategy. Football is administered locally by 43 County Football Associations and The FA funds full-time football development staff in each County to deliver the development programmes. There are 47 specific Women's and Girls' Football Development Officers, working strategically across the country to introduce the playing opportunities required. These posts are supported by a network of over 160 generic football staff and nine FA Regional Development Managers, both male and female.

2.2 The FA is working closely with schools to develop more opportunities for girls to play within designated PE lessons. In 2002 a Sport England survey showed that only 13% of girls have access to football coaching in PE lessons, yet football is the sport of choice for girls. The FA's Football Development teams, which include some specific Education Officers, provide a support network to ensure opportunities are offered, teachers achieve FA coaching qualifications and schools have access to approved equipment. So we would expect to see a significant rise in this percentage in the coming years.

2.3 Since the launch of the five-year FA Football Development Strategy in 2001, we now have over 4,000 Charter Standard (FA kite-marked) Schools. Through this programme The FA has provided over 350,000 young people per year, approximately 50% female, the opportunity to participate in football in a safe and progressive environment during curriculum time. Over 1,000 new girls Under-11 teams are playing in the national English Schools FA competitions and more young people are provided with an opportunity to progress into a Charter Standard Club.

2.4 The FA School Club Link Programme is football's commitment to the delivery of the Physical Education and School Sport Club Links (PESSCL) strategy, which sets out to ensure that all children, whatever their circumstances or abilities, should be able to enjoy physical education and sport. It also aims to develop sustainable relationships between schools and local clubs to provide young people the chance to continue their football participation. Since 2001 an average of 20,000 young people has attended the related "Three Lions" coaching course each year, of which 61% are female. In 2005 there were 144 FA PESSCL football projects specifically focusing on girls' football, with 235 forecast for this year.

2.5 The FA "Tops" programme represents another £6 million investment into Primary Schools Football, representing the largest single sport education programme in Europe. 88% of all primary and special schools in the country have been signed up by their Local Education Authority to be part of the programme which benefits both boys and girls, in curriculum and out of school hours. Some of the numbers from this initiative are worth noting:

- 11,995 schools included in the programme;
- 23,990 mini-soccer goal posts dispatched;
- 71,970 footballs dispatched;
- 1,335 coaches from FA Charter Standard Clubs trained; and
- 337 Special Schools received both TOPS equipment and a "Soccability" bag to assist inclusion of people with disabilities in PE and sport.

Social Inclusion Case Study—Northamptonshire FA

Eighty girls from deprived backgrounds have received coaching in East Northamptonshire, with half of them moving onto local FA Charter Standard clubs. A further pilot disability project has encouraged new female players in special schools, with coaching in deprived areas with provision to encourage future participation. In addition, there has been a successful Street Football mini soccer festival, and targets have been set to develop coaches and female teams within the local Somali community.

2.6 At the elite end of the girls' game, there are 51 licensed FA Centres of Excellence in operation across England. These Centres provide weekly quality coaching and a localised fixture programme for talented girls from the age of 8–18. The FA provides direction and a substantial grant to each Centre, totalling over £1 million per annum. Each Centre is either attached to a County FA, a County Sports Partnership or a men's professional club.

2.7 Their male counterparts, playing in Centres of Excellence and Academies at professional clubs, currently receive direct Government funding and have done for some years. The FA would welcome similar support for the female game.

MIXED FOOTBALL

2.8 There has recently been some media attention on the possibility of girls playing mixed football after the age of 11. At present the relevant FA Rule reads:

"Save for matches in a playing season in the age ranges Under 7, Under 8, Under 9, Under 10 and Under 11 players in a match must be of the same gender".

2.9 This rule has the effect of prohibiting boys and girls aged 12 or over from participating in the same match. The FA places the safety of players as its overriding concern. The decision was taken following advice from experts in the field of child development. The ruling is based on the age where puberty will alter the strength and other physical characteristics that differentiate males from females. The advice we have received is that the muscle strength and power differentials between boys and girls, which may be compounded by different rates of physical development, could lead a girl to an unacceptable risk of injury.

2.10 In addition, as the rest of this document demonstrates, The FA supports the setting up of girls/women's football teams in order to promote and encourage female participation and to provide them with clear channels of progression.

2.11 However, The FA recognises that the pace of change in the girls' game means that the technical differences between boys and girls are continually decreasing. As a result of this, The FA has committed to undertake a consultation with young players themselves, in order to ensure the validity of the under-11 ruling. We have also been liaising with the Office of the Children's Commissioner to seek their involvement with the process.

3. *Women's participation in all aspects of the game including coaching and management*

COACHING

3.1 The FA actively supports all female coaches who wish to develop their experience and coaching qualifications. Each County FA offers a comprehensive coach development programme and many run very successful female-only courses.

3.2 The FA National Mentoring Programme has over 60 female coaches registered, of which four have already achieved the prestigious UEFA "A" Licence, the highest level of coaching qualification available. There are 20 coaches who have reached the "Level 3" award and 10 at "Level 2". There are nine female coaches on the FA Elite/High Performance programme of which eight have achieved or are currently undertaking the UEFA "A" Licence.

3.3 The table below shows the breakdown of coaches passing through the three main levels of coaching qualification in 2004. The results are very encouraging; the percentages of females compare very favourably with the playing statistics:

| <i>Coaching Qualifications</i> | | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|--------------------------------|------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Level 1 | 2004 | 24,716 | 3,072 | 27,716 |
| | 2005 | 27,083 | 3,422 | 30,505 |
| Level 2 | 2004 | 5,364 | 404 | 5,768 |
| | 2005 | 5,496 | 351 | 5,847 |
| Level 3 | 2004 | 783 | 31 | 814 |
| | 2005 | 1,009 | 51 | 1,060 |

3.4 The FA's Diversity and Sports Equity workshop, currently being implemented throughout grassroots football, celebrates the successes so far in developing the women's and girls' game. It also encourages clubs to involve and develop female participants in the roles such as coaching, refereeing and team management.

3.5 The FA's free phone "Abuse and Discrimination Line" (0800 085 0508) is widely promoted through this workshop along with several other means, to ensure that women feel confident to report any concerns they have about being treated unfairly in football.

REFEREEING

3.6 There has been a huge growth in the number of females now taking up the whistle. Two years ago there were 450 registered female referees, and now 1,097; a growth of 144%. These figures have been achieved in several ways:

- Women only "introduction to refereeing" evenings.
- Women only Referee courses.
- Young Officials programmes run through Active Sports, which are then linked to Referee Academies, ESFA and Local Authority Competitions.
- Practical Basic Referee Training Courses.
- Current female match officials have encouraged others to join them.

3.7 The trends are encouraging, but we still need to invest in this growth area in order to obtain a fairer representation. We are currently undertaking a review of the recruitment and retention of female match officials as well as their development pathways and career opportunities. As part of the development of the women's game we hope to encourage more women and girls to take up refereeing by offering them the opportunity to referee female football only and have the opportunity to be promoted through that stream.

This will serve three purposes; to encourage more females to take up refereeing; to aid retention and supply the women's and girls' game with qualified registered referees throughout the structure and; to make the game more enjoyable for the participants.

3.8 For all female match officials, The FA allocates a coach who provides advice and support. Regular county, regional and national in-service training events take place specifically for female match officials.

4. *Media coverage and sponsorship of women's football*

MEDIA COVERAGE

4.1 While we realise that most of the media's focus is on the men's game, we believe that it is vital that we maximise opportunities to promote women's football in the media. We have been working hard to achieve this, and believe that success in this area is best demonstrated by our work around Euro 2005.

4.2 In preparation for the tournament, The FA employed an expanded media team and campaigned for the BBC to show England's games live on terrestrial television, which did appear at prime-time on BBC2. We were delighted with the support which the whole tournament received from BBC Sport, and we are grateful to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for its role in ensuring that the BBC was as supportive as possible.

4.3 The success of the coverage of that tournament proved to be a watershed in the coverage of women's football. The tournament was a media success. The opening match of England v Finland attracted a peak audience of 2.9 million, and 8.9 million people watched England across the duration of the tournament. Furthermore, The FA investment in media liaison resulted in the tournament being covered by every English national daily newspaper on at least one occasion; this was unprecedented for women's football.

4.4 With 70,000 paying fans attending three England games during the tournament, there is a clear indication that there is a solid market for the women's game as a credible spectator sport. Since Euro 2005 we have been working to maximise the audience for the game through increasing coverage and sponsorship. The legacy of this work appears to be in place. Ticket and match day revenue from the England v Iceland international at Norwich City FC in March 2006 was 10 times the amount of the comparable England v Italy game at MK Dons FC in February 2005, with crowds rising from around 5,000 per game to over 10,000 in this period.

4.5 At club level, BBC1 has broadcast live The FA Women's Cup Final for the past five years, while The FA Nationwide Women's Premier League Cup Final has been televised live on Sky Sports every spring since its inception. League matches are not well covered at all, which is again part of the ongoing review of the League. We are continuing to work to ensure an increase in media coverage of women's football in the years to come.

SPONSORSHIP

4.6 Nationwide Building Society is currently The FA Partner for Women's Football. This includes support for the England Women's Team, The FA Women's Cup, The Nationwide Women's Premier League Cup and the Nationwide Women's Premier League. Nationwide has specifically invested in supporting the girls' and women's game in England from 2002 to 2006, during which time the game has seen unparalleled growth in participation and profile and Nationwide has been instrumental in delivering this.

4.7 Nationwide will no longer be involved as an FA Partner from July 2006, as The FA's sponsorship cycle comes to an end. The FA is in the process of negotiating with other potential sponsors. As part of our offering, we are planning to agree a distinct England Team sponsor—for both male and female teams—as well as a Women's Football Development Partner. We have recently announced that E.ON is to sponsor The FA Women's Cup, in addition to The FA Cup. This will allow a dedicated sponsor to further raise the profile of the showcase match of the Women's domestic football season.

4.8 This year saw 13,452 fans attend the final at Millwall FC, which is just under the record crowd set in 2001 of 13,824. The television audience for the match over the past few years has been in excess of 1.5 million. Some clubs in the FA Women's Premier League are now attracting their own sponsors; Leeds United used their good run in The FA Women's Cup to get Asda on board as a club sponsor.

4.9 We believe that, as participation and the profile of the women's game grows, there will be an increased scope for The FA and clubs to maximise sponsorship opportunities, which will allow higher revenues to be distributed to all levels of the women's game. However some radical change to the FA Women's Premier League, described above, will be required to achieve this.

CONCLUSION

The Women's Euro 2005 tournament and recent success of the England women's teams shows that women's football has undoubtedly made tremendous progress. However, there remains huge scope to develop the game at all levels. It is vital that we build on the legacy of Euro 2005, increasing participation in football with more female players, coaches and referees, crowned by the rejuvenation of the FA Women's Premier League. The FA looks forward to providing oral evidence to the Committee on 27 June.

10 June 2006

Witnesses: Ms Kelly Simmons MBE, Head of National Football Development, and Ms Faye White, Captain of England's Women's Team and Arsenal Player, Football Association, gave evidence.

Chairman: Can I welcome the Football Association, and representing them are Kelly Simmons, the Head of Development, and Faye White, the current Captain of the England women's football team.

Q77 Alan Keen: It is very pleasing that there are more and more women watching Premiership games. How can we take advantage of that to push forward the participation of women in football? There must be masses of those women watching Premiership football who wished they had played football at school and could have gone out on the pitch instead of just going out on the Saturday and watching. How can we use those growing numbers to further women's football?

Ms White: I think obviously the European Championships did show that so many more people are coming to support them and watch the women's game. There are not quite as many unfortunately watching our national division league games, but, as a club at Arsenal, we do a lot of work in the community to try and get out into schools, to show what women's football can do and deliver and to let them know that there are women playing so they can then come and watch our games. I think that work is important. I know some other clubs, like Charlton, they are very good at doing that as well and it is often the clubs that have a good community link that do try to do that, but it is an area which we do need to continue to work in order to get more people to come and watch our domestic games. And we also need to do the work around the England games where about five years ago it would have been less than 5,000 people coming to watch us, but now regularly over 10,000 people come and watch the England games. Then obviously the Euros showed that we hit the target, and we beat the record for European Championships, when over 29,000 people were watching those games.

Q78 Alan Keen: What is the structure within Arsenal, the club as a whole? How does the women's team fit in with that? Do you feel a part of the club as a whole or not quite?

Ms White: Yes, definitely. The club has been going since 1987 and the support has grown each year. Basically at the moment there are six of the current first team players that actually are employed by the club. That is either as a development officer, which is what I do and I have been doing it for the last two years, and we have two development officers: a lady who oversees the whole ladies' club: and also two players who also work in the academy. They are

employed to get out into the community to do all of the coaching within the schools, set up soccer schools, and that is part of my job, to really help get the participation and the people coming along to come to watch our games so that the ladies' club is actually supporting itself, as far as getting out there and trying to promote the game is concerned. As far as the financial commitment that we get from the men's club and how we feel part of the club is concerned, it has been very good over the years and it is always improving, and I think that shows in our success as well. In the League we are doing very well and we have won the League for the last three years because obviously having the backing of such a good club, the name, you get the facilities. We also train at the men's grounds, we get to use Highbury on a number of occasions, and use the training facilities and therefore we are able to attract the best players, so the success then comes in because of that.

Q79 Alan Keen: In economic terms for the future of Arsenal Football Club, you must capture a lot of young fans who are going to pay entrance fees for a lot of years ahead. Can you contrast that with Manchester United who have ditched their women's team? Surely they are throwing a potential advantage away?

Ms White: Well, I think that is one of the strong points, that Arsenal clearly see that the female audience is a huge area which they can tap into and see that it benefits the game as a whole, and having the ladies' team doing so well and showing their support to the ladies' team is going to affect that. When Manchester United announced that they did not support their women's team any more, it was a huge loss and Arsenal as a club do not see why because they see the benefits that the ladies' clubs bring to them. The number of females watching the men's game is improving all the time and we are getting more people coming to watch our games as an outcome as well.

