

# A Year Like No Other

ECB Annual Review 2020-21





# IMPROVING LIVES, CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

- **The ECB oversees, supports and develops the sport of cricket, in every form and at every level. Our ambition is to grow cricket and make it a game for everyone. By inspiring people to discover and share their passion for cricket, we aim to connect communities and improve lives.**
- **Because we are a not-for-profit organisation, all of our revenue goes back into professional and recreational cricket across England and Wales. In order to run and grow the game, we collaborate with and provide funding to many different organisations from the grassroots up, from local cricket clubs and charities to County Cricket Boards and First-Class County Clubs (FCCs).**
- **We provide opportunities for children to pick up a bat and ball for the first time and programmes to make the game more accessible and inclusive. We support the county network at the heart of our domestic game.**
- **We also fund successful England teams who can inspire passion and participation and which generate the vast majority of the income that underpins the success of cricket at all levels.**

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# CEO FOREWORD

ECB Chief Executive Officer Tom Harrison reflects on how cricket got through a year like no other in 2020, and on the significant challenges that still lie ahead for the game

After the euphoria of our ICC Men's World Cup win in 2019, and surging interest in the women's game after the ICC T20 World Cup in Australia at the start of the year, 2020 was poised to be a year of building and progress for cricket in England and Wales.

The first year of our new media rights cycle promised significant extra investment to help us achieve our objectives and broaden the game. But then COVID-19 arrived, and things turned out very differently. Rather than investing more to achieve our goal, over the past

12 months we have had to confront the biggest financial crisis the game has ever experienced. And despite the optimism around at the time of writing, it is clear we're not out of the woods yet.

From the start, I said that ECB's response to the pandemic had to be clear, decisive and consistent. We based this around three priorities – keeping people safe, to protect the financial health of the game, and critically to work in partnership with our stakeholders at every level. It is very pleasing that the cricket network

came together so effectively around this framework.

By sticking to these priorities, and with hard work by so many people at all levels of the game, we were able to get cricket played again safely and avoid an even deeper financial challenge than the significant one we face today. It was particularly pleasing to see the role our game plays in people's lives come to the fore in the absence of other freedoms. Whether it was watching or listening to our international teams play on Sky or BBC, or a trip to our local club, the contribution of our

game to the wider community around the country was extraordinary and wonderful to see.

Crucial to all this has been the strength of our partnerships, within the game and beyond. Our partnership with both the UK and Welsh Governments, Sport England and Sport Wales enabled us to deliver a season, albeit different to the one we'd envisaged. This will be vital again in 2021.

It's been a painful year on many levels. We have lost much loved members of the cricket family to COVID-19 and we mourn their passing. This pandemic has spared no part of our society. Addressing the financial impact of the crisis also meant we had to let many highly respected people go from our organisation. Across the network others have been forced into similar action. We've also had to put some of our vital plans to grow cricket on hold.

As a game we've also had to confront uncomfortable truths around inclusion and diversity. Stories that emerged following the Black Lives Matter movement have shown how much more there is for the whole game to do to become the inclusive and diverse sport we want to be. We were proud that our players took a public stand against racism on the pitch, and we have listened to those who have come forward with their own stories. We are also acting, with a new Anti-Discrimination Code of Conduct already in place. With

**“VERY SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD. ALTHOUGH WE ARE NAVIGATING THROUGH UNCERTAINTY TO WHICH WE HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED, OUR AMBITION FOR THE 2021 SEASON SETS A VERY HIGH BAR – WE CANNOT LOSE ANOTHER YEAR OF PROGRESS”** **TOM HARRISON**

the launch of the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket and a comprehensive set of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion actions, there will be further progress to come. We have committed to drive change, and with the help and support of our network, we will.

While it wasn't the year we envisaged, we can take pride in what we have achieved. We led the way in being the first sport anywhere in the world to stage international team competition again after the pandemic took hold. We staged international, domestic and recreational cricket, established a new structure for women's regional domestic cricket and awarded 41 full-time professional contracts to domestic women's players. We also created more opportunities to get involved in the game with new coaching bursaries and the first phase of increased support for the expansion of the ACE Programme.

Very significant challenges lie ahead. While we are hopeful and optimistic about the 2021 summer, we don't yet know what the implications are for the return of crowds or indeed on 'bubbles' for this season.



Tom Harrison

## “WE MUST TAKE THIS CHANCE TO GROW OUR SPORT”

Dynamos Cricket, the ECB's first participation programme for 8 to 11 year olds, launched this year



We are building plans with the experience from 2020 and taking forward the lessons we learnt. Although we are navigating through uncertainty to which we have become accustomed, our ambition for the 2021 season sets a very high bar – we cannot lose another year of progress.

We have launched Dynamos Cricket, our first participation programme for 8 to 11 year olds, a critical age group where children might previously have lost contact with the game having completed All Stars Cricket but not yet feeling ready to join an organised club.

In July, we will launch The Hundred, with every match live through our partnerships with Sky and the BBC, delivering world-class men's and women's action on the field with a fresh and dynamic presentation off it, that will thrill fans and open the game up to more people. We will also see the first full season of the new women's domestic structure, work with partners to create more opportunities for children to play and step up our digital game.

We must take this chance to grow our sport and make cricket a game for everyone.





## INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

ECB Chair Ian Watmore on the importance of working collaboratively with the wider network to tackle cricket’s challenges and how the game can demonstrate its importance in national life as we emerge from the pandemic

Joining the organisation in the middle of a pandemic, and with the game facing its biggest ever financial crisis, has allowed no time for gentle introductions. I have been so impressed by everyone’s efforts in rescuing last summer’s programme, getting through the winter and beginning a new season on time, and I wish to pay a huge tribute to all those who’ve worked so hard – at the ECB and across the entire cricketing network – to get us to this point.

Crucially, the game stayed together to address the challenges we faced as a result of COVID-19. Our invention of the biosecure ‘bubble’, combined with the courage of our international teams and those who we hosted, effectively saved cricket globally. It’s a huge credit to the men’s and women’s players that they were able to produce many outstanding achievements on the pitch while spending weeks on end living in a bubble off it. We are extremely grateful to the

West Indies, Pakistan, Australia and Ireland for their willingness to travel here.

The First-Class Counties worked collaboratively to find the best structure for the men’s domestic schedule last year and this, playing exciting cricket and allowing talent to emerge and flourish. As a big fan of the county game I was delighted to attend matches at Canterbury and Lord’s in the Bob Willis Trophy, something that seemed impossible at points early last summer.

Recreationally, I saw for myself at my local club Lindow, in Cheshire, and in the Cheshire Cup Final at Cheadle, how the game erupted again last July, and the sheer pleasure on people’s faces as they were able to get out and enjoy cricket again. I believe the decisive action taken at the start of this crisis has been crucial in getting us this far, while not losing a focus on



growing the game through widening participation. For example, the ECB Board was clear from the start that it was important to ensure England Women played on, with the same levels of COVID-19 security, internationally and domestically. I enjoyed watching our women’s side defeat West Indies at Derby, while seeing the new Rachael Heyhoe Flint tournament at Leicester, and the players benefited hugely from the tour to New Zealand to replace the postponed World Cup.

We should not underestimate the scale of the financial challenge that still confronts us, however. As a game, the cost of COVID-19 runs to over £100m in lost revenue. In a year when the ECB’s revenue should have grown by tens of millions of pounds to fund investment across the game, it fell compared to the previous year. With further disruption this year – and there is still currently uncertainty over when we will see full stadia again – our ability to invest in the game will once again be reduced.

But I don’t want to be downbeat. Working collaboratively has shown that, while we won’t always agree, we can achieve so much more if we work together, and I firmly believe there is an opportunity out of this crisis for cricket to show just what it can do for this country. I also thank my predecessor, Colin Graves, for ensuring the organisation is in a strong position to weather these challenges and for his leadership of the ECB Board through the initial response to the crisis last year.

As chair there are three major areas I want to focus on.

First, growing the game and widening participation by implementing our excellent Inspiring Generations strategy. International cricket will continue to be the pinnacle of our sport and our players are role models and ambassadors around the globe who inspire millions. We are working with our First-Class Counties and others

to strengthen and grow the men’s professional game, and help the women’s new regional structure take root and flourish. The Hundred will bring world-class cricket which existing fans can enjoy, while also – over time – inviting more people into cricket, signposting them to play or enjoy watching other formats as well. It will also help grow the women’s game through the significantly increased visibility it will provide. And we must emerge from COVID-19 with a new focus on participation recreationally, engagement with young people and schools, disability cricket and connecting people digitally to our game.

