



# EVOLVING TOGETHER

WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL GAME STRUCTURE 2.0  
**TIER 1 CLUBS: INVITATION TO TENDER**

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# 1 FOREWORDS



**RICHARD GOULD**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ECB

The growth of women's and girls' cricket across England and Wales during the last four years has been incredible.

From thousands of girls picking up a bat and ball for the first time, through to England Women thriving and inspiring on the world stage, and The Hundred generating unprecedented levels of visibility and profile, plans laid out in our Transforming Women's and Girls' Cricket Action Plan (2020-2024) have come to life at pace and scale.

At the start of our next strategic cycle a powerful platform has therefore been laid from which the whole game can now really take-off.

Since 2020, through the advent of the women's Regional Model, we have seen significant progress in the professionalisation of women's domestic cricket. The eight women's Regional teams, and all involved, have done a fantastic job accelerating performance standards on the field to create an engine room of fresh talent to go on and excel for England – exactly as the Regional Model was designed to do.

Yet, through this delivery model we are only scratching the surface of the potential of the women's domestic game.

To continue moving forward, and to make cricket a gender-balanced sport – which is a core part of our wider collective mission – we need a change in the ownership model and governance structure underpinning the women's professional game.

This invitation to tender – which is being issued to all 18 First Class Counties (FCCs) and Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) – represents this next step. A step that will embed the ownership of our eight women's professional teams, driving accountability and elevating the status of women's domestic cricket, to enable it to go further, grow faster and reach its full potential.

As we know, the cricket landscape is changing rapidly, and over the course of the coming months the game will come together to make some big decisions. Within this, the outcome of this tender process, and the subsequent building of additional tiers of competition in an evolved, connected, women's domestic structure, will be critical to defining the future of the game we all love.

Richard

“**The outcome of this tender process will be critical to defining the future of the game we all love.**”



**BETH BARRETT-WILD**  
DIRECTOR OF WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL GAME, ECB

Just before I joined the organisation in 2014, the ECB had released a document entitled “Women's Cricket: A Sport Transformed”. Across the 15 pages through a series of case studies, interviews, and examples of targeted actions, it outlined the significant growth that had happened since the Women's Cricket Association merged with the ECB in 1998.

Since then, variations of the word “transform” have become a bit of a buzzword in women's cricket land. The 2017 ICC Women's Cricket World Cup final at Lord's was “transformative”, the launch of The Hundred has been “transformational”, and we even managed to include it in the title of our most recent strategy for the women's game the “Transforming Women's & Girls' Cricket Action Plan (2020-2024)”.

A lot of hype, but a catchphrase not without substance. The pace and nature of change over the last ten years, but especially the last five, has been rapid and substantial. The number of opportunities for girls and women to access the sport has never been greater, and the number of people following and falling in love with the women's game has never been higher.

I believe that the next chapter – starting with this invitation to tender – is less about the separate transformation of women's cricket, and more about evolving the whole game together.

This tender process is primarily about ownership, belonging and accountability. The transition of our existing eight women's Regional team entities into eight women's professional Clubs, each owned,

governed, and operated by an individual FCC / MCC. An action that will embed the foundations laid since the Regional Model was launched in 2020 and enable the women's game and players to thrive within the established cricket ecosystem.

It's also about opportunity.

A moment for the game to come together to elevate women's cricket to the next level, a level which the weight of opportunity has become too heavy for the current Regional Model to maximise at full potential. A generational opportunity for FCCs / MCC to reimagine what their cricket club “looks and feels like”. But above all, an opportunity for us to write the next chapter together and evolve the whole game into the sport we want it to be: one with an equal opportunity for men and women, boys and girls, to feel like cricket is a game for them.

Beth

“**The next chapter is less about the separate transformation of women's cricket, and more about evolving the whole game together.**”