Q80 Chairman: Do you think there is a direct correlation between having a women's club and attracting women to come and support the men's club and that the men's club, therefore, has a financial benefit from sponsoring a women's team? Is there an overall economic benefit to the club?

Ms White: I think Arsenal have an overall outlook that it is very much 'for the community' and they are trying to keep that element of football as well as just the big money and winning and having that money side of it in the men's game. I went to the Champions

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League game recently in Barcelona and we had so many fans on both sides, male and female, coming up and recognising us as some of the players and saying, “Well done!” and saying how they want to come and watch. For the fan base we do get a lot of support through the media, and through the links that the press office also help us with, and we are firmly part of the club now. I think it does have an effect on the number of fans that go and watch the men’s game as well, from my experience.

Q81 Chairman: You are the exception, not the rule. We have heard about Manchester in evidence earlier from Sue who was at Southampton and Southampton have now dropped their link with their women’s club. It does appear that most clubs in this country are not interested in women’s football.

Ms White: Yes, and that is a big shame because it does mean that our league is becoming unstable and lower clubs are struggling to keep up. Although I love winning every year and doing well and getting that success, as a player and as a player who plays for our country as well, you want to know that you are getting challenged week in, week out and that you are having strong competition to play against. It is also necessary for the fact that you are going to try and encourage spectators to come along, that you need a very competitive league, and, although it is slowly closing, there is a big gulf between the top teams that get everything and are well supported and the ones that are struggling. We are fortunate to have over six people employed to run the ladies’ team, but many of the lower clubs do not have that luxury as well and that affects everything from how you market a game to the training facilities and the running of the club.

Q82 Philip Davies: Just on that, how many people come to watch an Arsenal women’s football match? What is your typical gate?

Ms White: It can go anywhere, as the lady said earlier, from 50 people for a lower team that we are playing against up to one of our records which was nearly 3,000 for a European game that we played.

Q83 Chairman: Those are all paid tickets?

Ms White: Yes, and we promote it. Obviously we know that the date for a European game is set in stone, so if we have got to the quarter finals, for instance, as we did against an Italian team, for two months beforehand we knew that that date was going to go ahead, obviously apart from the weather, but we had a lot of time to promote it. We used all the channels with the FA, but also within the Arsenal press office and all their links to really promote it and get as many people as we could there, and also from around the local area where we played our game—which was pretty much a sell-out. It shows that it can be done, but we need this league structure which has dates set in stone, and due to the pitches that we get a lot of the time (although we are fortunate to have a good facility, but a lot of other teams do not have the facilities), obviously suffer from postponements and dates change too much. That is then hard for a club to market that game and

to try and get people aware of it, but it is also hard for the spectators to find out about it. Even avid followers of the game sometimes find it hard to know when dates are of games and that is a big problem and that is a lot down to the facilities that we are playing at and the precedent of how low down the League the ladies’ games are on certain pitches and obviously the weather. There may be other facilities which could stop this, like these new generation pitches which could be a possibility for the future.

Q84 Helen Southworth: What is it that works in Germany or the USA that we need to learn from in terms of women’s teams?

Ms White: In America it is the fact that it is not their number one sport and they have a lot of people involved in basketball and baseball as the main sports. In Germany I think the governing body has been supporting it for a lot longer than the FA have and they have got over 800,000 affiliated players. The perception there is slightly different as well in that women’s football is a bit more accepted in the culture. Again going out there and playing against a German opposition in the UEFA Cup, they do get a lot of sponsorship into the game and support from the public and can attract big crowds as well to their league games.

Q85 Helen Southworth: Sorry, I might be missing something very clear here, but why does the fact that football is not the main sport in the USA help women’s football? Are you saying it is because they are not as restricted to let women in almost?

Ms White: From my experience and I have coached out there—not a great deal, but a little bit—and seeing the kind of atmosphere, I think it is more accepted for girls to play, or it was. They are actively encouraged. You will go into a playing field and you will see just as many girls playing as boys, whereas in this country when I was trying to break my way through and play football in my teens, that was certainly not the case and I was not actively encouraged to play because it was not the perception that girls played football. I think it is a lot different now, but that was only 10 or 12 years ago.

Q86 Helen Southworth: You were not actively encouraged, but were you discouraged or did you feel discouraged?

Ms White: There just were not the opportunities. I was not able to play at school because the schools had not heard of girls’ football and were not encouraging it. I joined actually my brother’s team and played there, but I was not actually allowed to play on the Sunday, so I just trained with them. Then it was not until I stopped playing with them, which was purely my father’s decision because they were two years older than me, that I actually joined the ladies’ team at 13. That was by chance really as I bumped into a coach one day when I was playing at the local leisure centre, so I was not actively discouraged, and my parents were very supportive, but it was more that there were not the opportunities available to me then.

Q87 Helen Southworth: How do we find the boys who are really good players who are going to be Wayne Rooney or whatever? Do they just stumble along until they—

Ms White: No, their pathway is set out at the age of six when they—

Q88 Helen Southworth: Can you just describe it to me, what their pathway would be?

Ms White: My pathway?

Q89 Helen Southworth: No, what a boy's pathway would be.

Ms Simmons: A boy's pathway is a similar type of structure in that there is a range of opportunities at the grassroots level, be it through school, through school competitions, school teams or the local club football, and then better boys are selected into centres of excellence or academies, which are enhanced centres of excellence, and they will then come through that system.

Q90 Helen Southworth: At what age does that happen?

Ms Simmons: In boys' football, they are taken at around seven or eight, and girls, we take them around at nine or ten, so it is a similar system for the girls in that again there is a range. We have spoken earlier about the scale of opportunities not being as big for girls and not as localised in some instances, although we are growing. We then have centres of excellence trials where the talented young girls can come in for trials and for acceptance to the centres of excellence from under-ten right through to under-16. Many of them now have 16 to 18 partnerships with FE colleges where they can train every day, so it is a similar type of system, but obviously the scale is not as big.

Q91 Helen Southworth: The one you are describing for boys, is that the Youth Development Programme?

Ms Simmons: Yes, and just to pick up on that because you asked a question on that earlier, the Youth Development Programme was a funding agreement between the FA, the Premier League, the PFA and the Football Foundation and the Government through DCMS and Sport England. That was a £10 million pot a year to fund boys' centres of excellence/academies within football league clubs and all of that went to boys' football. That deal has just recently come up for renewal and Sport England have decided not to continue funding, but the Football Foundation have put, I think it is, £1.25 million in again for another year and the FA have put funding in and the Premier League have put funding in and that is what the FA's Youth Development Programme is. The girls' centre of excellence programme is totally separate in its funding. It is funded entirely by the Football Association and we invest £1 million a year to the girls' centres of excellence. We have never had any government funding, so the boys had eight years of funding at £2.5 million a year through Sport

England into that programme and the girls' centres of excellence have never had any external funding, solely FA monies.

Q92 Mr Hall: We have heard a lot about the physical difficulties in terms of facilities, the provision of pitches and changing facilities, which actually inhibit girls' and women's football.

Ms Simmons: Yes.

Q93 Mr Hall: Do you want to say a few words about that in terms of the FA? I have asked this of other witnesses and I am not sure we have got a clear idea about who is actually responsible for sorting this particular problem out. What is the FA's view on that?

Ms Simmons: Well, first of all you mentioned Germany—I have just been out working for FIFA in Germany for a month and I have just come back. There the Government invests hugely in local community sports facilities and in fact one of the top international teams, its training site was a school playing field, a school pitch and facilities, so that is how good their sports facilities are in Germany in the schools and in the community. That is a huge factor. When you talk to the German FA, they do not actually invest any more money than we do, although they have been doing it longer, but they invest similar sums of money and have similar types of infrastructure within their national association, but they are hugely supported by a massive capital investment in school and community facilities. Who is responsible? Well, there is not one agency responsible for facilities. Obviously we invest, like the Government do, into the Football Foundation and they are doing a fantastic job, but I think the estimates are that £2 billion is required to bring all of the facilities up to the standards that we require, and that is a long-term programme.

Q94 Mr Hall: Over what period of time would that be?

Ms Simmons: Around bringing the facilities in terms of male and female provision there are local authority pitches and facilities that you would not want your dog to run through, so it is about bringing those up to just reasonable basic standards of hot showers, clean changing rooms and provision for boys and girls and pitches that are well drained and maintained and, therefore, it does not matter if you play on a Sunday afternoon, you have still got a good-quality pitch. The pitches and facilities at grassroots level are not just an issue for girls, but they are a huge issue for grassroots football. Where they are an issue is in the Women's Premier League and we have just started this review of the Women's Premier League. I agree with what the Foundation were saying, that in grassroots facilities, yes, invest in them and make sure they are for boys and girls and that is fine. I think on the Women's Premier League side, you need to develop some sort of specific point to drive facilities for the Women's Premier League clubs because there are very few Arsenal's and a lot of the issues we have talked about—Paula mentioned them earlier,

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postponements, it is very hard to market the games, the women's games are often called off, et cetera, et cetera- it is all because of lack of decent-quality facilities for driving the Women's Premier League and it is holding it back.

Q95 Mr Hall: I was astonished to hear the fact that it is almost not a set fixture list.

Ms Simmons: Well, it is a set fixture list but there were two issues which really hampered it. One we have resolved because we have lobbied FIFA, so they have set calendar dates like they do for men's internationals because a lot of the time there were loads of postponements: for example Ireland would get a game, the Irish women's team or the Welsh women's team are on different dates and they would be cancelling because FIFA called, so they have standardised the international dates, so that was one problem. What is going to take an awful lot longer to turn around is to try and get women into quality facilities where they will not be the last team on that weekend and our lowest priority and, therefore, the game which is called off. We have started to do this review and that is why we need the Government's support, and we need the Foundation where we cannot do it on our own, which is to try and look at a summertime league and look at the value of third-generation pitches for the women's game, otherwise we are never going to move away from this issue.

Q96 Mr Hall: This might be a very naïve question, but who decides the order of play on these pitches at the weekends? Is it somebody who is a longstanding booking? What is the determining factor?

Ms Simmons: For the Women's Premier League, obviously one of the requirements is that we like to have some element of stadia to try and encourage people to come in and watch the game and that means that normally you are playing on club pitches owned by men's clubs. That is historical and, therefore, the women's club tends to have the least influence in the club and the matches are scheduled for Sunday afternoons and they may have had one or two games on there already.

Q97 Mr Hall: Can I ask you two very separate questions now. Why is there such a lack of women representation at the higher echelons of the FA and do you think that is holding back women's football?

Ms Simmons: I think the FA is evolving and there are a number now of females who are heads of departments. We have obviously got the Burns Review and we are examining that at the moment and looking to report back shortly. One of those issues we are looking at is representation and making sure that the FA go forward reflective of the football community and the community of England, so in the Burns Review we will take that forward.

Q98 Mr Hall: Very diplomatic! This artificial age of stopping mixed football in schools at 11, that has got to go, has it not?

Ms Simmons: I was involved when we did a big review on it a couple of years ago and we spoke to a number of agencies, sports agencies here and a

number of countries abroad and we moved the age up. It was under 10 and we brought it in line with primary school and brought it up to under 11. The essence is that we have a duty of care in developing the game to provide safe football for all and at some point, and Faye and I were chatting about this earlier, and nobody quite agrees at what point, but at some point on the whole boys have more strength and power than girls and, therefore, there is a safety issue. There is also the issue of developing the girls' game, the women's game as a game in its own right which we focus resources and effort on. We have said that we will do a review involving young people as well this time and we have written to the Children's Commissioner to engage him in that process, so we will look at it and be speaking to more people. I have chatted to a number of my colleagues abroad who have all got varying age ranges from no rule down to a similar ruling as ourselves, and some in between, so there is not a consistency in the world of football. I speak to FIFA and I think it is something that FIFA or UEFA could also have a look at because there just does not seem to be a—

Q99 Mr Hall: While we keep on looking at it, we are just not going to do anything about it.

Ms Simmons: Well, we promise to come back and report back on this review by September.

Q100 Chairman: What is wrong with the system which was advocated by Wendy earlier where you allow managers to pick people who are best capable of playing and the managers clearly will not pick people who are weaker or likely to be injured? Why do you need an artificial barrier saying "No girls over 11 are allowed to play with boys"?

Ms Simmons: As I say, it was put there with all good intentions in terms of the safety of young people. Most countries do have a rule. Ours is one of the lower ones, some people are similar, but most countries do have a mixed football rule. We will review it.

Q101 Chairman: Just because everybody else does it, it does not mean we have to go along with it. There has to be a good argument for it, does there not?

Ms Simmons: The argument is that it was put there on the grounds of safety and the biological and physical differences between males and females, on average, of secondary school age.

Q102 Mr Hall: If you have got a staff shortage, surely there is no problem with this? Faye sitting next to you did not have a problem with this.

Ms White: By 12 I was stopped and it was my father who decided that. I do think obviously there is a stage where boys are physically stronger than girls and that is going to cause them a problem. I think for the girls that maybe are not the greatest and who cannot compete with the boys, there needs to be a structure in place so that they can get by and improve and have a system that they can play in. I was obviously stopped but I then went on to a girls' team and I stood out because I benefited from

playing with boys. I went quickly into the ladies' set-up. The good thing is that now girls who are talented are spotted right the way through to the centres of excellences. We have got a player at Arsenal who joined at under 10 in our centre of excellence and worked her way through all the age groups. She is now playing in our senior team and at the end of last season she got her first call-up for England, and that is Leanne Sanderson, so it shows that having a good system is not going to disbenefit girls. They are going to improve by playing the boys but that is only for the really good, talented ones who are physically stronger and who are able to keep up. There are a lot of girls who are not, so they need to have a system that allows them to play.