Secondly, enabling accessible, exciting and sustainable cricket. This means ensuring financial viability but also that opportunities are there for all and we show that cricket really is a game for everyone. Cricket has faced

some tough questions over discrimination, inclusion and diversity over the past year, and by establishing the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket, along with other actions we have taken, I am determined that we will continue to listen and to act where it is necessary to make this the sport we want it to be.

And finally, using the game to do good in society locally and internationally. Cricket has the power to get people active, improve lives, and bring communities together. What could better fit into the wider national agenda as we emerge from this pandemic?

The challenges are great, but with our collective vision and the right support, cricket can be the sport that delivers for England and Wales.







Aneeshwar Kunchala batted; Heather Knight (below right) break-danced and clubs, like Fulwood and Broughton CC, innovated

# HOW THE CRICKET FAMILY CAME TOGETHER

From providing meals to NHS staff and the vulnerable to online coaching and skills challenges, cricket stepped up when the pandemic struck

Inspired by the walking feats of the late Sir Tom Moore, a five-year-old boy from Warrington decided to take on a batting challenge during the first lockdown last year.

Aneeshwar Kunchala would hit a cricket ball 100 times a day for ten days, hoping to raise £1,000 for Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. In fact, he raised almost £3,000. He then moved on to organising a cycling challenge with 50 friends that raised £4,000 for a hospital in India.

“He was just learning cricket and asked if he can hit the ball to raise money – we wanted to encourage it,” Aneeshwar’s father Anil said. Anil took it in turns with his wife Sneha to bowl at their son. “He loves cricket and can’t wait to play proper matches when the pandemic is over.”

## Beyond our boundaries

Aneeshwar’s back-garden hitting was just one of more than 400 initiatives that the cricket family embraced as the COVID-19 pandemic turned life upside down. These activities raised more than £1m for good causes, brought communities together and united the game with inspiring tales of selflessness and generosity.

In May, ECB launched Together Through This Test with an online resource hub and a film, *The Wait*, narrated by Stephen Fry that was shown on ITV’s *Good Morning*

*Britain*. The aim was to mobilise the game and to help counties and clubs amplify their efforts.

The First-Class Counties looked within and beyond their boundaries to raise spirits and funds. Players and staff checked in on their members, particularly the elderly and vulnerable. Essex were one of a number of counties who helped make and deliver meals to NHS staff across 13 hospitals in their local area. “It’s important especially for us cricketers to help the community where we can,” said spin bowler Simon Harmer. Former England Men’s captain and Essex legend, Graham Gooch, described the experience as “very humbling”.

Durham’s Ned Eckersley volunteered at food banks while Surrey spinner Amar Virdi prepared and distributed meals to homeless and vulnerable people in London. Lancashire offered 5,000 free tickets to NHS staff.

## Digital dancing

The world moved online and so did cricket. Chance to Shine provided a bank of online coaching resources for primary and secondary schools while the ECB’s partnership with Google Digital Garage offered clubs the chance to improve their online presence. In addition, the ECB website provided tools for aspiring coaches, umpires, groundsmen and players.

Recreational clubs the length and breadth of the country dreamed up ever more imaginative ways to pass the time and bring people together when they were apart. Bake offs, alternative cricket teas, slickly-produced bat and ball online challenges – even England Women’s captain Heather Knight break dancing – all contributed to keeping minds active, smiles on faces and the game at the heart of communities.



So I’ve got a challenge for you. This is the press-up-to-breakdancer challenge.

400+

Initiatives during lockdown across the cricket network in England and Wales

–  
144

Of which engaged and educated children and young people

–  
128

Mental wellbeing initiatives helping the most vulnerable

–  
51

Activities providing tips to maintain physical health

–  
52

Initiatives provided food to NHS staff, the elderly, vulnerable and homeless

# “THE TIMING WAS PERFECT – WE WERE ALL FEELING LOW”

Dr Samara Afzal, a GP in Birmingham, was one of more than 20 key workers honoured in last summer’s #raisethebat Test series against West Indies by having their names printed on the backs of England Men’s players training shirts – this is her story:

Cricket has always been a part of Samara Afzal’s life. “I was lucky because my dad was happy for me to play with the boys,” she says. “But when I was 12 or 13, an older family member told my dad it was inappropriate for me to be playing with the boys. So my dad looked for a club and the nearest at that point was about an hour away by car. But it was a prestigious club – Wolverhampton CC, where Rachael Heyhoe Flint used to play.”

Samara played at Wolverhampton, progressing to play for Staffordshire and then Warwickshire. She moved to Walmley CC, much closer to home and also the club of Chris Woakes. The pair even did their Level 1 coaching courses together back in the day. “It’s brilliant now because there are so many clubs for women and girls – there’s been so much development.”

In 2019, Samara supported a pilot scheme with the National Asian Cricket Council (NACC). “We put on ten weeks of coaching sessions for some of my patients, South Asian women who don’t leave the house much except for household activities – but we got them playing cricket.”

There was understandable elation in the Afzal household at the sight of Samara’s name appearing on the back of Woakes’ shirt at the first #raisethebat Test at the Ageas Bowl last July. “My dad was so excited,” she says. “The timing was perfect. At that point a lot of frontline workers were feeling very low because we couldn’t see a way out. To have a distraction was really helpful – it was a brilliant campaign.”

Colleagues and patients alike were wowed by Samara’s show-and-tell of the unique, signed item of England kit, but one more than others. She explains: “One of my patients is in his 80s, loves cricket and actually played with [Warwickshire legend] Eric Hollies back in the day – he was so excited.”



# MULTI-PURPOSE FACILITIES

From Alnwick in Northumberland to Plymouth in Devon and many points in between, cricket clubs great and small have been transformed into COVID-19 vaccination centres

Glossop CC in Derbyshire was one of the first to open, back in December, and was part of one of the fastest roll-outs in the country with more than 400 people receiving a jab on the first day. In Manchester, Whalley Range CC is just a couple of miles from Emirates Old Trafford and was the first pharmacy-led vaccination centre but was also flooded this winter, for which they will receive an emergency ECB grant.

The First-Class Counties have been doing their bit with Edgbaston, Lord’s, Canterbury, Beckenham and the Bristol County Ground all involved.

“At one of the most testing times we have all faced, Gloucestershire Cricket has been proud to partner with Gloucester Road Medical Centre to offer our facilities for vaccinations to those in our local community,” said Will Brown, Gloucestershire Cricket CEO.

“Members of Gloucestershire’s own staff have volunteered to help assist in the vaccination process on site, and we will continue to do everything we can to help in the weeks and months to come.”





# PLAN EARLY, DECIDE LATE

That was the mantra underpinning the remarkable collaborative effort across the whole of the game that enabled cricket to return in 2020 from a position of perilous uncertainty

The aim was clear: cricket had to return. And return it did – at international level, for men and then women; at domestic level with reimagined, innovative schedules and new trophies; and also at recreational level across England and Wales.

Unprecedented times called for unprecedented action: from constant communication with Government, to the monumental science and medical effort in assessing risk and designing biosecure environments with no template, to the events teams making those bubbles reality and allowing cricket to take place, albeit behind closed doors (BCD). The response was led by CEO Tom Harrison and Chief Operating Officer David Mahoney, and saw teams from across the organisation and the wider network going above and beyond.

The framework for the ECB's response to the pandemic was set from the start by Harrison and was based around three priorities – keeping people safe, protecting the financial health of the game, and working in partnership with stakeholders at every level.

“Collaboration and communication were key to being able to stage so much cricket,” says Professor Nick Peirce, the ECB's Chief Medical Officer. “I've never seen so many teams across the ECB work so closely together, but also with DCMS, Public Health England and other sports.”

This sentiment is echoed by many across the organisation, including Steve Elworthy, the ECB's Director of Events and Special Projects. “It was a huge show of solidarity as a sport,” he says. “There was some incredible commitment by so many people – you can't put a price on that.”

## Understanding the science

At the outset, there was so much uncertainty. So little was known about COVID-19, Government strategy was evolving and there was no national testing programme at that point. Peirce's medical team worked 18-hour days as they sought to understand quickly the risks of Coronavirus transmission within a cricket context.