# THE STATE OF PLAY

## 2.1

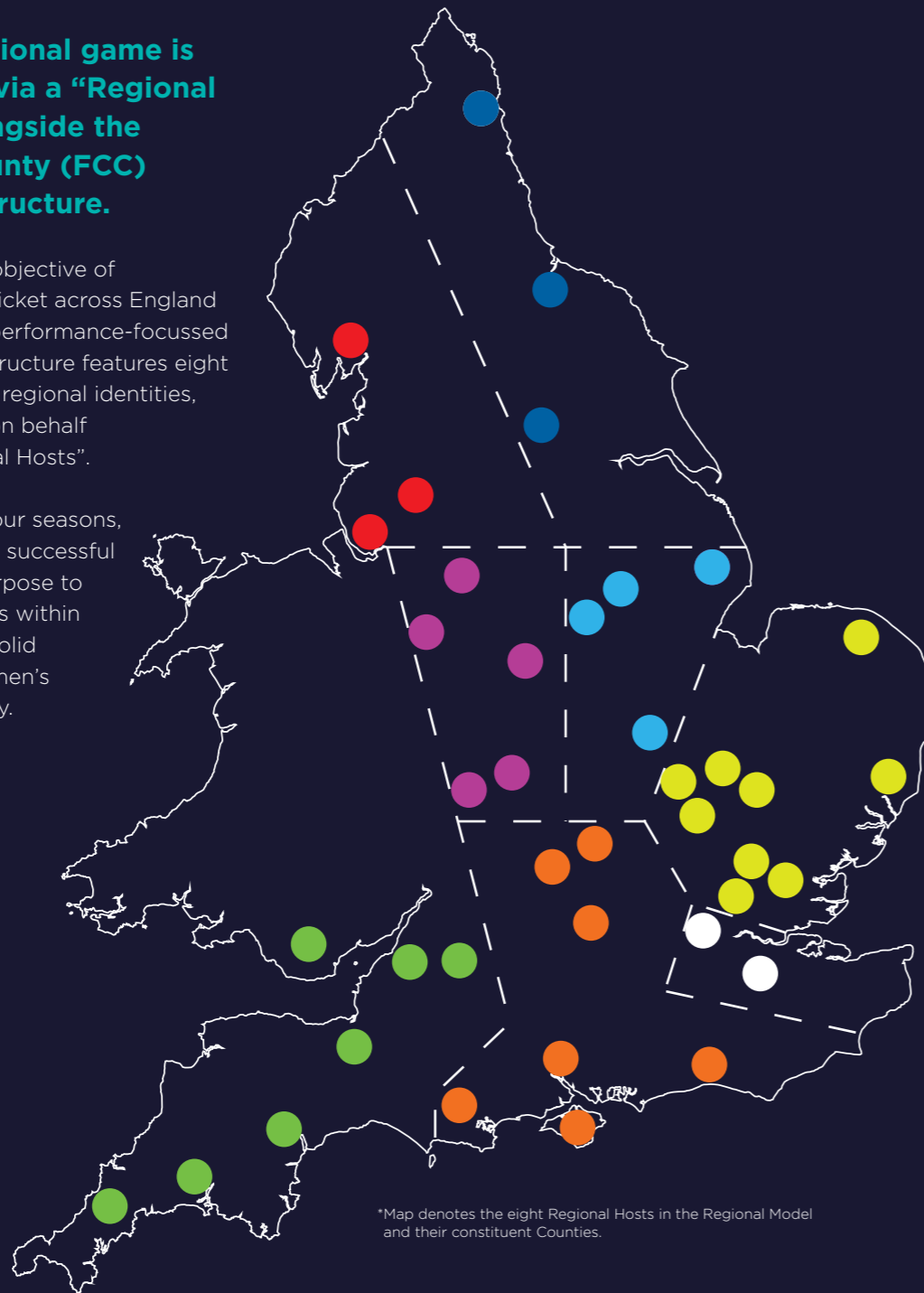
### THE REGIONAL MODEL

The women's professional game is currently structured via a "Regional Model". This sits alongside the men's First Class County (FCC) professional game structure.

Launched in 2020, with the objective of professionalising women's cricket across England and Wales through a single performance-focussed lens, the women's regional structure features eight regionally based teams, with regional identities, administered and delivered on behalf of the ECB by eight "Regional Hosts".

Over the course of the last four seasons, the Regional Model has been successful and impactful, serving its purpose to accelerate performance levels within women's cricket and laying solid foundations to grow the women's domestic game professionally.

- North West
- North East
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- South West & Wales
- South Central
- London & East
- London & South East



\*Map denotes the eight Regional Hosts in the Regional Model and their constituent Counties.

### IDENTITY

#### 8 TEAMS

- Thunder
- Northern Diamonds
- The Blaze
- Central Sparks
- Western Storm
- Southern Vipers
- South East Stars
- Sunrisers

### GOVERNANCE

#### 8 REGIONAL HOSTS

- Lancashire CCC
- Yorkshire CCC
- Nottinghamshire CCC
- West Midlands Women's Cricket Ltd
- Western Storm Ltd
- Southern Vipers Ltd
- Surrey CCC
- Middlesex CCC

### IN 2024

80+

female professional domestic players, average salary £25k.

100+

dedicated coaching and support staff working across the eight Regional teams.

102

Regional fixtures.

£11m

annual ECB investment.