Ms Simmons: The big issue for me is about a girl being able to access a good-quality, local girls' system. Faye is right, most of the girls from our research would like to play in a girls' team. Yes, there are some talented players, we have got one here today, who could compete on the boys' teams but we do not know how long she could compete for before she would want to go into a girls-only system, but the most important thing for me, whilst we review that rule, is to continue the work that we are doing going from 80 girls' teams to 8,000 girls' teams. We have already heard today that one in three girls wants to play football so there is an awful lot of potential growth there still and girls' teams that we can set up. It is critical that we keep the funding going for the grassroots. The Active Sports programme has been a key factor in driving growth. For the 47 Emma Wakes around the country that are working with boys' teams, working with schools, setting up girls' clubs, setting up school clubs, doing all the work that you have heard a lot about today, we are continuing our funding into that programme for the next four years. Sport England have committed for the next four years as long as this issue over the moratorium by FIFA is resolved. That is potentially blocking our funding into the girls' programme. Then the Football Foundation, who are our funding partner, are committing again to funding but they have decided to taper the funding down from £10,000 a year to each partnership to £4,000 per partnership by the end of the three years, which puts a massive strain on it so we are appealing against that decision. We need the local infrastructure, the Emma Wakes of this world, to continue to be invested in to set up that sort of system that Faye has talked about—local girls' teams, local girls' leagues and, for the better girls, girls' centres of excellence.

Q103 Chairman: Emma's funding is going to run out in January of next year. Is the FA going to make sure that she continues to promote growth in Essex?

Ms Simmons: That programme is funded by three partners: the FA, and we have committed to the next four years of funding; Sport England, who have committed to the next four years subject to us resolving the issue of the moratorium on the funding, where if we do not resolve this issue about WADA and FIFA to do with doping control it could affect our girls' football funding; then the Football Foundation is the third partner, and they have

decided to reduce their funding levels going forward over the period which will put a big strain on keeping the Emmas of this world in post. We have asked the Foundation to re-look at that because that could put us into a redundancy situation. Resolving that is absolutely critical to continuing the growth of the game that has gone on so far.

Q104 Philip Davies: Sorry to labour the point but on this age 11 thing which I really do not understand the need for, Faye said her father decided when she was 12 that it was not suitable for her any more. She and her father did not need the FA to decide that. They were capable of making that decision themselves. I do not see why we need the FA to decide for us. Surely boys develop at different ages to each other so you might even get a girl who is more physically developed at 11 than a boy? I do not see why it needs the FA. Surely people can sort this out for themselves? Would you not agree that at the World Cup we would have been better off with Wendy Owen than Michael Owen?

Ms Simmons: I am not sure how Wendy's knees are, so I am not going to comment on that one! You could say that about a number of rules and regulations, could you not? There are rules and regulations around the two-year age banding. We are looking at the regulation at the moment and we are moving up the age you can play adult football. It was 14 and you think, "Why do you need a rule because it works itself out?" Well, it has not in the women's game. You have still got 14-year-olds competing with women and therefore we are moving the age up to 16. The number of 14, 15 and 16-year-old boys playing men's football is very limited probably because of the structures that are involved and there are more players and so on. I think there is a need to have some rules and regulations in the game to protect young players. We have said that we will look at the mixed football one. There does not seem to be a consensus whoever you talk to: should there be a limit; should there not be a limit; what ages should they be? There does at some point in early secondary school start to become, on average, a marked difference in the power, strength and speed of males and females.

Q105 Philip Davies: Can I ask at the other end, do you have rules about at what age boys and girls, whether at the same age or a different age, can start playing competitively?

Ms Simmons: Yes we do. It is the same ruling.

Q106 Philip Davies: What age is it?

Ms Simmons: It is six years old, under seven years. But even then, particularly up to under 10 and 11, we try to encourage festival-type football with less focus on results and big cups and medals, and try and make it more of a play-type experience.

Q107 Helen Southworth: I have to say that from all the evidence we have had, and I think the evidence of our own eyes as well, the involvement of the FA has phenomenally changed women's football and allowed it to develop incredibly well from where it

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was starting. But you will not be surprised to know that I am equally interested to see your evidence and one of the things you say about the 11-year-old rule that: “. . . the FA recognises that the pace of change in the girls’ game means that the technical differences between boys and girls are continually decreasing. As a result of this, the FA has committed to undertake a consultation with young players themselves . . .” which you referred to just there. You will not be at all surprised to know that I am extremely interested in one of my constituents who is an exceptionally good player, Hannah Dale, who has demonstrated her stamina today by the fact that she has been here throughout this evidence session and is going to see me afterwards to tell me what she thinks about all the various different issues and what she would like to see happen about them, but I want to know that girls like Hannah in the very varied scene that we have been describing earlier for elite girls’ football in terms of the under-investment, very limited opportunities and very diverse geographical situations. I would like to be able to see that girls like Hannah can actually develop their potential. I would also say personally that there was a stage when people said that women could not be MPs because there were not enough toilets for us and the only time we got enough toilets was when there were enough women MPs so they had to be there. We have a responsibility to make sure that we are not doing the same because I do think that as adults we have a responsibility to make sure we do not say to girls, “You cannot do this because you are a girl,” when they quite clearly can and to put artificial barriers in their way which mean they have to go back to five-a-side football instead of 11-a-side because there are not enough girls to play 11-a-side.

Ms White: Talking about opportunities for Hannah in the elite game, I joined the international team at 16 because there were no younger teams available at that point, whereas a lot of work and investment has

been put into the England set-up and girls are being scouted at 15 for training camps and under-17s, to work their way up to under-19s and under-21s. So that option where I went in to the senior team as my first experience, girls are getting talent-spotted a lot earlier and have been able to work through that system a lot more nowadays than was ever the case back then. I think it is easier, and it has definitely improved, and there are opportunities for that development to happen.

Ms Simmons: We now fund 51 licensed FA centres of excellence for girls across the country and through recent increased investment many of those centres are now playing against other centres on a regular basis, many of them on a weekly basis, so that the best girls in the area are playing against the best girls, because the Hannahs of this world need to be challenged, as we talked about earlier. The best way to cater for all those talented girls, I believe is through the centres of excellence programme and through the centres of excellence fixtures programme. Obviously if the Government wants to redirect the £2.5 million of public monies it has been giving the boys’ academies to girls’ centres of excellence, we can put even more than 51 centres of excellence across the country. That has been a really successful scheme in terms of improving the quality of young players coming through the system and giving them the best available competition, but obviously more resources would help widen that net.

Helen Southworth: I must say as an interim measure a lot of people are appreciating the pragmatism of the FA in re-looking at the rules to see if there are ways they can help young players who perhaps do not have as many opportunities as they need locally to develop to be able to compete and be stretched at an early age.

Chairman: Can I thank you both very much and on behalf of the Committee can I say to Faye good luck for China next year.

Memorandum submitted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport

INTRODUCTION

The Government welcomes the opportunity of this inquiry to set out the support and funding it is providing to women’s football in England.

There has been significant growth in women’s football both in terms of participation and popularity in recent years. In fact, women’s football is England’s fastest growing sport amongst the general population.

The Government places great importance on women’s football and football in general. The sport is a key deliverer of DCMS’ aims of increasing participation which, in turn, contribute significantly to wider social policy objectives of social inclusion, community cohesion and improving the health of the nation.

This Memorandum summarises the main areas of policy and the progress being made.

1. PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN IN FOOTBALL—SOME HEADLINE FIGURES

1.1 There were 132,794 affiliated female footballers in England in 2004–05 and an estimated 1.2 million non-affiliated players. This is around 9% of all affiliated footballers (male membership is around 1.27 million). According to data collected from governing bodies,⁹ football is the third most popular affiliated sport for women after tennis and golf.

⁹ Women’s Sports Foundation research, November 2005.

2. GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES

2.1 DCMS seeks to help promote the women's game through our close working relationship with the Football Association (FA) and other footballing authorities, and notably through our NDPBs, including Sport England.

2.2 The health benefits of sport and physical activity are well understood. As set out in the Chief Medical Officer's Report "*At least five a week—Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health*", wider participation by women and girls in amateur and elite football is likely to produce net health benefits.

2.3 The Government set out its long-term strategy for sport in *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives*. The long-term vision for sport and physical activity by 2020 is "to increase significantly levels of sport and physical activity, particularly among disadvantaged groups, and to achieve sustained levels of success in international competition."

2.4 Our ambitions for sport are also part of the wider delivery of the commitments contained in "*Choosing Activity: a physical activity action plan*", published by the Department of Health and DCMS in March 2005, setting out how the Government will translate the Public Health White Paper into practical action for local communities.

2.5 Building on these strategic documents, DCMS has set out its priorities in its *Public Service Agreements* to:

- (i) increase participation in sport by 3% amongst priority groups (which include women) by 2008;
- (ii) shared with Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills (DfES), to halt the year on year increase in obesity in under 11s by 2010; and
- (iii) jointly with DfES to ensure that 75% of children do at least two hours of high quality PE and School Sport by 2006 and 85% by 2008. The ambition, by 2010, is that all children will be offered at least four hours of sport every week, which will comprise at least two hours of high quality PE and sport at schools and in addition the opportunity for at least a further two to three hours beyond the school day.

2.6 While it is the responsibility of the football authorities to develop, manage and organise much of women's football the Government has an important role in delivery against these challenging targets through the funding provided for sport programmes.

3. SCHOOLS

3.1 The national school sport strategy is transforming the quality and quantity of PE and sports provision in schools and has benefited from investment of £978 million from 2003–04 until 2007–08. In addition, £686 million of lottery funding is enhancing school sports facilities.

3.2 The school sport survey in 2004–05 showed that 3.5 million pupils were attending schools that were part of a School Sport Partnership. The survey also showed that 54% (12,300) of schools in England were participating in 313 live School Sport Partnerships. There are now 411 School Sport Partnerships and all schools will be part of a Partnership by the end of 2006.

3.3 The PE, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) programme is designed to target all children. However, following the 2004–05 School Sport Survey, the Government asked all sports governing bodies involved in the strategy to focus on how more girls could be encouraged to participate in school sport. Separate monitoring provided by the FA shows clearly that there is substantial work taking place.

Club Links

3.4 The main aim of the Club Links workstrand within the PESSCL strategy is to strengthen links between schools and local sports clubs and, by doing so, increase the number of children who are members of accredited sports clubs. The programme is being delivered mainly through the governing bodies of 22 sports establishing links at local level between their clubs and School Sport Partnerships. The School Sport Survey 2004–05 demonstrated that 75% of schools had links with local community football clubs.

3.5 In 2005–06 there were 144 projects that focused on girls football including the Three Lions FC School-Club Link coaching courses which had 25,000 attendees during that year—56% of these were female.

3.6 The National Club Links Innovation Awards 2005–06 provided several examples of best practice, one example of which is Park School. The Special Needs School in Blackpool has been running a successful after-school football club for girls since September 2005. The girls have taken part in two football disability tournaments and have benefited massively from this.

Step into Sport

3.7 Step into Sport is one of the eight workstrands of the National School Sport Strategy. The programme provides a framework of opportunities at a local level to enable all young people to experience sports leadership and volunteering.

3.8 Over the last two years the FA has, as part of their Step into Sport Framework, been developing volunteer opportunities targeting all young people aged 14–19 years. The programme provides education and training opportunities for the volunteers, including Coaching, Refereeing, and Junior Football Organisers Award. Following a successful pilot, the programme is now being rolled out nationally this year from September. The FA will be monitoring the gender, ethnicity and disability of the young people on their Step into Sport programme.

4. GRASSROOTS SPORT IN THE COMMUNITY

4.1 Building on the school sport strategy, the big challenge is to strengthen the grassroots game and promote community participation by encouraging more people to both start and stay physically active playing football.

4.2 Financial support for sport in England from public sources is primarily channelled through Sport England and UK Sport. In the main, Sport England's priority is community sport, and UK Sport's the identification and development of elite talent. Both bodies award Lottery grants, and distribute Exchequer funds from DCMS.

5. PARTICIPATION IN FOOTBALL

5.1 Exchequer and lottery funding support for grassroots sport is largely based on whole sport plans agreed by National Governing Bodies with Sport England.

The whole sport plan for football

5.2 In 2004 the football authorities—including the FA Premier League, the Professional Footballers Association, the Football Foundation, Football in the Community and the English Schools Football Association—submitted a Whole Sport Plan—"Football United" to Sport England. This document advocated the significant contribution that can be made by football in meeting the Governments grass roots community and participation objectives, and in the achievement of success at international level. It sought funding over four years to assist the FA to drive forward participation and widen access with a specific emphasis on girls and women football, building on the 53% increase in the number of girls playing football since 2001.

5.3 To achieve these goals, from 2005–06 to 2008–09 some £4 million is being invested to drive the Whole Sport Plan which includes specific Key Performance Indicators for women and girls' participation, FA Community Clubs and women coaches. These indicators include:

- the number of women and girls to be regularly playing football during the award period to have increased to 138,354 from the current baseline of 96,044;
- increase the number of active accredited clubs within the sport to 2,490 from a baseline of 490;
- increase the number of FA Community Clubs with a minimum of 10 teams, youth to adult football for males and females, qualified coaches, child protection policies and a football development plan to 333 by 31 March 2009 from a baseline of 53; and
- increase the number of active qualified women coaches delivering instruction within the sport to 13,326 by 31 March 2009 from a baseline of 2,535.

5.4 The Funding Agreement also strengthens equity issues and requires the FA to implement and adhere to *The Equality Standard: a framework for sport* published by the 4 Home Country Sports Councils in October 2004; and use reasonable efforts to work towards achieving accreditation as assessed by the independent panel for the preliminary level of *The Equality Standard: A Framework for Sport* by 31 October 2006.

Football Foundation

5.5 The Football Foundation is also a major funder of grass roots community football provision. Set up in 2001 the Foundation is a unique partnership of the FA, FA Premier League and Government (through Sport England) with each partner contributing £45 million from 2005–06 to 2007–08.

5.6 The Football Foundation acts as a one-stop shop for all applications seeking funding for football projects, including projects which both directly and indirectly benefit women. Examples include capital grants to improve changing accommodation for women, community and education grants awards or free junior kit.