Although there was no national testing programme, it was obvious that before the first lockdown there had been 23 community-acquired COVID cases in the domestic game, among players. Full training had still been continuing and Peirce's team were able to show no further transmission had occurred within the game, either indoors or outdoors. Scientific analysis was also conducted and published, into the amount of times a cricket ball is touched in a game, how close and

how fleeting the contact from fielders, batsmen and bowlers might be. Indeed external collaborators and benefactors supported unique research into the survival of SARS2 virus on the surface of cricket balls. Peirce even spent a Friday evening watching cricket with scientists from SAGE, the Government advisory group, to convince them of the game's safety.

## Partner with Government

The challenge for Mahoney and Hannah Murphy, Head of Public Policy, was to navigate and interpret the ever-changing Government advice and restrictions to present a persuasive, cogent case for the return of cricket.

Mahoney explains: “There were three stages: steadying the ship; working out the priorities; and then working out what was and wasn't possible in this fast-moving environment. Then we were able to focus on four key areas: the return of live sport; the return of recreational cricket; the return of crowds; and helping the national effort. We treated Government as a partner from the beginning to try and build trust with them.”

There was constant dialogue with Government, Public Health England and local health authorities to provide clear evidence to show the game was safe and that risks could be mitigated. Mahoney describes the effort to restart recreational cricket as the hardest element.

“People probably couldn't see the amount of work that was going on behind the scenes during that period,” he explains. That work included collaboration with other team sports who had similar priorities and challenges.

The next stage of collaboration involved venues and the touring teams that were being asked to come and play in a country that had one of the highest infection rates in the world. If international cricket couldn't be staged, the game was in severe financial peril.

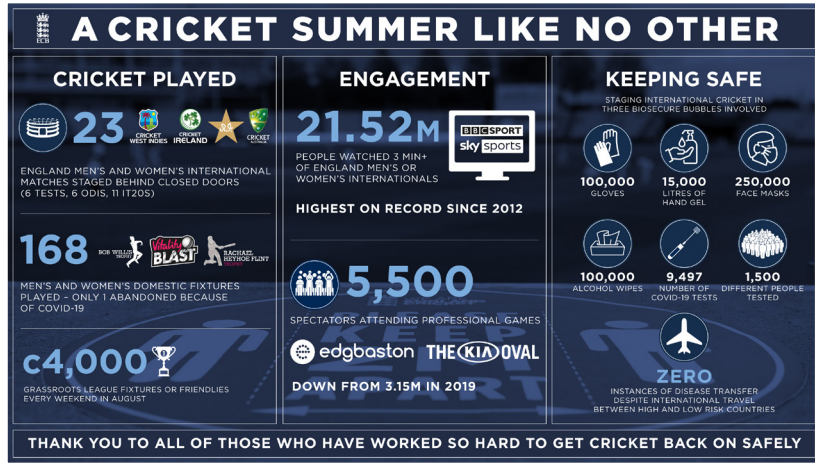
With no blueprint, biosecure bubbles were devised and delivered with outstanding success. The nature of these bubbles – and their presumed efficacy – had to be communicated to West Indies, Pakistan, Ireland and Australia. “We had a very open approach with the overseas teams,” says Peirce, “making sure they were aware of the state of play in the country, but that they also knew what we were doing, and so they would trust us.”

Elworthy describes the operational process as “unpacking an entire Test match from start to finish and putting it back together through a COVID lens”.

There was a huge amount of understanding and goodwill from host venues, not only the Ageas Bowl, Emirates Old Trafford, New Road, Worcester and the Incora County Ground, Derby, who, with their onsite accommodation, were chosen to stage the BCD internationals but also from the many venues that were originally scheduled to host matches.

Elworthy pays tribute to the efforts of Meena Botros, the ECB's Director of Legal and Integrity, and his team for their unstinting work to ensure that the board was contractually safe in all their venue relationships. “It was just non-stop,” Elworthy says. “The hours he and his team put in were amazing and Meena's work was hugely influential in getting the season on.”

It was an astonishing medical, logistical and sporting triumph. On 2 June, England Men's three-Test series against West Indies was announced. The Windies arrived a week later and on 8 July, the summer that almost never happened, got under way.



## GREATS OF THE GAME HONOURED

The immediate reaction of the First-Class Counties, faced with the prospect of a summer without cricket, was to work collaboratively and innovatively together, and with the ECB, to deliver meaningful cricket – across the men's and women's game – for players, staff and supporters.

The unity of the effort was as significant as the size of the challenge to deliver three competitions during a pandemic. A completely reimagined tournament and a brand-new tournament were held: the Bob Willis Trophy, honouring an England fast-bowling great, and the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy, that paid tribute to one of the great pioneers of women's cricket.

The staging of those tournaments, let alone their undoubted success, embodied the best of the First-Class County structure working together for the benefit of everyone associated with the county game.

Following a group stage, Essex and Somerset did battle in a five-day Lord's final for the Bob Willis Trophy. Essex took the title following a draw thanks to their first-innings lead that was built around 172 by Sir Alastair Cook. With the LV= Insurance County Championship's return this year, the preliminary stage – with three groups of six – has been retained leading to an additional divisional stage and then a Lord's final.

Notts Outlaws secured their second Vitality Blast title in four seasons with a comfortable victory over Surrey at Edgbaston, the now traditional home of Finals Day.

Southern Vipers claimed the inaugural Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy with victory over Northern Diamonds at Edgbaston. The name of the trophy was initially considered a one-off but it will continue and the 50-over competition has been joined by the new regional T20 competition.



# NINETY DAYS IN THE BUBBLE

After weeks of planning and preparation, it was time to execute. Here's what life was like locked down in a biosecure bubble

"Nobody stayed in their lane," says Aoife Murphy, Senior Broadcast and Media Operations Manager, of the exceptional team effort that helped to get cricket on again within the unique challenge of biosecure bubbles.

In theory, Murphy's role in 2020 was no different to any other year: liaising with broadcasters and other media, ensuring requirements were met and everyone was in their allocated spots.

Yet there was one important difference: around a hundred broadcast personnel would be part of the bubble too. "When it became clear the only way to get this done was in a biosecure environment they needed clarity and reassurance that this was actually safer than

the outside world," Murphy explains. "We had to bring them on the journey because we were all working it out as we went along."

Murphy moved into the Ageas Bowl with Jess Stapleton, Phil Williams and Matt Legg from Events on 13 June and left exactly 90 days later. "Coming from lockdown into the bubble wasn't a dramatic change," Murphy explains. "But it was a bit odd when the rest of the world started to open up. My normal season is on the road so it was actually quite refreshing, and grounding, to stay in one place. It sounds cliché, but you become quite a family. It felt like we were doing something special – we were world leaders."

Everyone had to muck in, whether it was setting up hand sanitisers or putting up signage. "It was probably the most collaborative environment I've worked in," says Murphy. "The medical team were incredible, the testers, the whole operation."

Phil Davies, who recently completed his role as Covid

compliance officer for Team England on the Sri Lanka and India overseas tours, together with Professor Nick Peirce devised the biosecure concept and medical plan for the summer.

It was then the remit of the events team to bring this concept to life on site and this was led by Phil Williams, Senior Events Presentation Manager. This was integral to making the biosecure bubble work efficiently. "The plan needed very little tweaking once we got on site," says Murphy, "which is testament to the hours and hours of preparation from all those who made this concept a reality."

When West Indies' Kemar Roach delivered the first ball of the international summer to Rory Burns, it was an understandably emotional moment for Murphy and her colleagues. "I won't lie, we all just burst out crying," she recalls. "We'd made it – we'd got a team into the country and cricket was underway. We owed it to the game – this is what we do."

## EVERYONE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Claire Dale, Director of People and Culture, reflects on how a turbulent year has shaped the future culture of the organisation



In common with many organisations, the pandemic forced us to embrace a more flexible approach to working. We came to recognise that working from home, or other spaces away from a central base, is much more achievable than we might have thought previously. Productivity certainly hasn't dropped. In fact, the opposite is true.

Last year was exceptionally difficult but I'm proud of the way we handled the restructure and the support we gave to people who were leaving the organisation. We're still on a journey but we have a long-term approach. We're aiming to become a leaner, more efficient organisation with an agile approach to work.

### Modern ways of working

Social distancing doesn't appear to be going away anytime soon, even as we come out of the pandemic, so we need to reduce our capacity in each space, whether that be at Lord's or elsewhere.

The workspaces we create will enable people to come together when required for the face-to-face contact that's so important when working in big groups. Knowing that remote working is eminently doable we are allowing people to flex their time in order to manage their work and life in a more rounded way. In essence, we need to adapt to and adopt modern ways of working.