## 2.2

# THE CASE FOR CHANGE

In the four years since the launch of the Regional Model the cricket and women's sport landscapes have changed dramatically. Four key reasons now exist for why it is the right time to evolve the women's professional game structure:

## 1. THE POTENTIAL OF WOMEN'S CRICKET

While the Regional Model has pioneered the women's professional game domestically, there are some significant challenges inherent to the underpinning delivery structure, which if we are to achieve our long-term aspirations for women's cricket, are now prohibitive to future growth. This is especially true in off-field areas such as audience and commercial growth ambitions. Key challenges include:

- **Unsettled sense of belonging:** teams and players tend to exist / live nomadically (43 match day venues used in 2023).
- **Variable governance and ownership:** limited levels of accountability and responsibility for FCCs in their capacity as hosts.
- **Narrow brand and team awareness:** low visibility and limited ability to build profile and scale at the required pace.
- **One-way investment model:** almost entirely ECB-funded structure, with little incentive for FCCs to invest.

## 2. THE RISE OF WOMEN'S SPORT

There is huge momentum behind the growth in fan interest for women's sport, with Deloitte<sup>1</sup> predicting that in 2024, revenue generated by women's elite sports will surpass £1 billion for the first time. This total is projected to be at least 300% higher than their last prediction on the same topic in 2021.

In England and Wales, The Hundred effect in cricket, and the rise of women's football through the Barclays Women's Super League (WSL) and rugby via the Allianz Premiership Women's Rugby (PWR), are accelerating audience growth and creating new commercial opportunities for domestic women's sport properties.

The market for women's sport has evolved at pace over the last five years and linked to the challenges outlined in point number one, the women's regional structure is not currently set up in a way that can make the most of these new conditions and opportunities.

## 3. CRICKET'S AMBITION TO BE THE MOST INCLUSIVE TEAM SPORT IN ENGLAND AND WALES

All Stars Cricket, Dynamos Cricket, club cricket, County Age Group cricket, The Hundred, England Cricket...

In a way that no other team sport in this country can or is doing at scale, cricket has a powerful opportunity to present and deliver the game in a gender-balanced way at every single touchpoint.

The women's Regional Model vs men's FCC structure is the last major point of difference in how cricket is currently provided and presented across genders. A point of difference which creates a divide between how the game perceives women's and men's professional cricket, inferring a sense of "otherness" around the women's regional teams and competitions.

## 4. THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR EQUITY IN CRICKET (ICEC) REPORT

Within the ICEC report, several recommendations were made relating directly to women's domestic cricket. These recommendations support further acceleration in the women's professional game space over the next five years, which will require a delivery structure that enables us to collectively move faster and in a more equitable way.

ICEC recommendations for women's domestic cricket include:

- Equal pay and prize money for women's domestic players by 2029.
- Equality in working conditions for women's professional players.
- Equal representation for women's cricket across governance structures to drive equitable decision-making.
- Increased investment in the core infrastructure for the women's game.

## IN SUMMARY...

The context within which the women's Regional Model was initially formed in 2020 has fundamentally shifted in 2024.

To continue to move forwards, the game must now come together and act.

This action starts with the evolution of the underpinning structure for the women's professional game to ensure it is as effective and equitable as possible. A structure that will enable women's cricket to become embedded and thrive within the established cricket ecosystem, and a structure that will ensure the potential of women's domestic cricket is maximised on and off the field, to secure a sustainable and vibrant future for the whole game.

The transition of the existing eight women's Regional team entities into eight women's professional Clubs – each owned, governed, and operated by an individual FCC or MCC – therefore represents the crucial next step in the evolution of the women's professional game.

## THIS INVITATION TO TENDER

This Invitation to Tender ("ITT") is being issued by the England and Wales Cricket Board Limited ("ECB" or "we") to all 18 First Class Counties ("FCCs" and each a "FCC") and Marylebone Cricket Club ("MCC") for the purposes of selecting eight professional cricket clubs to be awarded "Tier 1" women's team status ("Tier 1 Clubs" and each a "Tier 1 Club") with a requirement to participate in the ECB's women's professional domestic competitions for the 2025-2028 seasons.

Successful applicants will be required to sign relevant long-form documentation with the ECB, setting out the delivery requirements, rights, and obligations – of each party – associated with this award. This documentation is currently envisaged to be the County Partnership Agreement 2025-2028 ("CPA 2") or other suitable funding agreement and the Venue Agreement 2025-2031 ("Venue Agreement") (together the "Long-form Documentation"). Drafts of the Long-form Documentation are being worked on and will be circulated to FCCs and MCC in due course.