5.7 In 2003 the Football Foundation funded the most comprehensive assessment of England's football facilities, in the form of the Register of English Football Facilities (REFF). The study found that 94% of changing rooms had no facilities for girls and women. Now, every grant the Football Foundation makes to develop new changing rooms is conditional on them catering for both male and female participants. This is also true of new facilities for officials to encourage participation in officiating the game amongst women.

5.8 While almost all Football Foundation funding benefits both male and female participants, the Football Foundation has also supported 86 projects specifically for women, at a total cost of £9.8 million since 2000. The Tranmere Rovers "Kick It" initiative provides a good example. This football development programme provided playing opportunities for women of all ages and increased participation throughout the borough. Several players who came through the programme now attend national training camps for both Wales and England.

National Sports Foundation

5.9 The Government has recently launched the National Sports Foundation (NSF) with £34.5 million funding, over the next two years, to attract matched funding from the private sector. The NSF is a Government-led vehicle to facilitate and encourage partnership between private investors and community sports projects.

5.10 The NSF has three priority areas for funding through the NSF and a key area is Women into Sport. Women into Sport will encourage projects to increase female participation in sport, including providing coaching and support for female teams. The NSF is already engaging with the nine English regions, National Governing Bodies and community groups to develop an exciting portfolio of projects seeking investment. There are already some specific women's projects in the system for assessment.

Facilities

5.11 Participation in grass roots sport needs to be supported by good quality facilities. Between 2001 and 2006 Government and the National Lottery distributing bodies have invested some £1 billion through lottery and exchequer funds to develop new or refurbished public sports facilities.

5.12 This represents a considerable investment in our community sports facilities infrastructure and over 4000 sports facilities projects have now been supported as a result.

5.13 Our aim is that by 2008, most people will live within 20 minutes travel time away from a good quality multi-sports environment such as a school, sports club or leisure centre.

CCDP

5.14 The Community Club Development Programme (CCDP) has been an important part of this investment and has benefited football directly.

5.15 CCDP aims to increase the quality of sports facilities and to increase and widen club membership thereby strengthening the club structure. It will provide £100 million to National Sports Governing Bodies by March 2008. Over 700 projects have now agreed funding for capital developments, with almost 500 of these completed, or on site.

5.16 Under the CCDP investment stream for 2003–06, the FA entered into a tripartite agreement with Sport England and the Football Foundation under which the £9.4 million investment allocation was targeted at FA Community Clubs. These clubs operate a minimum of 10 teams based on youth to adult football for males and females. All participating clubs have qualified coaches, operate child protection policies and have a football development plan. A total of 25 projects have been funded to date. Baseline key performance indicators are currently being agreed.

Supporting and promoting talent

5.17 One of the Government's priorities is also to support talented athletes who have the potential to compete in their sport at the highest level, and some of whom will represent their country on the world stage. While UK Sport's World Class Pathway programme focuses on those Olympic and Paralympic sports most in need of public funding, women's football does benefit from Exchequer support through the Talented Athlete Scholarship Programme and 2012 Scholarships. The Government also wants to promote more women role models in sport to encourage more girls to participate in sport and show that it is possible to reach the very top, if you have the talent, commitment and determination.

Elite sportswomen as role models

5.18 The Government is keen to increase participation in sport for young people, and inspiring youngsters through the achievements of top athletes is a key way of providing the impetus to take up a sporting activity. The appointment of Dame Kelly Holmes as School Sport Champion in 2006 has meant that she has toured the country supporting and publicising the National School Sports Strategy as well as inspiring the young people that she meets.

5.19 In the same vein, the Government also supports the Sport England developed and funded Sporting Champions scheme. This is designed to bring World Class Athletes into schools and local communities to share their sporting experiences and to motivate young people to take part in sport as a lifelong activity. There are two female footballers involved in this scheme—Julie Fletcher, an ex England and Arsenal player, and Sue Smith of Leeds WFC.

Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) and 2012 Scholarships

5.20 TASS is designed to help young athletes between 16–25 years old reach the elite level in their sports while continuing in employment or further/higher education.

5.21 “2012 Scholarships” is a strand of TASS, designed to fast track 12–18 year olds to elite sporting programmes, including UK Sport’s World Class Performance Programme. The programme is primarily targeted at 12 to 18 year olds competing in Olympic/Paralympic sports and that have the potential to be a future medallist.

5.22 In 2004–05 TASS provided support to athletes in 34 sports and in 2005–06 to 43 sports—including Women’s Football. Through TASS, 42 women footballers received an award in the 2004–05 academic year, representing an investment of £81,000 and 50 are receiving support in the 2005–06 academic year—an investment of £102,000. Nine players who have received TASS support have represented England at Senior International Level.

6. THE WIDER POLICY AGENDA

6.1 Government investment in sport and sports development is important in its own right. But it is increasingly clear that sport is contributing significantly to the wider economic and social policy agenda. Health and the regeneration of disadvantaged neighbourhoods provide two clear examples.

Football and women and girls’ health

6.2 There are many examples of football being used to convey health messages to traditionally hard to reach groups. In 2005 the Department of Health in partnership with DCMS and the football authorities published the “Football and Health guide” which encouraged health professionals and football clubs to improve understanding of healthy choices and increase access to health services. For example, Football based breakfast clubs such as Southampton FC and Southampton PCT who are working together to monitor the eating habits of children and also encourage them to play football.

6.3 As these types of partnerships are formed, it is important that the benefits extend beyond a predominantly male audience, and that clubs should consider how to involve female coaches and players as role models in their community development work. At Leicester City, for example, a female community development officer has been employed to support the women’s’ game at local level.

Disadvantaged neighbourhoods

6.4 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have worked in partnership with Sport England to increase access to football skills development and coaching opportunities for residents of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in England.

6.5 “StreetGames” operates through a partnership between local sport, local renewal agencies, DCLG Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Sport England and the Football Foundation and provides a framework of sporting activity within the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in England. The Football Foundation has contributed £250,000 towards these activities.

6.6 StreetGames provides opportunities and access to football at low cost within less affluent neighbourhoods. StreetGames is explicitly accessible to both women and girls, aiming to ensure wider participation and benefit from sports development and coaching opportunities as well as skills development. Local coaches and leaders are recruited from within the community to act as realistic role models and to strengthen community ties.

Governance and the Burns Review

6.7 In order to strengthen the environment for all policies to be developed and implemented, a key Government policy objective is to make national governing bodies of sport fit for purpose. Working closely with Sport England, a number of key governing bodies have undergone a major modernisation process, focussing particularly on governance, to ensure that they are able to succeed in the modern sporting landscape.

6.8 The FA is no exception. Lord Burns' report on the FA in 2005 helps to set out a platform from which The FA will be well placed to meet the challenges of the future. The recommendations represent an important agenda for change in order to continue to run the professional game at the highest standard and to build on the popularity of football to get more people playing the game and into sport more generally.

6.9 As Burns recommends, the Council of the FA should evolve so as to become more representative of the diverse interests in the game including supporters, players, managers, coaches, and referees. As women's football is the fastest growing sport, the FA should ensure that women are represented in the decision making process. The Government will continue to closely monitor the implementation process while respecting that this was an independent review and that it is for the FA to implement Lord Burns' recommendations.

Media coverage of women's football

6.10 The Government wants to make sure that key sporting events are made available to all television viewers, particularly those who cannot afford the cost of subscription television. This is why some events are protected by law as "Listed Events".

6.11 Beyond these arrangements, sports bodies are free to sell their rights as they wish, balancing the direct financial benefits of the sale with other factors, such as the wider audience which might be achievable through broadcast on the main channels and the potential impact in sponsorship income.

6.12 The Government would like to see more women's football on television and some progress is being made in this regard. For the 2005 UEFA European Women's Championships, there were 8.2 million viewers for the live BBC2 coverage of the three England games.

6.13 It would, however, be wrong for the Government to interfere and force any Broadcasters to show specific sporting events. To do so would substitute the Government's view about what should be shown for the views of experienced broadcasters who need to respond freely to the diverse interests of their audiences, taking account of any broad remits to which they are committed.

BBC

6.14 It is a vital part of the BBC's mission to reflect the important role which sport has in the life of the nation by bringing the best sport to a national audience. As such, the BBC should aim to provide access both to a selection of those great sporting events that many feel are national assets serving to unite the nation—World Cup football matches to Wimbledon—and to those sports, such as women's football, which might develop a new following among audiences and potential participants.

6.15 Women's football is part of the FA's broadcast deal with both broadcast partners showing key games through the season. Sky Sports shows at least three home England games per season as well as the FA Nationwide Premier League Cup Final. In recent years, BBC1 has televised the previous four FA Women's Cup Finals to audiences in excess of 1.5 million.

6.16 A TV contract between the FA and various media has formalised women's football coverage with England internationals live on Sky and the BBC and The FA Women's Cup Final live on the BBC each season.

6.17 Women's Euro 2005, which was televised by the BBC, was an unprecedented success in terms of the coverage it received, obviously helped by the event being hosted in England. A European record was set as 29,092 fans saw England beat Finland, which was testament to the effort put in by the FA, Women's Sport Foundation and broadcasters to promote the event.

8 June 2006

Witnesses: **Rt Hon Richard Caborn**, a Member of the House, Minister for Sport, and **Mr Paul Heron**, Head of Sport, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, gave evidence.

Chairman: Can I welcome the Minister of Sport, Richard Caborn and Paul Heron, the Head of Sport at the DCMS. Thank you for waiting. Can I invite Mike Hall to begin?

Q108 Mr Hall: I do not know how much of the evidence you have heard, Richard, but we have heard a great deal about physical barriers to girls and women playing football in the UK. We have just heard in the last session that it would take around £2 billion of investment to bring sports facilities up to scratch where they were suitable for girls and boys, men and women. The Government puts a lot of money in through the Football Foundation. Do you think there is a case for putting more government money into improving these facilities?

Mr Caborn: If you take it in the round, not just football in itself—and there are 130 sports in this country—I think there is probably more investment into community sports now than there has ever been. Over the last four or five years £1 billion has gone into sports facilities. It is very important and for the first time part of the comprehensive performance assessment for local authorities has now got a leisure block of which sport is significant, so I think over and above what they are doing now, it will now be in the interests of local authorities to continue to invest in that because it will be against their quality marks that the judgment will be made. I think that the investment into sport is there. I also believe it is there in terms of both the physical facilities as well as the human. One of the big problems is the organisation of sport and the whole question of club development and whether governing bodies are indeed fit for purpose. It is something that systematically we have been going through with sport, working to get better governance of all sports, including football. You have already referred to the Burns Report and I think all these things have got to go hand-in-hand, and by doing that we will have a very sustainable structure in sport right from grassroots through to the elite.

Q109 Mr Hall: But is anyone going to put more money into improving sports facilities?

Mr Caborn: The answer to that is yes. It is not just in terms of women's football, it is in other sports facilities across the board. I think the Equity Programme that Sport England and UK Sport are pursuing is very important. The Whole Sports Plan which each governing body is now negotiating with UK Sport and Sport England contains that. There is a proper equity programme both in terms of the physical facilities as well as, as I say, the development of people in those sports. I think also when you look at Building Schools for the Future, which is now going to be something like a £20 billion build programme over the next 10 years, at the heart of each of those is going to be sports facilities. That is going to be something in excess of £2 billion worth of sport facilities in Building Schools for the Future which is accessible to those communities in which those schools are actually operating. So there is a

huge investment, as I say, for all, both in terms of sex and in terms of disability as well, and I think we have made big advances in there. I think all round, sport will be more accessible to the whole of the community.

Q110 Mr Hall: Can I press you on another issue, Richard. This is in terms of the amount of funding that is available for football generally and the amount of money specifically available for girls' and women's football. There seem to be a plethora of organisations that provide this particular financial support. Is there a case for streamlining that? The second point is highlighting the amount of money that is available so that there is a greater awareness, particularly among girls' and women's football about the money they could tap into?

Mr Caborn: First of all, there is a lot of money going into football and communities at grassroots and that is including women's and girls' football. It has currently benefited by £135 million-worth of investment. That is from the FA, the Premier, the Government and that is through Sport England and the Football Foundation. The Football Foundation has also spent £3 million specifically on women's and girls' coaching projects, so there is a big investment going on. Can it be streamlined? You can always make it better and more user friendly, but I do not believe that that is a major barrier for football at a community level accessing those funds. We have streamlined it over the past and we will continue to keep that under review but I do not believe that is a barrier.

Q111 Mr Hall: What about promoting the funds that are available that can make clubs more aware of what is available? Surely more can be done there?

Mr Caborn: It can but let me give you an example. I was told for the last 30 years that sport wanted mandatory rates relief. There are about 140,000 sports clubs up and down this country. About 50,000 of those could actually access the mandatory rates relief which along with community sports club status will give them five tax breaks.

Q112 Mr Hall: By the local authority.

Mr Caborn: By local authorities but we have got mandatory rate relief for all sports clubs now and as long as they apply for community sports club status they get five tax breaks plus mandatory rate relief. Of those 50,000 clubs, in the first 12 months where they were telling me they have been wanting this for 30 years, less than 2,000 sports clubs actually applied for it. We are now up to I think just over 3,000 or 4,000 sports clubs out of the 50,000. There is a big disconnect between governing bodies and the club structure and that is something that we are addressing now to make sure that school to club, club to school, the governing bodies are taking more responsibility for the club structure under their control. I only give that as an illustration of this disconnect because on the one hand we were told for

30 years they have been fighting for it; we actually give it to them and the take-up rate was abysmally low.

Q113 Mr Hall: We are talking specifically about women's football. I appreciate the point you are making. What is it the DCMS can do now to overcome the physical barriers to girls and women playing football in the UK because we see one in three girls wants to play football and that does not translate to what happens on the ground. What can the DCMS do to help?

Mr Caborn: We are predicating that on the basis that the one in three is correct.

Q114 Mr Hall: It is, believe me.