### Managers as coaches

We want to foster a growth mindset that is open to self-reflection and learning, that is always questioning why something is done and whether it could be done differently. We want to view our managers as coaches to

maximise the performance of individuals, teams and the whole organisation.

### Mental wellbeing

For the past three years we've had Mental Health First Aiders who have partnered people within the organisation when they have needed extra help. They are now being retrained as Mental Health Champions, in partnership with Changing Minds, our psychologists that provide support for our England teams.

The role of HR has changed forever in the past year. The recognition that mental health, wellbeing and safety is increasingly important means that HR needs to be part of the decision-making process.

### Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Building diversity of thought and experience across the ECB and in the wider game is now more important than ever and we will practise inclusion and fairness across our full employee life cycle and beyond.

### Connecting our people to our strategy

We're continuing our work to consider how we can better connect the cricket side of ECB with other parts of the organisation. This feeds into a desire to ensure that each individual and each team in the organisation knows how they are having a direct impact on our core strategy of 'making cricket a game for everyone'.

Ultimately, we want to empower our people to make a difference by connecting communities and improving lives through cricket.

# AWARD-WINNING COMMUNICATIONS

Communications played a vital role in the ECB's response to the pandemic. Extensive and detailed plans were put in place, strategies that were recognised at the PR Week Corporate City & Public Affairs Awards with victory in the Best Crisis Comms around Covid category.

The comms emphasised that protecting the vulnerable and key workers was paramount. Public affairs activity included a high-profile Select Committee testimony backing return to play and the establishment of the behind-closed-doors working group, for which the

ECB secured representatives from three government departments and Public Health England.

Creative digital and broadcast content included England players reminding people about washing hands, staying home and being tested. The Together Through This Test campaign launched in May with an emotional film *The Wait*, narrated by Stephen Fry, showing how the sport was helping society. Together Through This Test generated more than 200 articles and *The Wait* had 622,000 views.

From February to June, the ECB's corporate reputation improved across the board: 10% more people thought the organisation was doing a good job at running the professional game, for example.

One member of the awards judging panel commented: "The team successfully managed to support the strategic objectives of the ECB whilst appearing sympathetic to the challenges created to wider society due to COVID-19. It's a difficult brief and the team have clearly delivered."







# RESILIENCE AND COMMITMENT

Both England Men's and Women's teams have had to operate in uniquely challenging environments over the past year with months at a time spent locked down in biosecure bubbles at home and abroad. Ashley Giles, Managing Director of England Men's Cricket, and Jonathan Finch, Director of England Women's Cricket, discuss lessons learned and how to prioritise mental health and wellbeing in the future

## What are your overall reflections on the past 12 months?

**JF:** Inevitably the pandemic heightened the levels of anxiety across the game. The way the players and staff dealt with that showed immense levels of adaptability and resourcefulness. There is no doubt the pandemic has created closer working relationships within the ECB and across the wider cricket network.

**AG:** That we've got some very good people working for us across the organisation. Players, coaches and support staff have shown exceptional resilience and commitment throughout this time. They've all had to operate in very tough circumstances with bubbles, quarantine and long periods away from home and family.

## How has your relationship with the counties and regions changed during the pandemic?

**AG:** The support from the counties has been brilliant. We've had to operate with larger squads of players and realised that we've got a really good group of exciting young cricketers to pick from. We've also had

to deploy more coaches and support personnel which, again, showed what talent there is in our network. It's great for us to see different people and it freshens up the environment.

**JF:** The roll-out of the Women's Elite Domestic Structure will be a game changer for women's cricket and having a strong network of Regional Directors, Head Coaches and support staff focusing on the women's game was fundamental in providing players an opportunity to prepare for the West Indies series.

## What has a year of bubble life and quarantining taught you about mental health and wellbeing?

**AG:** People's circumstances change quickly. We've seen guys be totally fine one week and then a few days later, it's too much for them. We can't expect our people – whether playing or management personnel – to be in those bubbles for such long periods. Our strategic priorities in 2021 are the T20 World Cup and the Ashes and if we don't look after our players our concern is we won't get to those events with a fit team, physically or mentally.

**JF:** It has strengthened our commitment in ensuring that the welfare and wellbeing of players and staff is at the forefront of our planning. It has amplified the importance of having bespoke support plans for everyone, while highlighting the need to provide opportunities to talk openly and honestly without fear of judgement – which is often difficult in high-pressured, high-performance environments.

## Based on those lessons, what measures can enhance wellbeing?

**AG:** We've got much greater clinical psychology support than we've ever had before, which is partly on the ground but also a 24/7 support on the phone or video link. Players and staff aren't always comfortable talking to people they work with or play with so it's important to me that we offer that support. But I'm looking at increasing that resource further with the possibility of an individual, or a managed service company, leading in that area full time. We've never had that before.

**JF:** We constantly review the work of our Wellbeing Group and ensure we offer effective support to players and staff. We are working closely with the PCA to ensure player support is available across the Regional Structure as well as within the England Women's environment.



Natalie Sciver in action for England Women against New Zealand in March and (far left) England Men celebrate an Australian wicket in the Royal London ODI series last September

# RISE AGAIN



James Nordin (left) and Dan Reynaldo take on the Taverners

Disability cricket was hit harder than most in 2020 but there is plenty to look forward to in the coming months

It's mostly a case of looking forward rather than back for disability cricket after a challenging year impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Blind Ashes, originally scheduled for Worcester last August, was postponed while the Deaf Cricket T20 World Cup, scheduled for the UAE in November 2020, was delayed until 2022.

No wonder that the fixture at Arundel in late August when an England mixed disability side took on the Duke of Norfolk's XI felt like such a release. "It was just good to see lads playing in England shirts again," says Ian Martin, the ECB's Head of Disability Cricket. "The cricket was good and from a mental health perspective it was just great to get everybody away from the four walls of home and into a big green space." The Duke's XI won a nail-biter by eight runs.

A few weeks later, the physical disability side took on the Lord's Taverners at Tring Park CC in Hertfordshire.

The Taverners, who are long-time supporters of disability cricket, recently extended their involvement with a £2m partnership with ECB that will enable the Super 1s disability cricket programme to be launched in every county.

Also coming this summer is a pilot tournament, the Disability Premier League, which is bringing the country's best players together in four teams – mixed disability, physical disability, learning disability and deaf – competing in the T20 format.

"The uniqueness of this is the mix of disabilities and where we position it in the pathway," says Martin. The idea is that this tournament gives aspiring England players properly competitive cricket that doesn't rely on international opposition, as the Lions and Young Lions programme does currently. "It would be nice to think this could lead towards some form of professional disability cricket down the line," says Martin. "Hopefully we can get overseas players involved as well."

**(See pages 20-21 for more on the ECB's Disability Cricket Champion Club programme)**





# GETTING THROUGH THE CRISIS

Even with substantial ECB support, counties and recreational clubs have been forced to dig deeper than ever through the toughest of years

When COVID-19 struck and lockdown began, cricket clubs up and down the country were plunged into uncertainty. Long-term planning was now a luxury – getting through the immediate crisis was what mattered.

With a question mark over when – and if – cricket would be able to resume, and other streams of income such as hospitality and conferencing also shut off, urgent support was needed. At the end of March 2020, the ECB stepped in with an initial funding package of £61m for all levels of the game.

This included around £40m made available by the early release of three months' county partnership distributions and the immediate availability of two years' distribution of money for facilities maintenance. In June, a further support package of £37.5m was made available to First-Class Counties and County Cricket Boards.

## Derby does its bit

Resilience is a key attribute in county cricket – on and off the field – and never was that better demonstrated than last summer. Derbyshire, in their 150th anniversary year, did not play a match inside the county boundaries but the club played a crucial role in allowing international cricket to take place.

With a hotel on site, the Incora County Ground provided a biosecure training base for the Pakistan and Australia men's squads and a venue for the England-West Indies Women's Vitality IT20 series in September. "It was important to give the club a bit of financial upside, but the big thing for us was to do what we could to safeguard the whole game," said chief executive Ryan Duckett.

## Networking together

Given the initial uncertainty about whether there would be any domestic cricket played at all in 2020, that the Bob Willis Trophy and the Vitality Blast took place without a serious COVID-related incident owed much to the tireless work of the ECB Facilities Team – and the whole network working together.

The Facilities Team provided strategic frameworks

and operational support to the First-Class Counties, translated Government guidance and hosted weekly video meetings with operations leads at the clubs. Providing PPE, hygiene products and signage was also part of the Team's remit.