# 3 OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

In 2028 the women's professional game will be **embedded** and **thriving** across England & Wales...

Fully professional teams with strong local identities will be playing **world-class cricket** in vibrant, visible, and captivating competitions.

Venues will be packed full of **passionate fans** cheering on their home team, with thousands more tuning-in to watch on TV or online.

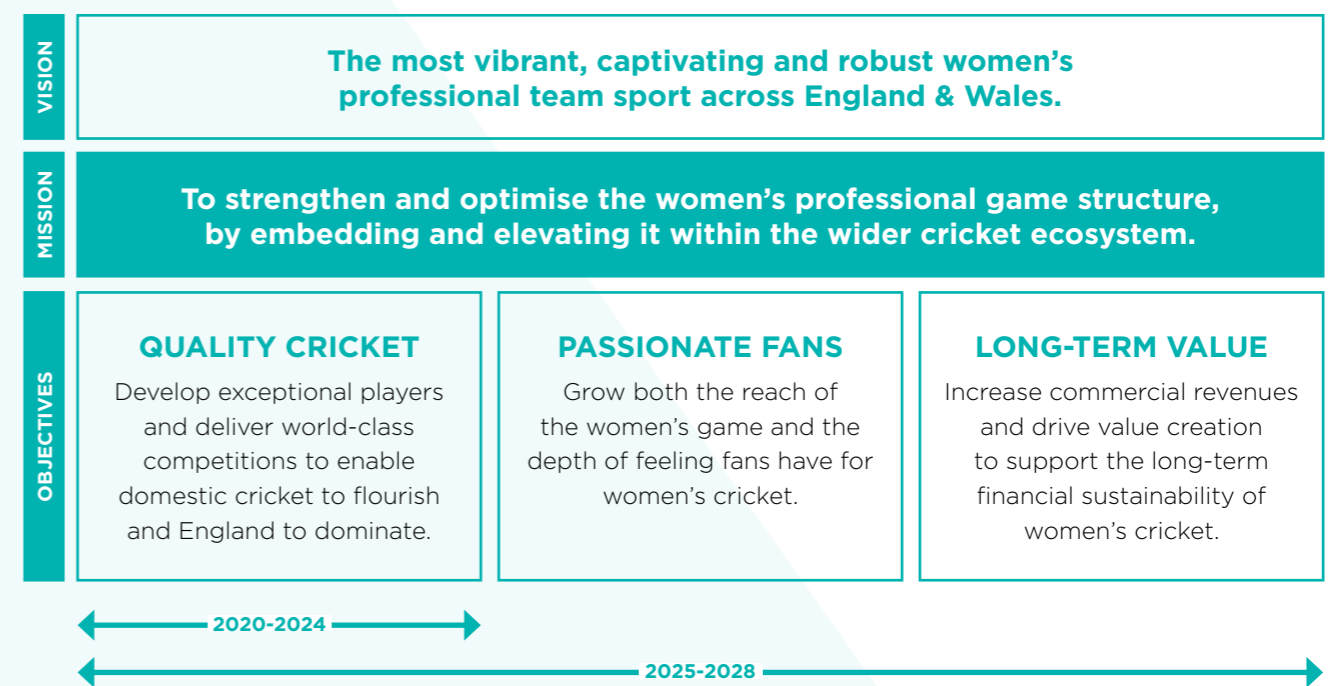
An accessible and connected **pyramid structure** will be providing depth and playing opportunities across multiple levels, to produce a conveyor belt of future stars.

And the women's game will be starting to generate meaningful incremental revenue, supporting a **financially sustainable** and viable future for women's cricket.

## 3.1

# WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL GAME STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2025-2028