Mr Caborn: Mr Hall, you are always right, I acknowledge that. Let us take that as read. First of all, it would be great if the modernisation of the FA could look very seriously and send a very strong message out on the Burns Report. One in 90 females on that Council is unacceptable. There is not one on the Board. I am hoping that they will accept the principle that Burns laid down of non-execs on that Board. If they do I think a woman on that would send a very, very powerful message out. They do have to look at the composition of the Council to bring it in and reflect the game as it is in the 21st century and not the turn of the 20th century. I also then believe that systematically we are going through the modernisation at the county level of football as well. With the new sports boards we have got in each region working with the Football Foundation, all of them are doing a very good job indeed, then I have no doubt that they will address a) the facilities that are necessary in terms of the physical build and b) the coaching. About one-third of the community coaches of those 3,000 are women coaches, not just for football but are women coaches coaching across the whole spectrum of sport.

Q115 Alan Keen: First of all, Minister, congratulations on your initiative on European football which is not directly to do with the subject today but it is going to be good for the future of football. If I were Jeremy Paxman I would probably say, "Minister, you must be deeply ashamed that we have got millions and millions of women who have never had the opportunity to play the great game of football?" It does not matter what anybody else has said this morning, if we do not give girls the chance at junior school to play football we are never going to change the culture higher up. I know the money that is going into facilities, that is very important of course, sports facilities in schools, but it is giving those girls the chance to play like they get the chance to play in the States. What are you doing within the Department for Education to make sure that is done?

Mr Caborn: We tried to build it into funding agreements and the PSA targets actually do have women in them, as indeed the whole Equity Programme does, so we drive it in terms of our governing bodies—Sport England and UK Sport—and the PSA targets, particularly Sport England's

PSA targets, do contain the development of not just women's football but women's sport and that is very important indeed. I think that has started now to have some effect. In terms of the schools, you are absolutely right, we have now 411 school-sports partnerships, broadly speaking that is one sports college, eight secondaries, 35 to 40 primaries, with 3,000 coaches in that, and linking that with the primary, secondary into the sports colleges, and that will give us two hours of quality physical activity on sport for every child, every week from the age of 5 to 16. Part of that is the development of football, amongst many other sports, so we do allow young people to have access to a range of sports which we think is important because the more sport a young person is exposed to at school the more likely they are to stop in sport when they leave school. One of the big fault lines we have is that 70% of our young people do not continue an active sport when they leave school, as against in France which is 20%. Part of that is being able to experience sport in school but also the weakness of the sporting infrastructure, the club structure and the governing bodies, when they have left school. So there are some fault lines there but we are addressing them.

Q116 Alan Keen: Since Sheffield United got promoted you will be going to more Premiership games, will you be tackling the chairmen of all these Premiership clubs about the fact that some of them chopped the women's team? Will you be engaging with them on the future development of women's football and the role they can play and the role we have mentioned this morning, the fact it will bring them in more supporters to spend money through the turnstiles in the future if they attract more women into the game rather than reversing it?

Mr Caborn: Yes, I think it is very short-sighted—I will be quite honest, Mr Keen—of any Premier Division club to cut the funding to the women's game. I was privileged to go to the final of the women's football at the Olympics, which was USA v Brazil, and the quality of that football would have graced any First or Second Division side, quite honestly, in English football; they were absolutely brilliant. I do not think we have that standard in Europe, we saw that with UEFA when we went to a number of matches in the North West, which was extremely enjoyable and incredibly well followed as well by spectators. So I think it is short-sighted of the clubs to cut that back. You have heard the story from Arsenal which did an absolutely fantastic job not just for women's football but out in that community, and I have seen many of the coaching schemes which have brought young girls into sport. What is very important I think from my point of view as a minister and with football—because football is the dominant game, there are 40,000 football clubs up and down this country, and compare that with probably rugby with 3,000 or cricket around 3,000—what we have to do is use football as a bridge to bring young people into sport via football so they can then experience other sports. That is why I am very keen on the multi-sports clubs where football may well be in the lead but it brings

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the youngsters in, particularly from down town Manchester or Sheffield or wherever, and I am absolutely convinced through football we can put on to the tennis courts of this country the Williams' sisters or in golf somebody like Tiger Woods, by the fact you bring them into sport through football. When you get films like *Bend It Like Beckham*, which brought a lot of young girls into football—there is no doubt about that—you put a tennis racket into some of those kids' hands, they are as good tennis players as they are footballers, and it is using that mix, the multi-sports approach to it, that is very important indeed.

Q117 Chairman: You say the clubs are being short-sighted, the clubs are having to operate as businesses and the vast majority are displaying the same affliction of short-sightedness which you have described; very, very few, top-flight clubs invest in women's football. Presumably the reason for that is that they do not see a return on their investment, they do not sell tickets to women's matches and they are all under financial pressure. Can you blame them?

Mr Caborn: Yes, they pay too much in players' wages, it is as simple as that. If you can afford to pay £130,000 a week for a player, then I am sure you can start looking at investing a little into women's football. I think the FA have just signed off a deal for £200 million for the Umbro sign as well for their shirts. That is great but I am just saying to them they should have a bit of social responsibility as well and put some into women's football. They are just about to sign a deal for the next three years with the Premier Division with those 20 clubs we are just referring to, one of which is mine, Sheffield United, and what are they going to get for the next three years, about £2.2 to £2.4 billion. Put on top of that the European money and you are into something like £3 billion over three years—£1 billion a year on television rights alone—going to those 20 Premiership clubs. Nobody is telling me they cannot afford a few bob to put into women's football, I do not accept that.

Chairman: I think that is the subject of another inquiry.

Q118 Helen Southworth: I can hear the passion involved in that, what I really want to ask though is about the Football Youth Development Programme. We have had evidence earlier about the £10 million a year, I understand, that has gone into that for five years, of which £2½ million a year was through Sport England. I am not going to say, "Why did it only go to the boys"—although that is what I really want to say, "Why did it only go to the boys"—because I am trying to be positive here, so what I am going to say instead is, what are you going to do to address the situation and make sure the girls who are elite players get a far better opportunity than they have in the past and that we take our responsibilities seriously for equity?

Mr Caborn: Let us be clear on that part of it, in terms of that £10 million, the £2.5 million through Sport England, because that is not going to continue, it is

going to dry up. It is going to dry up for this reason: when the Football League got into trouble with ITV Digital, you remember, a few years ago, they came to see me and said they were in great difficulty and one of the things which was going to get chopped was in fact the academies and that scheme. I said that would be very unfortunate. Sport England were already going to withdraw that money, it was the end of that funding agreement, but that was renewed because the teams in the League were in financial difficulty because of ITV Digital and we therefore put that money back. The question I have to ask myself is, why is it we just give it to football, which is a pretty rich sport anyway, and we do not give it to cricket, we do not give it to rugby, in that sense? So we have moved now very clearly to the Whole Sports Plans where these things can be measured much more effectively against agreed targets, and that is why UK Sport and Sport England have with every governing body an Whole Sports Plan which is negotiated with them for their finances and for that we get certain outputs. So that funding will be drying up over the next year, so the question will not be whether it is for boys or girls, it will be for nobody because they are not going to get any more dosh.

Q119 Helen Southworth: So what is the answer for girls who are elite players who have not had opportunities, the sport has not been able to develop in the way it needs to, we have to see it develop? You went along to see the Olympics final game, you want to be there when it is in London, you do not want to be going along and realising that the English players have not had the opportunity to develop and to be there in the final and to be winning it. Players like Hannah Dale, from my constituency, must find they have had the opportunities to develop and be in that team, so they will be there and they will not be standing on the sidelines.

Mr Caborn: That will be absolutely fantastic and that is why we have to be much more systematic in the funding of sport. That is a funding agreement, the Whole Sports Plan, as we call it, between Sport England and UK Sport to the governing body. We are also running alongside that a talented athlete scholarship scheme which was something which we introduced about 18 months ago. We have the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme, we have the potential and then world-class performers, three funding streams as a pathway to real excellence if young people want to realise that. On the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme, I think something like 40-odd sports now are on that scheme including football and they can access that. We are investing through governing bodies with a very clear strategy for the delivery of their plan. In schools we have a very clear strategy for giving two hours of quality physical activity and then, beyond the school, two to three hours extra on that. Then, if they are showing real potential in any of those sports, they will be picked up by the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme and, as I say, there are some 40-odd sports, as I understand it, which are on that Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme.¹

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Mr Heron: 45%.

Mr Caborn: Mr Heron will just give you the figures on that.

Mr Heron: Talented Athlete Scholarship has supported 1,171 athletes of which 531 were women; 45%.

Mr Caborn: 45% women and local footballers as well. 79 people.

Q120 Helen Southworth: One last question, we have had evidence that local authorities are substantial owners of pitches and sports facilities for football. Are you going to be drawing to their attention their responsibilities to promote equality and are you going to be tracking to see what happens?

Mr Caborn: Whether we track that, I do not know. I do not know if we have got in place a particular strategy; it is a good question and let me ask that we might have a look at that. In terms of the investment into facilities as far as local authorities are concerned, we have seen a substantial increase in that investment. Can I say, also, that Sport England now are a statutory consultee in the planning process and therefore no sports facilities/sports grounds can be closed down without them being consulted. We have also built into the new planning regimes one where they have to do an audit of playing field facilities inside their local authorities and if they do not they will not get any sanction of that planning from Government until they have done that. Finally, which was said by the Football Foundation, Active Places is a new audit that we have done of all sports facilities including playing fields and football pitches which is most comprehensive and is accessible now on the website, so you can pick up where any of the

sport facilities are and that will continue to be updated. For the first time now I think we have actually got a full inventory of all the sports facilities in the country.

Q121 Chairman: Minister, you have expressed strong views this morning which are welcome. Just before you go can I ask you one last question: do you think it is right that girls should not be able to play with boys above the age of 11?

Mr Caborn: No, I do not, I think it should be on merit. I am very, very pleased the FA now have agreed to consult the young people themselves on this which I think was probably a mistake that they did not in the very extensive consultation they had and we welcomed that at the time. I do believe it has been flawed in the sense that there was another constituency which ought to be back to the internet consultation which is now being done. My view is, right across sport, I always believe it is on merit. People from the North West will know the one thing we did, I think quite innovatory, in the Commonwealth Games was to get able and disabled people competing for the same medals. It was on merit and they did that and I believe that is the basic principle that should be followed. Okay other things need to be factored in like safety but broadly speaking it should be on merit that people ought to be going and playing sport, male or female.

Q122 Chairman: So you will be urging the FA to at least raise it not drop it?

Mr Caborn: I think, Chairman, the fact is that we have already made representation to the FA and the FA have now said that they will go back and add this other dimension to that review. They will be reporting back either late September or October of this year and then I think we might want to move forward a bit on this particular issue.

Chairman: Thank you very much indeed.

¹ *Footnote by witness:* TASS supported 1,171 athletes over the 2005–06 academic year, of which 531 (45%) were women,—79 of whom are footballers.

Written evidence

Memorandum submitted by the Professional Footballers Association (PFA)

- The PFA is the player's greatest supporter and the world's largest sporting union.
- The PFA have 4,000 current members and 50,000 former members.
- In 2000 Fulham FC approached the PFA to assist them with their women's team's professional contracts and to enquire as to the possibility of joining the Association.
- The PFA offered the women players Associated Membership of the PFA in keeping with male players in the Conference working to the Standard Players Contract.
- During the time that the team were professional the PFA offered the support of the Education, Coaching, Legal and Financial departments. These benefits are accessible to all our membership and players from Fulham LFC were offered assistance on a BA Honours Degree, BSc Degree, Physiotherapy courses, pension schemes, life insurance, sponsorship deals and promotions including newspaper and magazine articles.
- The team was disburdened after The FA's assurance of a professional league by 2003 failed to materialise.
- The PFA fully support women's football and are proud to include women within the realms of professional football.
- We advocate the necessity of an affiliated women's team for every League club and equal access for young girls and young boys to Academies and Centres of Excellence.
- We endorse the necessity for a professional women's league that is marketed and televised to ensure profile raising for the game and its players.
- We are in regular contact with current international players and attend matches and local fixtures to offer support and encouragement.
- We have helped Charlton and Arsenal football clubs with the development of their teams and the contracts that they offer their players.
- We consider the professionalisation of the women's game to be an important step forward and vital to show the ranks of girls playing the game that there is a career opportunity for them that is equal to young talented male players.

28 June 2006

Memorandum submitted by Oli Winton

I am writing in response to the recently announced consultation on Women's football.

I am submitting this response as an individual Manchester United Season Ticket holder, to voice my concern at the club's 2005 decision to abolish its women's football team. Whilst I am on the Committee of MUST, the independent Manchester United Supporter's Trust, this submission reflects my personal views only.

As the Committee will be aware, football has changed enormously over the past decade. There are many valid criticisms of the modern day game but one of the most welcome changes is that women and children are now more likely to be found in the crowd. All-seater stadiums, professional marketing campaigns and the media have all projected a new image of the sport and, despite all the problems that have arisen from this, from ticket price rises to supporters being ignored, it has undoubtedly increased the popularity of football overall. Naturally this has also increased the number of females wishing to participate in playing football, which ought to be embraced.

The football authorities in the UK have, in many ways, supported women's football. However, the governance problems in football have meant that women's football has suffered in many ways that it need not have done. These governance issues are well documented and do not need a detailed explanation but, in short, larger clubs have been able to run wild in recent years regardless of their ownership structures. Manchester United have epitomised this for many years, and the recent takeover by the Glazer family has seen many unwelcome changes for supporters and the wider community, including women.

Shortly before the Glazer takeover, Manchester United scrapped its women's football team. The most famous name in global football sent a message to the North West community that, with £650 million of debt about to set in, the purse needed to be tightened. Technically the Glazers were not in control of the club when this decision was made but, in reality, they were exerting power and pressuring the club to cut costs as the largest shareholders. It should be noted that this decision was announced three months before the North West of England hosted Women's Euro 2005. A club of this size and wealth, which has always contributed to the local community, has no issue supporting women's football before the recent takeover and debts.