Dan Cherry, Head of Operations for Glamorgan, said: "During a very difficult time for cricket and venues as a whole we found the support delivered by the ECB Facilities Team to be truly outstanding. The experience and knowledge of the team was a great comfort during a time of uncertainty."

The financial distress that the county game is suffering is real and prolonged, with counties losing millions of pounds in revenue. As an indicator of how much counties generate income outside cricket, Somerset estimated that the closure of their conference and events business cost them £75,000 a month.

## Grassroots of recovery

For the recreational game, relief came with the launch of the Emergency Loan Scheme and the Return To Cricket Grant Scheme in April.

In all, £2.47m was distributed in Return to Cricket grants to 1,024 clubs and leagues, while £285,000 was paid in emergency loans to 42 clubs and leagues.

But bare statistics do not convey the whole picture. A glance behind the numbers reveals stories from the heartbeat of the game. The Essex Cricket Board – already working successfully in East London to grow the South Asian Action Plan – gave funds to ensure that clubs and competitions were able to play in 2020.

Jawar Ali of the Grassroots Trust said: "We helped facilitate a new league and helped get new clubs playing structured cricket for the first time. Most of the teams were from ethnic minority backgrounds with people who work in the evening on Saturday and Sunday. We provided access to the pitches from 10.30am which meant the participants were able to go back to work. I would like to thank Essex Cricket and the ECB on making the summer of 2020 a memorable one for all the right reasons."

In rural Lincolnshire, Revesby CC benefited from the ECB Facilities Team's work with the county's cricket board. "The grant payment helped enormously with covering the costs of ground maintenance for the truncated two-month 2020 season," said Revesby chairman Simon May.

There was an instant recognition that provision of council-owned recreational facilities would prove problematic during the pandemic. Working with the Grounds Management Association and sharing information with Sport England, ECB ensured that a large number of local authority cricket grounds were able to stage matches in a COVID-safe environment.

Despite the time of unprecedented crisis, the Facilities Team were able to carry on with some of the projects which had been at the core of their aims before the coronavirus changed the landscape. Burslem CC in the Potteries took out a £22,000 interest-free loan to help complete the work on an extension to their changing-rooms.

Their ambition was to create a modern and inclusive facility to support their community focus. "We had a massive response on social media to the project with close to 5,000 views of our Twitter posts," said Paul Johnson, the club chairman. The club now plans to launch a programme to help children from the poorest areas use their facilities during the school holidays.

The Facilities Team were also involved in giving assistance to fight proposed planning developments that threatened cricket grounds.



## SUPPORT PACKAGE

# 1,490

Queries resolved by the ECB Facilities Team's special helpdesk for clubs

# £61m

Initial financial support package announced by ECB in March, followed by second release of £35.7m in June

# 3,200

PPE packs distributed to clubs

# £2.75m

Distributed by ECB in Return to Cricket Grants and Emergency Loans

# 35

Proposed local developments that threatened cricket that were successfully fought







Joe Root talks to a robot; Natalie Sciver after the most watched women's match in the UK and (right) Mark Wood in Sky's Player Zone



# PURE ESCAPISM

A thrilling summer of cricket saw bumper audiences tune in to watch behind-closed-doors cricket

Stadia may have been deserted as sport was forced behind closed doors, but record numbers tuned in on TV, radio or online as England's cricketers provided a welcome distraction from lockdown.

Overall, 21.5m people watched Sky's and BBC's broadcast coverage of England cricket – a 33% like-for-like increase on the Ashes year of 2019. More than 11m tuned in having not watched any cricket the previous year.

Sky saw its highest audiences for a Test summer ever, with a peak audience of 1.8m tuning in for day four of the first Test against Pakistan. Meanwhile the return of live cricket to BBC TV saw England Women's third

Vitality IT20 against West Indies – shown on both Sky and BBC – become the most watched women's cricket match ever in this country, overtaking the home ICC Women's World Cup Final of 2017 at Lord's. The live broadcast averaged 500,000 viewers and reached over 2m people.

It marked a successful first year of the ECB's new distribution model, which seeks to balance audience reach and revenue in order to support, nurture and grow the game at all levels. This year it will also see every match of The Hundred being shown live on Sky, with the BBC showing ten men's matches live as well as the opening women's fixture and final.

With fans increasingly keeping on top of the action on phones or online as well, digital access is a key part of the model. Our own ECB England Cricket YouTube channel alone saw 21.6m UK video views of clips and highlights in 2020. Across all our channels, we recorded 1.25bn views, with 16.5m followers/subscribers.

Behind-closed-doors matches also presented broadcasters with an opportunity to innovate. "Thanks Big Brother ... day one ... out," was how England Men's fast bowler Mark Wood, with characteristically mischievous humour, signed off an interview in Sky's brand new Player Zone at the Ageas Bowl last summer.

From the outside, the Player Zone was an unprepossessing marquee but inside a tardis-like remote-access TV set for biosecure player interviews and insight, groundbreakingly conducted during the hours of play.

As well as Player Zone, additional 'ambience' from stump mics and a confected 'Lord's hum', there was Batcam Drive, a remote-controlled buggy with a mounted camera to enable interviews to be conducted from the pre-match toss in a complete COVID-safe way. Players became used to being interviewed at a distance by a human or indeed simply speaking to a robot.



HOW FANS DEVOURED THE GAME IN THEIR MILLIONS

## 21.5m

Individuals reached by broadcast coverage of England men's and women's cricket, a 33% like-for-like increase on 2019

## 2.9m

More female viewers in 2020 than 2019

## 111.5m

Hours of live Test action watched with Sky's hitting its highest Test audience, with a peak of 1.8m for day four of the first Test v Pakistan

## 11.4m

People tuned in having not watched any cricket in 2019

## 1.25bn

Views recorded across ECB channels, with 16.5m followers/subscribers. Fans can access cricket via a wide range of routes including on their phone, iPlayer, YouTube, Facebook. The ECB's England Cricket YouTube channel alone saw 21.6m UK video views of clips and highlights in 2020.



Middlesex v Surrey in the LV= County Championship at a behind-closed-doors Lord's gets the full broadcast treatment

# STREAMING AHEAD

With members and supporters shut out from First-Class County grounds, newly-enhanced live streaming services gave them a way of following all the action. It's an innovation which promises to benefit the connection between the counties and supporters into the future.

The county streaming service has come a long way in a short time. Nottinghamshire were the pioneers in 2014 with footage from two fixed cameras, used by the team analyst. Surrey developed a multi-camera offering and Somerset trialled drone footage.

There has been a significant step up in quality and consistency. The ECB is introducing further enhancements for 2021 with live coverage

available on the ECB app for the first time and the ECB website housing a hub which provides a one-stop-shop for fans to find the live stream for every county match. Live streaming can also be accompanied by the ball-by-ball BBC commentary, following the ECB's new four-year deal with the Corporation.

Somerset are one of a number of counties using their own presenters and pundits this summer to give the coverage an even greater feel of the full televised broadcast.

The developments all aim to ensure fans can stay more closely connected with their county and women's regional team than ever before.



# THE REVOLUTION WILL BE DIGITISED

## ECB's ground-breaking partnership with Microsoft is set to deliver lasting benefits at every level of the game

When Satya Nadella, the Hyderabad-born CEO of Microsoft, decided he wanted to create a cricket pitch at his company's Seattle HQ, he asked his LinkedIn community for advice. The ECB reached out and on Tom Harrison's next media rights visit to the west coast of America, the seeds of an unusual partnership were sown.

The aim of the ECB's partnership with Microsoft is to use technology to deliver long-lasting benefits, while bringing the purpose and mission of both organisations to life. The work is initially focused on three areas: Cricket Communities, High Performance and Cultural Transformation.

Digital skills training is set to be provided to grassroots cricket communities over the coming years, which will contribute to Microsoft's 'Get On 2021' campaign, designed to help 1.5 million people build careers in technology over the next five years. "Microsoft are helping us to think on a scale that English cricket frankly is not used to," says Harrison.

Through the partnership it is hoped to provide digital skills training to thousands of people across the cricket network in 2021, ultimately reaching 100,000 people by 2025. This will give opportunities to people across cricket, from volunteers to young participants, to develop new potentially life-changing skills, and for clubs to accelerate their own digital transformation.

The ECB will work with Microsoft to explore how artificial intelligence, real-time data and analytics can inform the performance of England's national teams. The partnership is also set to investigate how technology can help to unearth the next generation of elite cricketers and engage more diverse talent across the whole game.