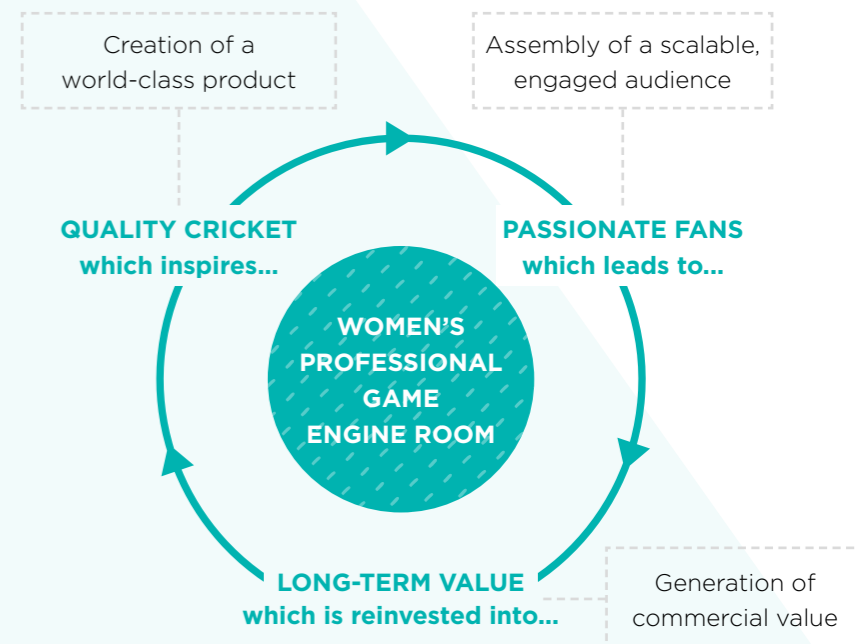
Over the course of the last six months and in consultation with key stakeholders from across the cricket network, we have defined the vision, mission, and objectives for the women's professional game for the 2025-2028 seasons ("**Strategic Period**"):



In line with the case for change, two new objectives have been added to this next evolutionary phase for women's domestic cricket: growing the audience for women's teams - **Passionate Fans** - and creating the conditions for long-term financial sustainability - **Long-Term Value**.

These new fan-centric goals therefore build on the performance focus - **Quality Cricket** - that exclusively directed the actions and outcomes behind the launch of the original women's Regional Model in 2020.

Together the three objectives will combine in a virtuous cycle to continuously fuel growth.



# 3.2 PRIORITY ACTIONS

The 2025-2028 strategic framework provides a very clear direction for what we are aiming to achieve through this next growth cycle for the women's domestic game.



To bring everything to life, three **priority actions**, guided by three **central recommendations**, have been identified.

The combination of these three actions and their successful implementation over the next four years will form the heartbeat for the realisation of our collective mission to strengthen, embed and elevate women's domestic cricket through this strategic period and into the future.

CENTRAL RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY ACTION
1 To evolve the team ownership, finance model, and governance structure of the women's domestic game.	Transition the existing eight women's Regional team "entities" into eight women's professional Clubs each owned by an individual FCC / MCC.
2 To evolve the playing depth of the women's domestic game.	Build a three-tier pyramid structure by launching a new "Tier 2" and "Tier 3" underneath the existing professional "Tier 1" competitions.
3 To evolve the visibility, scale, and fan following for the women's domestic game.	Present aligned women's and men's domestic white-ball competitions and teams.

## 1. DRIVING OWNERSHIP

This ITT to identify and select eight individual FCCs / MCC to become a women's Tier 1 Club from 2025 applies to the implementation of the first central recommendation and is the first thing we need to do. Once complete, all other actions and activities will flow.

**By delivering this priority action we are seeking to:**

- Ensure strong and clear ownership, accountability, and governance to support the growth of women's cricket.
- Provide stability and a sense of belonging for the women's teams and female players.

- Generate economies of scale across the men's and women's professional game structures.
- Accelerate performance standards for male and female players by sharing best practice.
- Establish a more compelling platform to commercialise women's cricket and create investable assets for the women's game.
- Galvanise and embed cultural change through a collective shift in mindset about the position of the women's professional game - to be on a par with the men's game - within the cricket ecosystem.