The Manchester United takeover by the Glazer family has offended nearly all supporters of Manchester United. However, for the purpose of this inquiry, the issues are too broad. The club's decision to scrap its women's team should be condemned by the Committee and it should be noted that the Football Association made no attempt to publicly criticise this decision.

Women dream of playing for Manchester United just as so many children and indeed men do. They have been denied that opportunity because the money used to fund them is now part of huge debts owed to investment banks for no ones benefit but the Glazer families.

June 2006

Memorandum submitted by the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management (ISRM)

ISRM is a registered charity and the national professional body for those involved in the provision, management, operation and development of sport and recreation services in the United Kingdom

The Institute's vision: To enable the benefits that sport and physical activity have to offer society through the professional, safe and efficient management and development of sport and recreation facilities and services.

On receipt of your inquiry dated 30 March 2006 reference No 26, we e-mailed our members for evidence which resulted in the following submissions:

1. AMY CROOK, OFFICE MANAGER/WOMEN AND GIRLS FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, BRENTFORD FC LTD, GRIFFIN PARK STADIUM

According to my experience and knowledge of women's and girls football in the West London area I have submitted the following issues you have mentioned for the Committee:

1.1 The development of women's football at all levels and the resource requirements to support wider participation in amateur and elite women's football. When a player within your club gets to a certain standard they are usually poached and the team has to re-build by managing a season without their best players and may drop down a division in the process. It should be made aware more, that you can dual sign players, and clubs should give more support to clubs who require call ups on their players under a written contract, obviously if they do not want to help then that's final. I think it will encourage players who are in a high division that are always on the substitutes bench to get match practice elsewhere and still have a place in the high league.

1.2 Availability of opportunities for young players to develop skills, stamina and performance; without leagues few clubs will develop girls teams and there is a need for more structured ones which enable clubs more competition. There are not enough centres of excellences or academies to help the growth of young players due to no more licences from the FA. There is certainly a need for more in the West London area or support for clubs that cannot access one.

1.3 Women's participation in all aspects of the game including coaching and management: and a large number of females with coaching qualifications not working in clubs due to lack of information and support. Funding helps, but this is more about developing the mentoring scheme and covering other areas such as referees, officials and volunteers.

1.4 Media coverage and sponsorship of women's football. The media coverage is still a grey area and needs to be investigated and supported a lot more. Many clubs do not realise how much funding and support they can access, mainly because they are too busy sorting out the running of the club and have not got time to digest the information organisations send ie London Active Partnership, local county, F.A, Greater London League although this is not always sent to the right people or again passed on.

2. DAMIAN IVES, FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, BATLEY FOOTBALL CENTRE, BATLEY, WEST YORKSHIRE

2.1 The development of women's football at all levels and the resource requirements to support wider participation in amateur and elite women's football

2.1.1 Women's football is on the increase, this is backed up with the fact that in 1993 there were around 80 women's and girls teams and presently there are over 6,000 teams in England. These figures make football the most popular female sport in England and with the FA investing £10 million to develop the women's game the sport can only grow in all areas of the game. Already the women's and girls game has grown since the FA launched its football development strategy in 2001 with a 53% increase in the number of female players in England and the commitment and with investment from the FA the future of the women's game is looking bright.

2.1.2 With the women's and girls player pathway in place, a clear structure of the game is apparent. From the mini soccer leagues, after school clubs, local authority and football in the community schemes to structured and affiliated leagues advancing to Centres of Excellence and women's football academies, players can be shown a clear pathway to the international and world class performance stage, through the England youth (Under-15, 17, 19, 21) teams and the full international senior team.

2.2 Availability of opportunities for young players to develop skills, stamina and performance.

2.2.1 There are an increasing number of opportunities for young female players to develop skills, stamina and performance. A number of these include participation within school teams and schools football festivals, an example of this took place at Batley Girls High School in West Yorkshire when over 300 year 7 and year 8 girls took part in 8 weeks of curriculum coaching. This was followed up by a Euro 2005 festival in which a number of teams participated. The Kick Start programme also included a presentation to highlight the women's and Girls Player Pathway and a visit from England international women's player Sue Smith to present participation certificates and answer any questions the girls had.

2.2.2 Coaches from local junior clubs were involved in the delivery of the sessions, again to highlight opportunities for the participants in the area. Role models like Sue Smith can only increase the profile of the game for girls and make them aware of the opportunities that are widely available for them.

2.2.3 Other opportunities include participation at club level, whether this is in mini soccer leagues (ages 7-10), specific girls leagues or open age women's leagues. As with most clubs the season is often completed with club based galas and tournaments giving further opportunities to develop in skill, stamina and performance. A prime example of club/playing opportunities within West Yorkshire is the West Riding Girls League. The league, now in its 4th year, boasts over 150 teams and offers playing opportunities for over 2000 girls and ladies from under 9—open age.

2.2.4 The next stage in performance within the women's and girls player pathway is Girls Centres of Excellence. Backed by the FA the centres exist to identify players from schools and clubs and provide a technical and educational programme that will allow them to develop to the highest possible level. Whether this is at Centres of Excellence, Academies, FA Player Development Centres or at the international and world class performance stage. The West Yorkshire Girls Centre of Excellence based at Batley Football Centre runs squads at Under 10, 12 and 13 years. This is one in a number of centres in the North of England. The programme, with improved financial commitment from the FA, aims to provide technical, educational and personal development for players, as well as talent identification to further develop players for the world class performance stage. There are a number of benefits to the Centres of Excellence some of these include, being part of a national programme, quality coaching from FA qualified staff, a code of conduct and child protection procedures and a chance to be selected for England development squads.

2.2.5 Opportunities are also available for young people who do not wish to join a club or those who are new to the game. These opportunities are often in the form of junior coaching programmes run at leisure centres and school venues by local authority and Football in the Community schemes. Programmes that take place throughout school term time and school holiday periods will no doubt highlight club opportunities but are most often based around participation, fun/enjoyment and skill development. These type of opportunities often link in to local authority football development plans/strategies and working with other partners ensure that the needs of the local community are addressed and catered for.

2.3 Women's participation in all aspects of the game including coaching and management

2.3.1 Many opportunities are available for women within football, from the coaching side to management. Initiatives and courses, such as FA Level 1, 2 and 3 coaching awards, are widely available for females to access through county FAs and local authorities. Particular opportunities and development tools can be found and supported by the FAs website in particular www.thefa.com/women. A whole host of information regarding the women's game and development can be found on this web page, such as information on grassroots coaching to the Women's National Premier League.

2.3.2 The roles of Women's and Girls Football Development Officers within county FAs again is an example of opportunities for females within the sport. With specific roles to develop the game at grassroots level to open age, provide support to women's and girls sections of club football and to provide coach education opportunities and mentoring schemes for females this type of post is of great value to the female game. Aside from playing at clubs females are encouraged to become club coaches not only to encourage youngsters to participate but also to act as a role model for up and coming players. Further roles within clubs can be taken up these ranging from chair person to child protection officer.

2.4 Media coverage and sponsorship of women's football

2.4.1 Media coverage of women's football has helped to raise the profile of the sport over the years. The 13,452 who turned out in the second highest crowd ever to witness a ladies F.A Cup Final this year would have been joined by millions more as the final was screened live to 54 other countries in the world, this demonstrating how much more the media are getting behind women's football and the showpiece events.

2.4.2 Another recent example of this was the Women's Euro 2005 competition which was held in June 2005 and hosted by the North West of England. Around three million people watched on TV the eight countries take part in 15 games, along with 70,000 who attended England's group matches in the competition.

2.4.3 The elite National Division of FA Women's Premier League comprises of clubs such as Arsenal, Liverpool and Leeds. With increasing commercial interest growing in the women's game the league has attracted a four year multi-million pound sponsorship deal from Nationwide. The company have also put their name to the League Cup showing that support is growing off the field as well as on, and at grassroots level.

2.4.4 By working with partners such as County FAs, Local Authorities, clubs and schools more opportunities will become readily available for women and girls within the game of football, whether this be at grassroots level, world class performance stage or within coaching and management. And with growing support from the media and the public the profile of women's football will be raised further.

3. MAUREEN HOLROYD, SPORTS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, CULTURE AND LEISURE SERVICES STADIUM BUSINESS AND LEISURE COMPLEX, STADIUM WAY, HUDDERSFIELD

DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S/GIRLS FOOTBALL IN KIRKLEES

3.1 *Introduction*

Kirklees MC has worked in partnership with West Yorkshire Sport and latterly with the West Riding County FA, to develop opportunities, through the "Kick-Start" initiative, for girls to participate and progress in the sport. Through working with local clubs we now have approximately twelve women's/girls teams in Kirklees, that are affiliated to their local league and play regular competition.

3.2 *Opportunities*

Kirklees Council's Culture and Leisure Service and Kirklees Active Leisure provide regular holiday coaching courses, to which girls attend, and also coaching sessions in schools in curriculum time.

Also in Kirklees we have a Girls Centre of Excellence, administered by the WRCFA. Girls who are recommended by their managers attend trials at the centre, where, if selected, they train with high level coaches in order to develop skills and stamina to perform at a higher level.

3.3 *Coaching and management*

We have several female coaches at level one and a small amount who go on to level two.

3.4 *Sponsorship*

Sponsorship of women's/girls teams is the responsibility of individual clubs and most of them seem successful in gaining the support of the local business community.

4. GEORGE CULL, SPORTS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, LEISURE IN HYNDBURN, ACCRINGTON, LANCASHIRE

4.1 *Sports Development—Hyndburn*

Women and girls football

This evidence is gathered together for the purpose of the report, however the information was already collated.

4.2 *Evidence*

4.2.1 Women and girls football has increased in popularity over the past five years and evidence of this is the fact that five years ago there was only one ladies team operating in the Borough. There are currently three clubs which now have female sections, two of which are FA Charter Standard and one who is working towards it. One of the three clubs have a youth and adult section.

4.2.2 Because of the growth and the demand for growth, girls football has been listed as a focus sport for the Sports Development Team, so resources of existing officers have been directed more into that sport than others.

4.2.3 We don't have specific figures for Hyndburn on the number of active coaches who are female however in the past three years we have run coaching and officiating courses and have had the following results:

- FA Level 1 course—five female.
- Referees level 7/8 Course—45 male, 11 female.
- Junior Football Organisers Course—10 female.

This is likely to increase this year as we run another course and have already had interest from five females.

5. JIM GRANT, SFA FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL, SPORTS UNIT

5.1 *Girls/Women's Football in West Lothian*

5.1.1 In our region participation levels are increasing in a very positive way, a 10% increase yearly with new teams starting up all the time. There are now three girls teams participating at 13s age group and we now have two teams playing in the 17s league.

5.1.2 The requirements needed to ensure wider participation are funding and resources to support a girls only primary and secondary school programme of fun days and festivals. This will allow a wider group to take part in taster sessions, and from that, those who show potential and want to play on a regular basis can be guided to local clubs who can cater for their needs.

5.1.3 For those who wish to play regularly then the opportunity will become available to develop skills, stamina and performance levels at the clubs. We need to ensure that more clubs have a girls section or allow girls to participate alongside boys and the coaches who work with the girls are suitably qualified and are fully aware of the girls playing and training requirements.

5.1.4 As more girls/women play and playing standards continue to improve then more will become positive role models for younger players and start to coach and manage teams. This will take a little time to filter through the system. Until then it is vital that girls teams have mothers/guardians helping in some way either as administrators, first aiders, physiotherapists or committee members. This will hopefully ensure that the girls/women's game is treated on a par within the club structure.

5.1.5 This will have to be supported with the required resources put in place to train these people to the required level.

5.1.6 Media coverage is still poor both at a local and national level. Particularly at a time when our national teams are performing well and their UEFA rankings are higher than the men's/youths.

5.1.7 I have found sponsorship on a local basis is good for the girls teams, there is always a local business who is keen to have their company associated with a positive thriving area of the game. Girls/women's football locally is seen as being not so cynical or tainted as the boys/men's game.

June 2006

Memorandum submitted by the BBC

The BBC remains very committed to women's football. We covered our first Women's Cup Final in 2001 and the game has been featured on BBC1 every year since.

Last year's Women's European Championships saw us do the three England games live with a peak of three million for England v Sweden on BBC2. We also did five late night highlights programmes during the tournament.

This season we have also covered two of England's World Cup qualification games against France and Hungary.

Football Focus has also regularly showcased women's football, previewing major games and also, alongside the regular children's feature in the Sunday morning Match of the Day repeat, telling women where they can get started.

22 May 2006

Memorandum submitted by the Premier League

INTRODUCTION

The Premier League and its clubs have played an important role in the development of women's football in this country, through individual programmes delivered at a club level and our investment in the Football Foundation. This has complemented the work of the Football Association who as the governing body for football is responsible for overseeing women's football at all levels of the game.

INCREASING PARTICIPATION AND DEVELOPING SKILLS

The Premier League, along with The Football Association, Sport England and the Government, are the funding partners of the Football Foundation which is the UK's largest sports charity. The Football Foundation is playing a key role in revitalising grass roots sport and since its launch in July 2000 it has supported over 2,200 projects worth nearly £400 million and given over 100,000 girls and boys brand new strips. Almost all of the Football Foundation's funding benefits both female and male participants. However, in addition, the Foundation has supported 86 projects specifically for women, at a total cost of £9.8 million and in early 2006 introduced a special Junior Kit Scheme designed specifically for women.

The Register of English Football Facilities (REFF) study, funded by the Football Foundation, highlighted that in 2003, 94% of changing rooms had no facilities for females. The Football Foundation is attempting to address this problem by ensuring every grant they make for new changing rooms is conditional on these changing rooms catering for both male and female participants. Better facilities for female referees have also led to a growth in this area of the game.