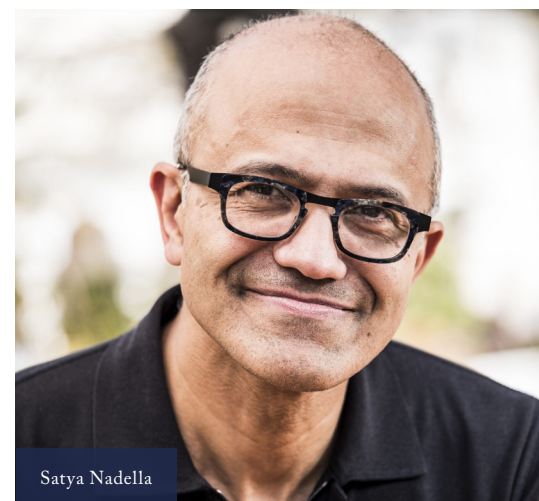
The nature of the partnership – based around the two organisations' shared purpose of empowering people, connecting communities and improving lives – makes it a ground-breaking arrangement.

As well as supporting delivery of the ECB's strategic plan 'Inspiring Generations' to grow cricket, it aligns with Microsoft's mission to empower every person and every

organisation on the planet to achieve more.

"This is genuinely a two-way partnership and different to any sports partnership that I've come across," says Derrick McCourt, General Manager of Microsoft UK's Customer Success Unit. "The communities that typically don't take part in cricket and are real targets for Tom and the team are very similar to the communities we're trying to reach in terms of digital inclusion."

"The digital transformation of our business is absolutely critical," says Harrison. "We want to become the first sport in the UK to fully embrace the digital opportunity and this partnership captures all of the intent behind that ambition."



Satya Nadella



Derrick McCourt

# REVIVE AND THRIVE

## #Funds4Runs is helping some of the most disadvantaged cricket communities rebuild after the pandemic

Stoke Newington CC sits in the second most deprived local authority area (Hackney) in England with green spaces at a premium. Yet the appetite for cricket is intense, particularly from women and girls.

The club was an early recipient of a grant (almost £3,000) from the #Funds4Runs initiative, launched by the ECB and LV= General Insurance, that has a £1m investment fund to help the grassroots cricket community recover and rebuild after COVID-19.

Hollie Summerfield, the lead women and girls coach at Stoke Newington CC, explains the benefits: "The grant is going to fund a completely free women and secondary age girls' summer programme. It's now possible for those who wouldn't be able to afford it otherwise to get involved and play cricket – a lot of the mums who play often have to choose between playing themselves or their children playing but this funding allows them both to be there which is cool!"

Stoke Newington's summer offering will include weekly women's outreach sessions at Hackney Marshes to coincide with junior training sessions so mums can join in while their children are busy with their own practice; weekly social women's softball sessions; weekly sessions for secondary-age girls; and friendly/festival-style matches (hardball and softball). All equipment is provided.

More information about #Funds4Runs can be found at [ecb.co.uk/funds4runs](https://ecb.co.uk/funds4runs) and [lv.com/gi/cricket](https://lv.com/gi/cricket).



England pace bowler Mark Wood launches #Funds4Runs at his hometown club in Ashington; (below) Stoke Newington's women celebrate a victory



## SCREEN TEST

### Unique tie-up with the BFI can boost clubs' digital engagement and online presence

Another exciting element of LV='s #Funds4Runs initiative is the opportunity being given to five aspiring filmmakers from around the nation's network of cricket clubs thanks to the ECB's partnership with the British Film Institute (BFI).

The successful applicants (selected in late April) are taking part in a bespoke 15-week online course – First Run – on filmmaking and production in sport led by the BFI, designed exclusively for and with the ECB.

The BFI, the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image, is a cultural charity that wants to help people from other professions and communities engage with the power of the moving image as a tool for effective communication.



England Women's player Sophia Dunkley says: "Bringing the sport to life through the power of film and digital content is crucial to getting more people into the game and promoting what clubs are all about."



Sophia Dunkley



# UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTHS, MEANINGFUL ACTIONS

The ECB has committed to a number of changes to tackle discrimination and increase diversity and inclusion across the whole game

It was the start to a Test series like no other. Ahead of the first #raisethebat Test between England and West Indies at the Ageas Bowl, Michael Holding, West Indies legend and Sky Sports commentator, and former England player Ebony Rainford-Brent spoke emotionally about their experiences of racism as they called for meaningful change in society in the wake of the killing of George Floyd in the US and amid global Black Lives Matter protests.

Holding's passionate advocacy and the deeply personal reflections of Rainford-Brent reached inside cricket's heart. Others spoke out too. CEO Tom Harrison spoke for many when he talked of the game having to "confront some uncomfortable truths" about the experiences of some people from Black or Asian backgrounds in cricket.

While important steps have been taken to make the game more inclusive in recent years – including the South Asian Action Plan, Women's and Girl's Action Plan and County Governance Framework – the ECB has been clear that more needs to be done, and committed to a number of significant actions to drive change across the game.

This year will see the launch of an Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket, chaired by Cindy Butts, who has extensive experience in senior roles spanning governance, inclusion and equity across the justice and policing sectors and Government. Its role will be to independently gather and assess the evidence of inequalities and discrimination of different forms within cricket and identify the actions needed to tackle these issues.

Ahead of the 2021 season, the ECB also launched a new Anti-Discrimination Code, which will be enforced by all cricket organisations operating under the ECB's jurisdiction, enabling discriminatory behaviour to be sanctioned through disciplinary processes.



The need for greater diversity in coaching led to the launch of a bursary programme for future coaches from under-represented groups. The ECB has also provided financial support to aid the expansion of the ACE Programme providing opportunities for young Black cricketers.

The ECB has collaborated with the Professional Cricketers' Association (PCA) on the launch of an anti-racism education programme following an extensive consultation with professional players. The programme had already been rolled out to nearly 1,000 people by April.

The ECB is also re-evaluating the way it attracts, develops and performance manages its match officials, in order to increase the diversity of our officiating,

inspire the next generation of umpires and match referees and ensure a culture of inclusivity and fairness throughout.

Work also continues with the First-Class Counties and County Cricket Boards to help them deliver on the commitments made in the latest County Partnership Agreement (CPA) that require 30% female representation at board level and targets for ethnic diversity that reflect each club's local community and population demographics.

The ECB remains absolutely committed in its resolve to stamp out any form of discrimination and to make the game more inclusive and diverse, and will continue to listen and take the action necessary to ensure cricket really is a game for everyone.

## OPPORTUNITY AND ACCESSIBILITY



ECB bursaries have made elite coaching qualifications more attractive and achievable for people of all backgrounds

"Ten years ago, I would never have thought of trying Level 4," says Dean Headley, former England pace bowler and now an experienced coach.

Thanks to an ECB coaching bursary, Headley, 51, has been able to pursue a Level 4 coaching qualification, the highest in the sport that potentially unlocks the door to some of the top jobs in the professional game. The scheme, which launched in 2020, made awards to ten Black coaches last year and also provided funding to the National Asian Cricket Council for the development of coaches of South Asian origin.

One of the barriers to entry to the elite coaching programmes has been the academic nature of the course, putting off someone like Headley who did not go to university. But the shift away from academia and the embracing of blended (online) learning has had the dual effect of increasing accessibility and reducing cost. Previously, even to take a Level 2 coaching

course could take six to eight months with up to five days spent away from home and a cost of £300-£700. Coaching qualifications now start from as little as £40 to be a support coach and £150 for a Foundation 1 which is a blended course including two days face to face and enables you to coach alone and unsupervised.

Increasing the diversity of coaching courses has been a focus for ECB Head of Coach Development John Neal since joining in 2017. On the most recent Specialist (Level 4) course, 28% were from ethnically diverse communities and 21% on the Advanced (Level 3) course. Bursaries have now been introduced for the foundation courses (Levels 1 and 2) with 1,000 awards already being made available via the counties.

Headley is open about his ambitions but phlegmatic too. "I want to work in professional cricket but, as I say to the kids I coach, at the end of the day the sport has to pick you," he says. "I'm 51 years of age, I'd like to think that a chance wouldn't be taken away from me because of the colour of my skin. If somebody says I'm not good enough to be there, that's OK by me."

Neal's summary is: "Opportunity but without positive discrimination because then it's tokenism."