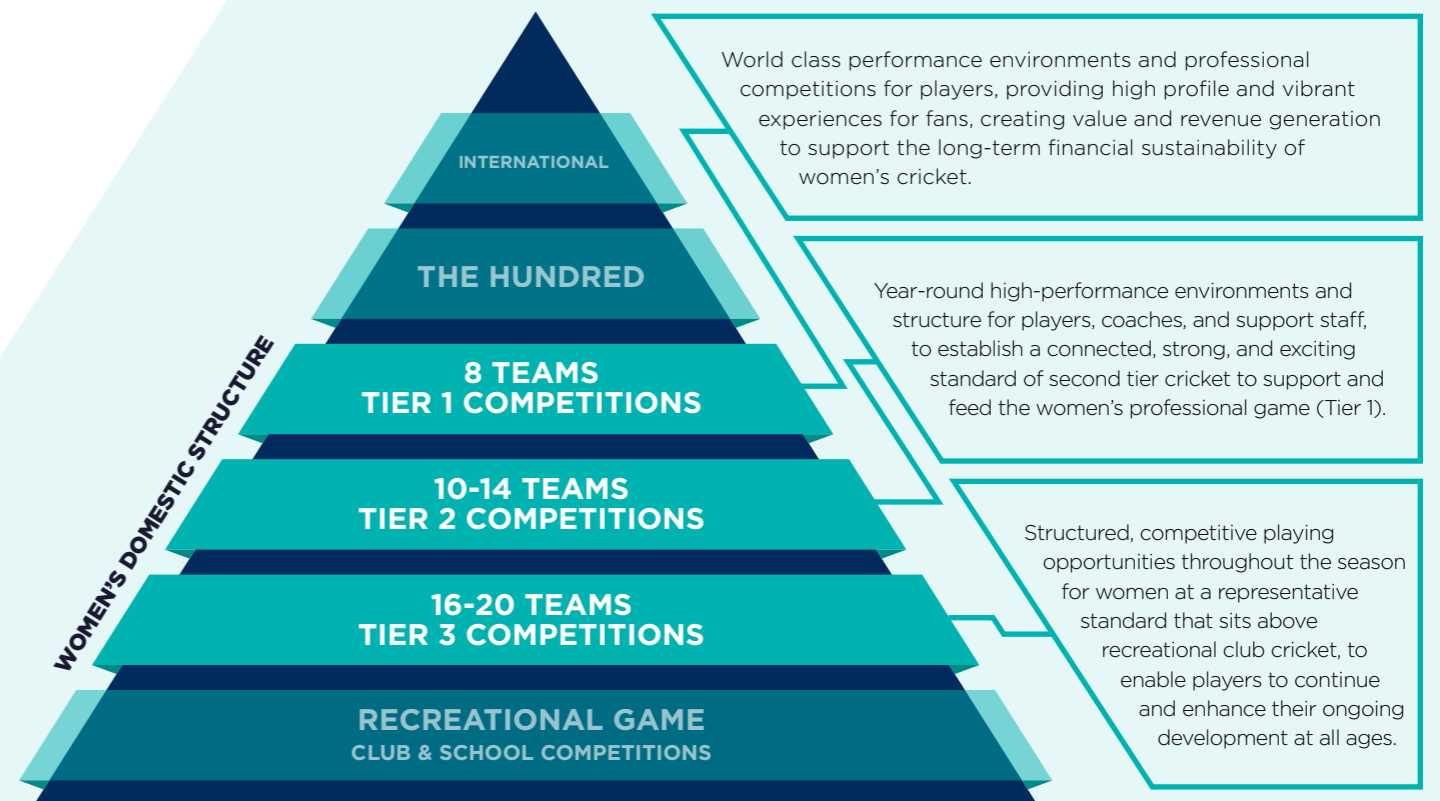
## 2. BUILDING THE PYRAMID

To accommodate and continue to accelerate growth in the number of players moving through the women's and girls' talent pathway requires an evolution in the capacity of the women's domestic game structure. Action here focuses on moving from a flat eight-team professional structure to one with additional teams and tiers of feeder competitions.

Following the completion of the tender process for Tier 1, it is anticipated that those FCCs / MCC who either (i) were unsuccessful in the Tier 1 tender; or

(ii) did not submit a Bid, and, separately, all National Counties, will be invited to be involved in a process to determine the composition of a new Tier 2 and Tier 3 as part of an expanded three-tier women's pyramid. The outcome of this Tier 2 and Tier 3 process will be confirmed by September 2024, ready to launch the evolved women's domestic structure in full in 2025.

For the duration of the Strategic Period (2025-2028 seasons) all three tiers will be "closed", with no promotion or relegation.



**By delivering this priority action we are seeking to:**

- Support the development and retention of more talented female players by introducing more layers of competition and ensuring greater access to training and playing opportunities across England and Wales.
- Widen the geographical spread of women's teams.
- Establish a women's domestic structure that provides aspiration for all and capacity to grow into the future.
- Filter significant levels of new central ECB investment into the County network beneath the top eight professional teams to develop women's domestic cricket to a greater depth.
- Provide purpose, local investment incentive, and responsibility for the growth of the women's game across the whole County network.
- Generate wider reach for fans to engage with and follow women's cricket at a local level.

### 3. ACCELERATING AUDIENCES

The transition of the existing eight women's Regional team entities into eight women's professional Clubs – each owned, governed, and operated by an individual FCC / MCC – through this tender process presents an opportunity to align women's and men's domestic white-ball competitions and teams.

Taking learnings from The Hundred and recent Ashes, Two Ashes campaign, alongside research from a range of sports properties, including the NBA / WNBA and Barclays Premier League / Barclays Women's Super League, there's clear evidence that consistent branding and alignment with an established men's team provides a significant and immediate audience halo effect for the women's team, generating scale and encouraging fanbases to grow faster.