Community schemes run by Premier League clubs provide opportunities for girls of all ages to play the game through school and after-school coaching programmes. For example, Arsenal run two-day summer non-residential camps which are designed to provide each girl aged between 7-14 years with the environment to learn and develop at their own pace together with the chance to make new friends and enjoy their football in a fun atmosphere. As part of the Community Girls programme, Fulham FC work with over 30 schools in seven boroughs throughout London and Surrey, providing girls-only after-school clubs, curriculum and lunchtime coaching. In addition to that the Club offers girls-only soccer courses every school holiday and Saturday morning sessions just for girls.

Many of our clubs have close links with their local County Association's Development Programme and some of our clubs also run Centres of Excellence. These provide opportunities for girls and young women who show a real talent for the game a progression route through to play for the club senior sides and hopefully then at international level.

INSPIRING TOWARDS EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Through the Premier League's community programme, there are equal opportunities for both boys and girls to be inspired by the power of football in order to provide them with personal development opportunities. The schemes are designed to improve educational attainment, improve self esteem and provide pathways to further education and employment. For example:

- Evaluation figures for Playing for Success found that primary school children's numeracy scores had improved by 17 months during the 10 week courses. Over 100,000 children have benefited from the initiative so far.
- 96% of children and 95% of adults who took part in Premier League Reading Stars last year believed the scheme had made them want to read more.
- 79% of participants on the Prince's Trust Football Initiative, who were previously unemployed, went on to find work, further education or training in 2003-04.

There are also specific community initiatives designed to involve girls and women in the game. For example, Middlesbrough have been running a project with Abingdon Sure Start aimed at delivering a football fitness course for Asian mothers and providing coaching qualifications so that they have the ability to deliver their own small sided competitions.

Charlton Athletic have also help develop a programme called Kick Into Training and Education (KITE), which delivers skills for health and fitness and skills for life, not just to footballers registered on the club's books but also to the general and wider community. The course develops players by the way of a comprehensive performance pathway, and also develops coaches, managers, administrators and fitness professionals through a range of educational courses and workshops. KITE makes the club's professional coaching and management team available to deliver courses to the local and wider community. This provides a range of enjoyable workshop and practical based courses and academic programmes of study designed to enhance skills and qualifications as well as confidence and an appreciation of sport in everyday life.

By inspiring women to play and be engaged by football, we hope that they will be attracted to employment with the game. From senior level at a club, such as Wigan Athletic's Chief Executive Brenda Spencer, to Everton's Learning Centre Teaching Assistant, the current Everton and England goalkeeper Rachel Brown, there are many positive role models for girls and women seeking employment in the game.

 RAISING THE PROFILE OF THE GAME

Premier League Clubs are committed to promoting the women's game through club media channels, such as match programmes and the Internet. Charlton Athletic recently launched a brand new website—www.cafcwomen.co.uk—which is devoted to the Charlton women's team and includes news, features and match reports. Other clubs have news, profiles and fixture details of their club's commitment to the promotion of the women's game at all levels.

Occasionally, women's teams also have the opportunity to showcase their skills on leading Premier League grounds. Blackburn Rovers attracted over 500 supporters to their game against Newcastle United at the end of the 2005–06 season to celebrate their promotion to the Ladies Premier League.

The Premier League also believes it is important that leading female players act as positive role models, replicating the success of roles such as Reading Champions in schemes like Premier League Reading Stars. For example, the Kickz project, a partnership between the Premier League, Metropolitan Police, Football Association, Football Foundation and Football League and Respect Taskforce, which provides personal development opportunities for 13-18 year olds, has recruited Rachel Yankey as an Ambassador.

The Premier League was instrumental in driving forward the Football Foundation Ambassador Programme where leading male players from our clubs encourage people of all to play the game and become aware of the opportunities to benefit from Football Foundation funding. This initiative has become so successful, the Football Foundation is now looking to expand the programme to recruit female ambassadors.

Memorandum submitted by Stephanie Cannon, Battersea WFC

I would like to have my say on the state of women's football in the UK.

I play for a women's football team in South London and we have struggled pretty much the last few years, to find decent training facilities that are central for everyone in the area, with good lighting and a suitable surface.

When I first joined the team we had a club house, with grounds to train and play on. However, we shared this with another football team and rugby team (both men's). We were not allowed to train on the pitch so you could imagine, three teams squashed into an area to the side, with very very poor lighting was not ideal, especially when it had rained a lot and the training area was a mud pool, which then forced us to train on the neighbouring basketball courts, a surface which was quite dangerous at times. But we survived and won the division that year.

When we commenced training for the following year, we were told we were not welcome. The man who owned/ran the ground had actually got funding to improve his grounds on the basis that he had a women's football club use his facilities. So we felt very very disappointed to be told we could no longer count on his club and facilities, the following season.

From there we moved on to play at various council-run pitches but nothing as good as what we had previously.

I guess the point I'm trying to make, is the extreme difficulty we have found to find a decent pitch to play and train on in our area for women. A lot of what is in the area is already booked by men's teams. I think it should be more affordable and that women's teams should have the same opportunities to play on decent pitches as men's teams.

The second point I'd like to make is the limited amount of referee's around. We would only have an official ref about half the season. And even than the standard of refereeing could definitely be improved.

Last of all, I'd like to request that we play earlier than 2 pm on a Sunday. Playing at 2 pm takes up the entire day. I would propose it's played earlier but not at 10 am like the men's. Women's teams are organised and we arrive at our games an hour before kick off, so I would propose 11 am.

9 June 2006

Memorandum submitted by Lucy Mills

I am a 25-year-old women's footballer and I play 11-a-side on a Sunday and five-a-side on a Wednesday evening. I also played football at University (Queen Mary College, University of London) and captained the team in my final year. I love the social and the physical aspects of football and it has been a really positive part of life since I joined the university team in September 2000.

All of the above sounds like a great advertisement for women's football, and so it should be.

However, there is one very significant black mark on the sparkling history of my football career. I captained my local boy's team until the age of 11 at which point it was illegal for me to play in the same team/league as the boys. As far as I knew this was an official FA rule (and still probably is). Unfortunately there was no similar girl's team close to my area (Ripon, North Yorkshire) and I could not make the long journey to Leeds or another big city as it was just not practical.

For this reason I did not play for a football team between the age of 11 and 19, at which point I went to University. I missed out on playing, quality coaching, physical development and training and most importantly my chance to enjoy myself in a team game I loved.

I really hope things have changed since then so that young girls are able to be given the same chances as the boys at such an important age of development. There needs to be better investment in the coaching and encouragement of female football at an earlier stage. There needs to be a better infrastructure in place so that girls are afforded the same sporting opportunities as the boys.

I really feel like I was unfairly disenfranchised from taking part in football and I missed out on an opportunity to improve my skills and become a better footballer.

8 June 2006

Memorandum submitted by Anne Ellwood

I am pleased to submit my own comments regarding the current state of Women's Football, based on my personal experiences of the sport.

Firstly may I enclose some background information of my experience and knowledge of Women's Football, which I have been involved in for over twenty years, and have experienced the game in a variety of capacities and levels.

Having recently returned to the sport as a coach and volunteer at my daughter's football club, I feel able to comment on the current situation of Women's Football, and the comparisons to my previous involvement in the sport many years ago.

Also in my capacity as an events officer during 2005 I was heavily involved in promoting the Women's UEFA Championships held in the Northwest.

My comments do not reflect those of my employers!

I would certainly wish to contribute and support the long term development of the game. I would be glad to attend any subsequent enquires etc.

INTRODUCTION

My daughter plays for a Charter Standard Club and I am also helping the club, as a volunteer, coaching to marketing etc. Offering my experience to the club, which is only a few years old, and I felt that they may welcome the support.

Whilst my daughter enjoys playing the game, she has endured some bad experiences with the club, through no fault of her own. Which, had the club been more proactive, especially under the criteria of the Football Association's Charter Standard (eg provide a fun, safe environment and respect the needs of individuals). Then perhaps my daughter would have had a far better experience.

The Club only formed four years ago, but has grown very quickly, catering for age groups under 10 through to the Women's Team. Sadly the club has experienced problems, which it has struggled to deal with and reflects badly on its reputation. I feel it is the club's lack of experience and perhaps lack of support from the governing body (local/national), in promoting "good practice". That is leaving the club to flounder and in danger of losing some very committed volunteers. And not least has already lost participants.

However I do believe that the Football Association could perhaps offer a mentoring service to the less experienced clubs, who desperately need the support for all their hard work.

Women's Football in comparison to the men's/boys game, is still in its infancy. Boys/men tend to be more naturally committed to football, whereas the women's game hasn't always been seen in the same light. Therefore good support mechanisms may help overcome problems and ensure that a sustainable pathway from the grassroots to the highest level is achievable and accessible by all (and most important being able to retain players etc).

In respect of women's football at the elite level, there is a good league system that provides an opportunity to compete and play to a high level, and seems to have a good support system, eg access to quality training.

However I do worry what controls are in place (at the lower levels) to ensure that those opportunities can be accessed by participants, and retained, with the quality of support that allows participants to realise their potential.

Based on my recent experiences of an “elite” club within East Lancashire, where there appeared to be a lack of “customer care” shown by coaching (FA Level 2 Qualified) staff, the staff seemed unable to communicate in a respectful manner towards young adults. I wonder how many participants will be lost! Thus again demonstrating the need to ensure that “all” participants are given the respect and opportunity to further their career at an appropriate level. Also afforded they should be shown respect (irrespective of ability) and should they not reach the standard (for elite level), be offered the guidance on how to improve their abilities.

DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN’S FOOTBALL AT ALL LEVELS AND THE RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT WIDER PARTICIPATION IN AMATEUR AND ELITE WOMEN’S FOOTBALL

Based on my current experience of resources at an amateur level within the East Lancashire area, I feel that there has been a dramatic change in the opportunity for participation at the grassroots level to the elite level. There does appear to be a vast amount of women’s teams at various standards within the region. However I am not convinced that the “network” between clubs and the governing body is strong enough to retain participants, and allow progression to elite level.

Examples

There is a distinct difference between survival of the stronger, established clubs, particularly those attached to (men’s) professional clubs and those with lesser resources. With many clubs unable to compete with those stronger clubs, there have been a number of teams withdrawing from leagues in 2005–06. Though there may be other reasons, there is however a feeling that it can be soul destroying for the less resourced clubs trying to compete against the “professional” clubs. Whilst it is good to compete against those clubs, there needs to be a support mechanism, whereby the “pro” clubs could share their expertise or maybe agreements made, that should girls fail to succeed with an “elite club”, then they are guided to other clubs that might be of an appropriate level.

I suggest that perhaps to ensure that participants are retained in the sport at “all” levels and also have opportunities to try, for example coaching/refereeing, there needs to be a strategy in place that pulls all clubs together and is able to retain participants who may drop out of the sport because they have failed at an elite level.

At the grassroots level there is a need to ensure that there is a proactive support system. That will cover all aspects of the game, which could draw on the experiences of the more established clubs.

Perhaps the FA could set up workshops based around a variety of topics, that are run periodically throughout the year at a local level (perhaps there could be an incentive scheme that offers rewards to clubs/players who attend those sessions, eg cash for equipment).

AVAILABILITY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PLAYERS TO DEVELOP SKILLS, STAMINA AND PERFORMANCE

Girls’ football seems to be accessible at most schools and many include it as a curriculum activity. Whilst most schools are able to offer suitably trained staff to deliver quality training, I do feel that there is a lack of experienced coaching available to provide quality coaching etc in the club environment (unless it’s a “pro” club). I base this on seeing many recently qualified coaches, who are very committed and enthusiastic, but lack confidence. Whilst it is the coach’s responsibility to gain experience, there is need for a good support network for coaches to gain that extra bit of confidence and knowledge. There is a need to be local groups that could meet and swap ideas etc.

Even though the FA has their successful Charter Standard scheme, which recognises a good safe training environment at clubs, I do feel that it is not a guarantee that there will be a quality learning experience for participants. I feel that once clubs have achieved their Charter standard status, there doesn’t seem to be evidence of any monitoring or support to ensure the required Charter Standards criteria are maintained. (Please note that there are many clubs that demonstrate a good standard, but perhaps it highlights the need for the Football Association to be more proactive in promoting “good practice” amongst all clubs.)

WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE GAME INCLUDING COACHING AND MANAGEMENT

Whilst I have seen more women now engaged in coaching/management at all levels, I still feel in some respect that there is still a male domination in those roles. Plus in some instances I have experienced “discrimination” from parents who feel, that a “man” should be the manager (perhaps because historically it has always been seen as a “mans” role)!

There is a need to raise the profile and showcase the women who are doing those jobs (at all levels, even at men’s clubs, where for example there are now women working as physio’s), which, would serve as an encouragement to others. Also, it is important to have role models, especially to encourage players to take on those roles. At the moment there is still a tendency to use the “mens” game as examples of role models, rather than we should be seeing and hearing about “women” in coaching positions etc.

At the moment the FA have a successful coaching scheme which goes from Level 1 coaching at grassroots to elite level with the UEFA licence. However I have seen little evidence to demonstrate that there is a support network to ensure that women can be mentored through to a higher level.

For example, I am currently re-taking my Level 2 and whilst there are a couple of other women on a “male” dominated course (I personally don’t have a problem attending the course and the “men” are very supportive).

Though I do feel that there may be a need to have a women-only course and many women may feel intimidated (also I am not aware of any women tutoring the coaching courses).

I am also aware of other women who have failed their Level 2, but there doesn’t appear to be a support mechanism to encourage them to try again. Thus many good coaches could be lost.

Need to profile women referees in particular at a professional level

I believe that there needs to be a better support network from the governing body, particularly at a local level.

MEDIA COVERAGE AND SPONSORSHIP

I feel that the media coverage of the Women’s UEFA Championships in 2005 has helped raise the profile of the sport. However it appears that at a local level the media coverage of the women’s game is very limited. Local papers still seem to be dominated by coverage of boys’/men’s football. Whereas if there were more regular media coverage of the women’s game, it would help raise the profile and also make it easier for participants to access information on girls’/women’s football.