### KEY ACTIONS TO MAKE CRICKET A GAME FOR EVERYONE

**Establishment of Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket, chaired by Cindy Butts**

**New Anti-Discrimination Code launched**

**Collaborated with PCA on an anti-racism education programme**

**Coaching bursary programme for under-represented groups: 10 bursaries awarded on the advanced and specialist coaching courses and 1,000 made available on foundation courses**

**Funding ACE Programme expansion in Birmingham**



## ACE EXPANSION

An ECB grant has allowed the ACE Programme to expand into Birmingham following its successful London launch in 2020.

The African-Caribbean Engagement Programme was set up by Surrey CCC and is chaired by Ebony Rainford-Brent, aiming to address a 75% decline in cricket participation by members of the Black community.

ACE is now established as an independent charity and received £540,000 in funding from Sport England and a £25,000 grant from the ECB that has allowed a programme to be launched in Birmingham in 2021. This is being delivered in association with Warwickshire CCC.

Eaton Gordon, Warwickshire Cricket Board community development manager, said: "We're very excited to bring the ACE programme to Birmingham, which we believe can make a huge difference in reinvigorating cricket within the city's large African Caribbean community."





## South Asian women continue to be drawn to the Dream Big volunteering campaign as it kicks off another ambitious summer

The ECB's Dream Big Desi Women campaign entered its third summer with renewed vigour after continuing to expand and inspire through 2020 despite the pandemic.

Dream Big launched in 2019 across eight urban centres – Birmingham, Bradford, Leeds, Leicester, London (two), Manchester and Nottingham – with the aim of inspiring 2,000 South Asian women to take up volunteering roles in cricket.

"There are a lot of cultural barriers to South Asian women volunteering," explains Shruti Saujani, who heads up the ECB's cities and volunteer programme. "But our team mantra is 'change the world a little bit' and I'd like to think we do that."

In the first year of Dream Big, 549 female volunteers signed up and despite all the challenges of the

pandemic, dozens more joined in 2020 with another nine centres added to the programme.

"We managed to keep the momentum going with a range of online activities," says Saujani. "Chai and Chat was a monthly opportunity for women to come together on Zoom. We had guest speakers, quizzes, yoga classes, Bhangra dance sessions and there were listening circles on a local level.

"We also work closely with Mental Health First Aid England and it's one of my proudest aspects of this campaign that a number of our activators have trained as Mental Health First Aiders. Mental health is a particularly sensitive area in South Asian communities that doesn't get talked about enough."

Dream Big relaunched at the end of April 2021 with the BBC Asian Network's Harpz Kaur on board as an ambassador and role model.

While the focus is on inspiring women to get involved, Saujani has learned the importance of "taking the family on the journey". The ECB is the first national

sporting governing body to introduce a 'modest apparel kit', which includes hijabs, longer t-shirts and looser jogging bottoms.

Saujani continues: "We're seeing women, many of whom have never worn westernised clothes, take such pride in wearing the All Stars activator kit – it's an association with cricket on a national scale. We package it up so it's like receiving a gift."

The emphasis is on fun, enjoyment and engagement. Cric-kitty Parties had food, games and prizes. "It was amazing to see – this was really growing the love for the game," says Saujani. "We want to get across the idea that 'if I can do it, you can do it'. It doesn't matter who you are, what you do or where you're from, you can be a part of our programme."

## "WE WANT TO GET ACROSS THE IDEA THAT 'IF I CAN DO IT, YOU CAN DO IT'"

# CRICKET SHAPES MY FUTURE

Faizah Hashmi is a 19-year-old student from Birmingham whose involvement with Dream Big has reaped huge personal benefits

I first got involved with cricket when coaches from Kings Heath CC came to our primary school. My family were very supportive and cricket is everything to me but my relationship with the game wasn't always as healthy as it is now.

I have suffered with mental health issues including anorexia, where I compulsively over-exercised my way through gyms, team sports and at home. Eventually, with proper support, help and hospital admissions I can now play with fun, laughter and good friends. I am still very competitive, but cricket doesn't hinder my future, it shapes it.

The Dream Big Desi Women project seemed so inviting and a great community to get involved in. All the women were encouraging and engaging, so it really was the first

place to be if you wanted to feel good.

My coach Asma has been the most supportive, strong woman from the day I met her. She has never stopped encouraging me and I couldn't be more grateful that someone in this project could care so much about every person within it.

I like to dream big! So maybe one day I hope to be semi-pro or professional, but taking my health into consideration, I would love to coach younger players.

I hope cricket continues growing for women in big and small communities. So far, it has been a long but beautiful journey and I am so grateful to my family, friends and especially Asma who have not stopped supporting me.



# INCLUSION IN ACTION

The Disability Cricket Champion Club programme is changing the face of cricket clubs up and down the country



"If 20% of society has a disability then where are they in our cricket landscape?" asks Edgar Herridge, the ECB's National Disabilities Manager. "This programme offers more opportunity but it also does something wider for social inclusion and brings inclusive practice to the fore."

The Disability Cricket Champion Club Programme is opening up clubs to people with disabilities like never before. Last year's intended launch had to be swiftly curtailed because of COVID but the re-launch in February handsomely made up for lost time with almost 100 clubs signed up before the end of April.

"We're fortunate to have disability cricket activity all over the country but until now only about 5% is carried out within clubs," explains Herridge. "We know they're fantastic settings to encourage that migration from a SEND school or community group through the gates of their local cricket club."

The Champion Club programme supports clubs with

guidance, resources and equipment, enabling them to welcome individuals with additional needs and varying abilities to play, follow, officiate and volunteer.

One such club is Walton-on-Thames CC which, with the help of the Surrey Cricket Foundation, has been able to deliver year-round activities for more than two years.

"It's a joint effort," says Clive Duke from the club. "We have the facilities but we wouldn't be able to do all the coaching."

Which is where Gavin Reynolds, Surrey's participation manager for disabilities comes in. He says: "You just need one or two people from within your club to drive things forward to be that main point of contact working with your local county board, looking to do taster sessions in local areas, schools, colleges and community groups. To see so many people get involved in the fun and see the enjoyment on their faces as they come and get involved in cricket is fantastic."

Herridge concludes: "This first group of Champion Clubs are just the start. Over the next four years the ECB plans to support hundreds more clubs to develop disability cricket offers, become advocates of inclusion and help ensure that club cricket is for all."





# GROWTH AMBITION

The women's game emerged from a turbulent year with much achieved against the odds and with mouth-watering opportunities on the horizon

The contrast was stark. On 8 March 2020, 86,174 packed out the Melbourne Cricket Ground for the final of the ICC T20 Women's World Cup. It was a high water mark for the women's game – Australia's superstar Ellyse Perry wasn't on the field but American singer Katy Perry was, sprinkling enough stardust for everyone.

Clare Connor, ECB's Managing Director of Women's Cricket, was there too, awestruck by the spectacle. But a fortnight later the UK was in national lockdown and the women's game was confronting some uncomfortable realities. Connor explains: "We were looking down the barrel of no recreational cricket, no launch of the new women's regional structure, no contracts for domestic female players, no international women's cricket and no Hundred. It looked bleak, especially given that we had just launched the Transforming Women's and Girls' Cricket action plan at the end of 2019."

And yet, apart from The Hundred, which launches this summer with men and women sharing the stage, women's cricket delivered on many of its goals for 2020.

"My overall reflections would be a real sense of pride in colleagues, and the game for what we did achieve," says Connor. "The men's and women's games came together as a single domestic cricket taskforce which was really impressive."

The new women's regional structure was always due to kick off in 2020, but the pandemic threw that into question. In the end, the 50-over competition did take place. Initially termed the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy as a one-off, the name has now stuck and this year the 50-over competition will be joined by the new regional T20 competition. The eight new regional teams competed in the tournament which was won by Southern Vipers in a victory over Northern Diamonds at Edgbaston in late September.

"There was something special about the summer ending on a high like that with a nod to the past," says Connor. "We have such ambitions for the future and Rachael was one of the great pioneers. For young female players who are either now on domestic contracts or aspiring to be, it's important to keep those connections understood, lived and celebrated."

Also in September was Women's Big Cricket Month. "It received unbelievable engagement," says Connor, "with more than 400 different events taking place across the recreational game."

In December, 41 female players signed full-time domestic contracts (25 had already signed regional



Clare Connor: "pride in what we were able to achieve"



retainers in June) for the first time with all eight regional teams having their own coaching and science and medicine infrastructures.

Regarding England Women's late-summer T20 series against West Indies, Connor says: "The board made the same financial commitment as they had for the international men's game – that you can't have a summer without international women's cricket."