### A SURVEY WITH THE CRICKET SUPPORTERS ASSOCIATION IN 2023 SHOWED THAT:

**83%**

of passionate cricket fans are open to watching and following the women's domestic game



### TOP THREE REASONS WHICH WOULD MAKE THEM MORE LIKELY TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE WITH IT:

- 1 Women's and men's double-headers in the Vitality Blast.
- 2 Women's teams aligned to the men's County teams.
- 3 Women's professional County competitions aligned to men's FCC competitions.

### OF THE 12 BARCLAYS WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE CLUBS

**100%**

are aligned to a men's Barclays Premier League / Sky Bet Championship football club.



#### By delivering this priority action we are seeking to:

- Leverage existing scale, awareness, and audiences from men's County cricket to accelerate the growth of fanbases for women's teams and players.
- Attract new and diverse audiences through the women's domestic game to diversify and grow the existing men's County cricket fanbase.
- Create new revenue streams for FCCs / MCC by introducing new women's partnership category opportunities and rights packages to their portfolio e.g. ECB's partnership with Metro Bank in 2023 as the inaugural champion partner of women's & girls' cricket.
- Protect existing revenue streams for FCCs with commercial partners who are no longer happy to sponsor exclusively male sports properties.





## 4

# BECOMING A WOMEN'S TIER 1 CLUB

## 4.1

## THE OPPORTUNITY

The issuance of this ITT represents a significant moment in the evolution of the women's professional game.

It also represents a generational opportunity for FCCs / MCC to reimagine what their cricket club "looks and feels like". An opportunity for Clubs to futureproof their identity in a gender-balanced way, for players, staff, and fans.

**A chance to secure a relevant, enduring, and holistic existence.**

And a chance for FCCs / MCC to access rights and own an asset in the fastest growing market and audience growth space for cricket: the women's game.



## WOMEN'S CRICKET IN 2023

### 140%

increase in attendance at England Women's internationals compared to 2022 (124,000 in total).

### 34%

of ticket purchasers for England Women's internationals were female.

### 7.4m

total broadcast reach for England Women's internationals.

### 167%

increase in viewers for England Women's Test cricket.

### 60%

of cricket players across England and Wales indicated that they are inspired to participate more by the England Women's team.

### 20%

growth in women's and girls' teams across England and Wales at a recreational level.

### 310,750

total attendees at women's matches in The Hundred (average attendance 10,400).

### 26,752

girls took part in ECB's national programmes All Stars Cricket and Dynamos Cricket.

### £465m

total sale value for the five BCCI Women's Premier League (WPL) franchises: the largest single-day financial injection in the history of women's sport.

### £95m

broadcast rights deal for the first five years of the WPL.

## WOMEN'S SPORT IN 2024

**£1.02b** is the predicted global revenue that women's elite sport will generate in the next 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

**Women's sport is culture, and investors are starting to notice that potential.<sup>2</sup>**

**Kara Nortman**, Managing Partner at global sports venture fund Monarch Collective and Co-Founder of NWSL team Angel City

<sup>1</sup> Women's elite sports: breaking the billion-dollar barrier, Deloitte Insights (2024)

<sup>2</sup> Why investors are cashing in on women's sport (Financial Times, 26th July 2023)

**The Long-form Documentation (CPA 2 and the Venue Agreement) shall set out the legal terms and conditions attached to becoming a women's Tier 1 Club. A non-exhaustive summary of some of the key components are set out below.**

## TIER 1 TEAM RIGHTS

By becoming a women's Tier 1 Club, the FCC / MCC will be required to participate in the ECB's women's professional T20 and 50-over domestic competitions, and any future Tier 1 Competitions sanctioned and launched by the ECB during the Strategic Period ("**Tier 1 Competitions**").

They will also be granted the same standard commercial rights for their women's team as has been agreed with the ECB for men's FCC teams. This includes team naming rights, team sponsorship rights, and home match day rights (as set out in the Venue Agreement).

## TIER 1 TEAM COMMERCIAL RIGHTS SUMMARY

- The team naming rights subject to the prior written approval of the ECB and provided that no sponsor's or other commercial third party's name is included.
- The right to design and manufacture the team training and playing kits, with the colours and design of such kit to be subject to the prior written approval of the ECB.
- The team title sponsorship and partner rights (including, but not limited to, shirt sponsorship rights).
- Merchandising rights in relation to products related to the team.
- The right to host a website and social media channels for the team.
- The right to retain income from home match day ticketing, hospitality, and food & beverage sales.
- The right to grant branding rights to the perimeter advertising boards at home matches (other than those within the 100ft "tv arc" area behind the stumps at each end of the venue).