I bet it’s easier for boys/men to find out about playing opportunities than girls/women, thanks to constant media coverage, certainly at a local level.

If I asked girls/women to name the England ladies’ team or a woman coach, they may struggle to answer. Mainly because the media is dominated by the men’s game and it is easy to name players like David Beckham rather than eg Rachel Yankey!

I hope that my comments are taken in a positive manner and I know that women’s football has become much more recognised and there is a lot of quality work been achieved.

5 June 2006

Memorandum submitted by Minnie Cruttwell

I am hoping that this letter will be discussed at the meeting on 27 June about women’s football.

My name is Minnie Cruttwell and I play in an Under-10s mixed football team called Balham Blazers FC.

I wrote to Tessa Jowell last year because the FA ruling states that after Under-11s I have to play for an all girl’s team, which I feel is unfair. Tessa supported my campaign, and arranged a meeting with the FA.

I think this rule is unfair and wrong for a number of reasons:

- I think that girls should be given the choice of playing on an all girl’s team or a mixed team;
- I know I can compete with boys equally, as I have been playing against them for over four years;
- England has the youngest separation age in Europe. Germany, for example, who are European women’s champions, allow girls to play with boys for as long as they want until a professional age;
- I do not think I should be expected to leave my friends behind, as I have made so many new ones during my time at Balham Blazers;
- If I was forced to join an all girl’s team I would have to travel further and the standard wouldn’t be as good;
- The FA say that it’s a size issue, but I’ve seen lots of boy’s teams where there are huge differences in height between players.

When I was at the FA meeting I got the impression that the people from the FA had not even been to a mixed football match before.

The FA told me after the meeting that they will consult with young people my age, and let me know the outcome in September. I hope that the FA will ask for the opinions of girls who play in mixed football teams, not just boys who have no experience of playing with girls.

I feel that this ruling is sexist and unfair, and an important issue to be discussed and changed if women’s football is to become more successful.

27 June 2006

**Memorandum submitted by Harry Smith, Team Manager,
Crosfields Under-11s "A" Team**

I am the Team Manager of Crosfields Under-11s "A" football team based in Warrington. At this moment in time my squad consists of 14 players, 12 male and two female. Up until the close of this season the sex of the individual players in my team was never an issue. The players respect for each other was based purely on ability. One of my female players, Addi Campbell, is a very capable player who more than holds her own against opposition players, even though the majority of the time our opponents are 100% of the male gender. My other female player is Hannah Dale. Hannah has been our "Player of the Season" for the past three years and I would consider her an outstanding prospect. It will come as no shock to me if she eventually represents our national side.

From a personal point of view, I have always supported any of my players and given them the utmost encouragement when they have been given the opportunity to play at a higher level. A total of five boys who played for me at Crosfields are now playing "Academy" football at Manchester United, Liverpool, Everton, Blackburn Rovers and Bolton Wanderers. I keep in touch with these players, and Crosfields will be there for these boys should they ever be released. When these players left Crosfields, it had a devastating effect on the team. We went from winning the League and, in my opinion, being the best team in the local area to being relegated the following season. I did not complain and decided we had to keep the players' heads up and develop the players in future years.

Since then I and my fellow coaches have worked very hard to stabilise the team, improve the players' ability and prepare them to compete at the highest levels they can attain. We feel we now have a team which is capable of winning our League next season. Hannah Dale is very much an integral part of that team.

When we first lost players to the "Academies", our remaining players accepted the fact that these lads were going onto a higher level and understood the reasoning behind this. Today they cannot understand the reasoning behind why Hannah and Addi cannot play next season. They are all bitterly upset at what they feel is an injustice. Our male players have worked so hard to become a good team once again and just when they feel they are ready to push for honours once more, they see the heart being ripped out the team.

I can fully understand their frustrations. This will be the second time due to FA rules (Academy players must leave their clubs) our team will suffer. Our squad comprises of 14 players, finding two players with similar ability to replace the girls will be almost impossible. Any half decent player is already signed up by a club.

I have heard all the arguments reference why girls cannot play football against boys from under 12, and I have to say they are outdated based on ignorance and bias. The two female players who play for me are physically strong and mentally tough. They know when they walk onto the pitch they will get no favours and don't expect them. They also know like all of our male players if their performances are not good enough, I will have no hesitation in dropping them. Both girls have adapted brilliantly to 11-a-side football, surely not even the ignorant or biased will claim it is a progressive step to move them back into seven-a-side next season. I know for a fact every team we played against last season would love to have Hannah Dale in their squad for next season. It is fairly obvious to me that people who know and truly understand football at grassroots (ie. ourselves and the opposition managers and coaches) who witness these games every week, cannot see why these girls are not allowed to play next season.

I can understand and tend to agree with the fact the average male player is better than the average female player. Hannah Dale is no average player. She should be allowed to compete at the highest level her ability takes her. At this moment in time that is against male players.

The Germans and Americans have the best female teams in the world. Ask yourself why? They have been allowed to compete at the highest level their abilities took them and that included competing against male players well over the age of 12.

All I ask the FA to do is allow these girls to play at their true level, for the sake of the boys in our team, but most of all Hannah and Addi themselves.

The FA have done a wonderful job with girls football, but in my opinion girls football is being held back with this outdated rule. The sky should be the limit, unfortunately the German and American girls have wings on their boots and our girls lead weights.

22 June 2006

Memorandum submitted by the British Olympic Association

INTRODUCTION

The British Olympic Association (BOA) is the National Olympic Committee (NOC) for Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It was formed in 1905 in the House of Commons, and at that time consisted of seven National Governing Body members. The BOA now includes as its members the 35 National Governing Bodies of each Olympic sport. The Football Association by agreement with the other Home Country Football Associations is the representative on the NOC for the sport of football.

The BOA is one of 203 NOCs currently recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The IOC's role is to lead the promotion of Olympism in accordance with the Olympic Charter. The Charter details the philosophy, aims and traditions of the Olympic Movement. The IOC co-opts and elects its members from among such persons as it considers qualified. Members of the IOC are its representatives in their respective countries and not delegates of their countries within the IOC.

The BOA is responsible for developing the Olympic Movement within Great Britain and Northern Ireland and facilitating and managing the British Olympic Team (Team GB) at the Olympic and Olympic Winter Games. In addition, the BOA delivers extensive elite level support services to Britain's Olympic athletes and their National Governing Bodies throughout each Olympic cycle to assist them in their preparations for, and performances at the Games.

Great Britain is one of only five countries which have never failed to be represented at the Summer Olympic Games since 1896. Great Britain, France and Switzerland are the only countries to have been present at all Olympic Winter Games. Great Britain has also played host to two Olympic Games in London: in 1908 and 1948. In 2005, London was selected as the host city for the 2012 Olympic Games.

The BOA is one of only two NOCs worldwide which does not receive government or public finance. The impartiality this grants the BOA means that it can speak freely as a strong independent voice for British Olympic Sport.

FOOTBALL IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

This submission provides evidence relating to two of the inquiry's requested areas of interest:

- The development of women's football at all levels and the resource requirements to support wider participation in amateur and elite women's football.
- Media coverage and sponsorship of women's football.

In 1900 football became the first team sport to be introduced into the Olympic Games. But Olympic football relatively quickly found itself rivalled by the instant popularity of the World Cup which began in 1930. Indeed football was excluded altogether from the Olympic programme in 1932. Further controversy followed when Eastern European nations found ways round the regulations which insisted on the amateur status of all participants. The 1984 Games in Los Angeles saw professionals formally permitted for the first time. In Atlanta 1996, women's football became an Olympic sport for the first time.

Qualifying competitions take place to decide the sixteen finalists in the Olympic men's competition. They are divided into four groups of four, and play 32 matches up to and including the final. The women's game is the same, but there are only two groups and the top two teams in each will go forward to the semi-finals. Great Britain has won gold medals in 1900, 1908 and 1912, but a British team has not participated since the 1972 Munich Olympic Games because of concerns amongst the Home Nations about their independent status in world football.

At the London Games in 2012, Team GB will be granted automatic host-nation qualification status for all the events on the Olympic programme. Whilst the BOA will take advantage of this unique qualifying situation, it will not field athletes or teams which are not competitive. It is however, the BOA's intention at this stage to enter a GB football team for both the men's and women's competitions in London 2012. The BOA has been leading discussions and negotiations between the four Home Nation football associations to ascertain how the format of such teams may take shape (please see Appendix. (*not printed here*)). The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has stated that the entry of a GB football team in 2012 would not affect the individual international standings of the Home Nations.¹

The London 2012 football competition will be the largest international football event to take place on UK shores since 1966. Games will be played at many venues across the UK, including the finals at the new Wembley Stadium. Particularly for the women's game, such exposure both in terms of spectator numbers and an increased media profile throughout the UK, will be unprecedented. Competing in the World Cup is obviously the pinnacle of any footballer's career, but London 2012 offers our top female footballers with a similar opportunity to showcase their talents in a large-scale tournament. Even better to do so in front of a patriotic and enthusiastic home crowd who will be inspired by the performances of the GB Teams. The BOA has no doubt that the presence of a GB women's football team competing in 2012 will encourage thousands

¹ BBC Sport: FIFA green light for 2012 GB Team (1 September 2005).

of girls and young women to take up the sport, not only as players but as coaches, referees and volunteers. Alongside encouraging women to become involved in the amateur game, the proposition of being able to compete in London 2012 will provide a fantastic challenge to aspire to for those women already competing.

Participation at the Olympic Games grants a level of media coverage which few other sporting events equal. Particularly, for some of the less popular sports, the Olympic Games provide one of the only opportunities for extensive local and global media coverage. The following statistics from the Athens Olympic Games television coverage in 2004 show the extent of such exposure:²

- An audience of 3.9 billion, from 220 different countries tuned in to watch the Athens Games (the largest in Games history).
- In total the BBC broadcast over 247 hours of dedicated Olympic coverage on its two channels.
- In total 49 million people watched Olympic coverage on the BBC for three minutes or more over the 17 day period.
- The peak British audience for the Olympic football competition (without the participation of Team GB) was four million viewers.

The presence of the home teams in the 2012 football competition would generate significant interest from both the national and international media, such exposure the GB women's team would no doubt wish to capitalise on, both for its corporate and sponsorship benefits, and for the increased profile which would encourage new participants.

In the lead up to the London Games in 2012 the BOA will continue to play a central role in encouraging the Home Country Football Associations to find a way to ensure Great Britain fields the strongest possible football teams in London 2012 and that no British footballer is denied the opportunity of taking part.

June 2006

Memorandum submitted by Sportsmatch (England)

1. INTRODUCTION TO SPORTSMATCH

Sportsmatch is the Government's business sponsorship incentive scheme for grass roots sport, funded by DCMS through Sport England and administered by the Institute of Sports Sponsorship. Since 1992 Sportsmatch has encouraged more than 5,500 companies to invest in community sports activities to promote participation and improve skills. More than £40 million of Sportsmatch funds have "matched" investment of £49 million from the private sector to support 5,200 programmes run by national governing bodies, clubs, schools and other organisations providing sustainable sporting experience across 78 different sports. Activities co-funded by Sportsmatch and sponsors have provided tangible social, educational and health as well as sporting benefits.

2. PRIORITIES FOR SPORTSMATCH

Since its inception Sportsmatch has followed DCMS and Sport England priorities for funding into sport, placing particular emphasis on promoting the scheme's benefits to attract applications from priority groups, including: youth sport, women's and girl's sport, sport for the disabled, projects for ethnic minorities and activities centred on areas of urban and rural deprivation. Emphasis has been placed on activities exclusively for those in these groups and also on programmes which include those from priority groups in a fully inclusive and integrated way.

3. EXPERIENCE WITH WOMEN'S SPORT

Of 442 Sportsmatch awards made in 2005–06 (value: £3.348 million), 297 were for activities for both male and female participants, 43 were for exclusively female participants. These figures have increased steadily since 2000–01 when, of 350 awards, 180 were for male/female activities and 20 exclusively for females. The total value of awards made has also increased commensurately. The leading sports showing an increase in applications for female participation have been rugby union, rugby league and cricket.

4. EXPERIENCE WITH WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

In 2000–01, 45 awards were made to bodies providing football activities (predominantly coaching) involving women and girls. Of these 37 were for integrated male/female programmes and 8 for female only projects.

In 2005–06, 55 awards were made to bodies providing football activities involving women and girls. Of these 44 were for integrated programmes and 11 for female-exclusive activities.

² Athens Olympic Games 2004 Review: BBC Sport.

However, although the number of awards to women's football has increased marginally, the total value of these awards fell from £759,000 in 2000–01 to £490,000 in 2005–06—certainly disproportionately to those for other leading sports.

5. ATTRACTING SPONSORS TO WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Traditionally it has been difficult for women's sport to attract sponsorship at a senior level and a lack of serious media coverage (both nationally and locally) has been cited as the prime reason for this. However, at grassroots level, the Sportsmatch experience has been that sponsors who wish to support their local communities through sport do not, in most cases, differentiate between men and women's sport. Their requirement is to support activities which are well organised and which make a useful contribution to the communities. Indeed, when sponsors are considering investment into youth sport they often stipulate that the programmes should involve both boys and girls.

For information, a wide range of business sectors have supported club activities receiving Sportsmatch awards and, in the women's football area, these have included:

- John Lewis Partnership (Birmingham City Ladies FC).
- Arnott Commercial Insurance (Lumley Ladies FC).
- Cassidy Group (Coventry City Ladies FC).
- Ocktcorn Ltd (Worcester City Ladies FC).

6. CONCLUSIONS

Awards made to (and applications received from) women's sport—both exclusive and integrated—have increased significantly in recent years.

Whilst awards made to (and applications received from) women's football have increased they have not kept pace with those from other leading sports.

Despite limited media coverage of women's sport, commercial sponsors have shown interest in investing in this area of grassroots sport.

There is no reason to believe that grassroots football should be any less attractive to sponsors than other leading sports.

30 May 2006