"At a time when most women's sports seemed to be silent and invisible, it was so important that we launched our new regional domestic structure culminating with a final on Sky, and then a fully televised series against West Indies as well. We couldn't do everything, but I'm really pleased with the amount we did."

Pandemic permitting, England Women now brace themselves for a testing home summer against India and New Zealand followed by the Ashes and the ICC Women's World Cup in New Zealand. And before that they will tour Pakistan for the first time. "This is an historic trip and therefore more than just a cricket tour for us," says Connor. The two T20 matches will be double headers with England Men, followed by three ODIs in Karachi.

Those T20 matches will form part of England Women's build-up to their participation in the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. "It's hard to put into words what that could mean for our growth ambitions," says Connor. "It's eight consecutive days of women's cricket on free-to-air television. People who watch multi-sport games don't necessarily watch those sports during the year so there's a real chance to reach new fans, new players, more women and girls. It's a wonderful opportunity to be part of a multi-sport games that could be a step towards the Olympics, which would be of huge holistic benefit to the game."



“CRICKET'S MY SOLE FOCUS NOW – AND I'M LOVING EVERY SECOND”

**Teenage pace bowler Issy Wong explains what it means to be one of the first group of female domestic fully professional cricketers**

I first wanted to be an astronaut but I moved on from that quite quickly. When I started watching sport, I wanted to play for England whether in football, hockey or cricket. I've never really moved on from that dream.

It's quite weird to think of myself as a professional cricketer. It was on my 18th birthday last May that Laura MacLeod, director of West Midlands Cricket, phoned to offer me a regional retainer for Central Sparks. I don't think she realised it was my birthday so we had a really good chat and then I had breakfast – it was a pretty good start to the day!

Over the winter, I've seen the real benefits of the new regional system and the professional structure. We're all just so grateful for the investment that's

been made in us, especially during COVID, to have people who are taking the time to grow the women's game and make sure we have access to the gym and training, indoors and out. We were training three or four times a week over the winter which most of us have never been able to do whether that's because of school, in my case, or having full-time jobs.

Having the time to develop my own skills has been great. But the biggest thing for me is being thrust into a professional environment straight out of school has helped me mature. This isn't a hobby any more, it's my job so I have to take responsibility.

I'm doing what I love and I'm able to do it now without compromising. I'm loving every second of it. In the past I've had to do my homework on the way to training but now I'm enjoying it being my sole focus. I can be properly present and 'in the lane' without other things on my mind.



# WORTH THE WAIT

Sanjay Patel, Managing Director of The Hundred, explains why English cricket's new world-class competition will be even bolder and better than planned

Having to postpone the launch of The Hundred last year was hugely disappointing. But by making the most of the extra time to develop our plans, I'm confident we'll launch a far stronger competition.

## Our four key objectives

These haven't changed – and they remind us why The Hundred is so important. Firstly, we want to broaden the audience for cricket and get more people to love our game. This will take time, it won't happen overnight. Second, it's about inspiring boys and girls to pick up a bat and ball. Thirdly, this is a world-class domestic competition that will help prepare our players to win on the global stage. And fourthly, The Hundred creates another revenue stream for the game and makes our game less reliant on international cricket.

## An equal platform

We've now been able to integrate the men's and women's competitions more closely. It feels like a game changer. The Hundred will play a significant role in the development of the women's game and kicking off the whole competition with a women's match on 21 July is an historic sporting moment – the first time it's happened in a competition like this. The Hundred can inspire ambitious young players and offers another opportunity for women to play cricket professionally. It raises the profile of women's cricket and will catapult it to a new and wider audience.

## Increasing participation

Extra time has allowed us to develop our participation plans. We want The Hundred to inspire people to pick up a bat and ball and are also providing more opportunities for children and their families to play. We've now launched Dynamos Cricket, our new programme for 8-11 year olds, and we'll be running it during the competition as well, while giving kids money-

can't-buy opportunities to get involved in The Hundred. Partners will be unveiling plans shortly to provide additional playing opportunities and our countdown cricket app will give people a fun way of scoring their own games whether it's in the park, on the beach or in the back garden.

## Bringing it to life on TV

We're working with broadcast partners more closely than ever. Sky will have a dedicated channel for the competition and all the women's games and nine men's games will be available on their free-to-view YouTube channel. They've got a brilliant, diverse, on-air line-up and the look and feel of their coverage will be different to anything they've done before. Meanwhile, we'll have the extra reach and exposure of ten men's games as well as up to eight women's fixtures – including the opening match and final - on the BBC, with the added bonus of those games being promoted on the BBC's Euros and Olympics coverage.

## Digital innovations

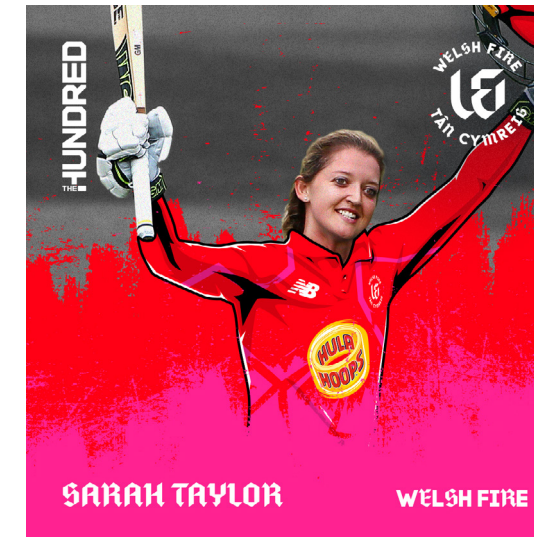
Whether grounds are full or we have reduced capacities, The Hundred will be a truly digital competition. People

will get their tickets through the app we'll be launching, and there will be lots of interactive content on there as well for people to enjoy. We want to bring the fans closer to the players and the action than ever before.

## The Hundred Rising

There's more to The Hundred than the action on the pitch. One of the most exciting days for me so far has been launching The Hundred Rising, an initiative that is providing opportunities for 100 people from diverse backgrounds to develop skills and experience in a professional working environment at the competition.

From hosting opportunities in-ground, to reporting as the journalist on a team, or assisting with content creation, these are new and interesting ways for up-and-coming talent to be part of shaping the future of cricket. Rising is just one way in which The Hundred is supporting the ECB's purpose of connecting communities and improving lives by inspiring people to discover and share their passion for the game. It is also a key element of delivering The Hundred's purpose – throwing cricket's doors open to everyone.



# ORIGINAL WIN

England bowler Kate Cross explains what being a part of The Hundred means to her and the women's game

The word I keep using is opportunity, and there's so much to be excited about. The Hundred is an amazing opportunity for female players and for the women's game. For us as players, it's a world-class competition in which to showcase our skills.

I'm hoping The Hundred can continue to change perceptions about women's cricket, building on the momentum that has been created in the domestic game. Some of the best players in the world are taking part but also top coaches too, like Australia's Matthew Mott, who's the most successful coach in the women's game right now.

In many ways, we are on a level with the men in terms of playing and training facilities – and crucially The Hundred puts us on the same platform in terms of visibility and profile. I'm also hoping there will be opportunities to work alongside the male players and coaches, and to develop a 'one team, two squads' feel to Manchester Originals.

I've always taken a lot of pride in representing the North West, and Manchester Originals are an extension of that for me. I love our kit and brand – they chime with Manchester's industrial history. We want to take some of those values of hard work and northern grit into The Hundred. Bring it on!



## WELCOME TO THE WORLD'S BEST

Both the men's and women's competitions have attracted some of the world's biggest names

The lure of The Hundred is irresistible. Of the many mouth-watering player announcements in recent months, the news of England great Sarah Taylor joining Welsh Fire raised more eyebrows than most.

Taylor, 31, retired from international cricket in 2019 but said of The Hundred: "The temptation to be part of it was too great to resist." She joins the likes of Australia's Ellyse Perry and Meg Lanning, South Africa's Marizanne Kapp and West Indies pair, Deandra Dottin and Stafanie Taylor, on a roll-call of top female talent.

In the draft for the men's competition, West Indies super-talented batter Nicholas Pooran (Manchester Originals) was the No1 overall pick while his fellow Trinidadian Kieron Pollard (Welsh Fire) was second. Australia's David Warner, a short-format legend, was drafted third by Southern Brave.





England and Wales Cricket Board  
Lord's Cricket Ground  
London NW8 8QZ

T / 020 7432 1200  
F / 020 7289 5619  
[ecb.co.uk](http://ecb.co.uk)

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