## ECB COMMERCIAL RIGHTS SUMMARY

The ECB will reserve for its own exploitation a number of central commercial rights, including (without limitation) title sponsorship rights, broadcasting rights, and digital and media rights for the Tier 1 Competitions (as aligned to the rights agreed for the equivalent men's FCC competitions) and one playing shirt sponsorship placement on each variation of team kit (non-leading sleeve).

In addition, the ECB will continue to own the intellectual property in its existing and future logos in relation to Tier 1 Competitions.

If a women's Tier 1 Club wishes to exploit rights which are reserved for the ECB (for example certain media rights on a local basis), approval will need to be sought from the ECB on a case-by-case basis.



## 4.2

# PURPOSE, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**The purpose of a women's Tier 1 Club is: to develop exceptional players and compete in world-class competitions, to grow the visibility of the women's game and depth of feeling fans have for women's cricket, and to drive value creation and support the long-term financial sustainability of the women's game.**

To realise this purpose women's Tier 1 Clubs will be required to fulfil a series of key roles and responsibilities, as summarised here.

### SENIOR SQUAD

Operate a senior women's squad with a minimum of 15 contracted players.

### COMPETITION

Enter a team in the Tier 1 Competitions.

### TALENT PATHWAY

In collaboration with constituent Tier 2 and Tier 3 Counties within their designated catchment area\* coordinate and deliver a collaborative, thriving and appropriately staffed talent pathway comprising:

- Academy: year-round, open age academy, providing opportunities for the most talented players from across its designated catchment area to access an individual programme of development aligned to relevant ECB guidance and insights.
- Emerging Player Programme: coordination of a year-round programme of support to players – predominantly 13-18 years – within Counties across its designated catchment area to develop the most talented players in the basic foundations of future performance

through individual programmes of development, aligned to relevant ECB guidance and insights.

- County Age Group (CAG) programme: connect and ensure inclusive, fun, and engaging CAG programmes that provide players the opportunity to sample all that the game has to offer and cement a lifelong love of the game. Through winter and summer programmes, support players to progress in the foundations and fundamentals of batting, bowling, wicket-keeping, and fielding, as well as the tactical nature of the game, with an emphasis on enjoyment resulting in positive and meaningful experiences.

\* Following the completion of this tender process the ECB will review and define the "Pathway Catchment Area" that each women's Tier 1 Club will be responsible for supporting and working with the constituent Tier 2 and Tier 3 Counties. As part of this exercise ECB will consult with representatives from across all three tiers to ensure the creation of a seamless pathway with equal opportunities for talented players to progress through the new women's domestic structure, regardless of where they live.



### 4.3

# CREATING TRANSFORMATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

If we are to embed and elevate women’s domestic cricket as per our mission through this next Strategic Period of growth, we need to continue to push to improve delivery standards throughout.

The re-launch of the women’s domestic structure, starting with this tender process, gives us the perfect opportunity to do this: a chance for us to collectively accelerate the transformation of experience for players, staff, and fans, to create a world-leading environment for women’s cricket into the future.

## MINIMUM STANDARDS x MAXIMISED ASPIRATIONS

All new women’s Tier 1 Clubs will be required to deliver against a set of defined minimum standards and obligations. These standards and obligations will create environments both on and off the field which will enable the delivery of the three key objectives within the women’s professional game strategic framework – Quality Cricket, Passionate Fans, Long-Term Value – providing a consistent blueprint for combined future success.

team to reflect the different stage of professional maturity and requirements in the women’s game right now.

An example of this is the reworking of a combined women’s and men’s science and medicine component for CPA 2. The aim here is to establish an overarching governance framework and common minimum standards across both teams, but with the requirement for distinct, individualised support systems for each. This will ensure that the specific needs of female cricketers continue to be met.

In relation to the applicable standards for Tier 1 Clubs, the intention is for these to be aligned, where relevant and appropriate, with the standards outlined for the operation of men’s FCC teams within CPA 2 and the new Venue Agreement. By overlaying and aligning the men’s and women’s standards through a combined, single, set of legal agreements we can apply a clear gender parity lens to the collective delivery of men’s and women’s professional cricket moving forwards.

At the time of issuing this ITT, the Long-form Documentation is still being finalised and is not therefore available to include in this pack. As part of the finalisation process, CPA 2 and the Venue Agreements are currently being consulted on with the cricket network and will be agreed in parallel to this tender.

For those FCCs / MCC who are awarded women’s Tier 1 Club status through this tender process therefore, they will have one CPA 2 contract (or other suitable funding agreement) and one Venue Agreement, which will include minimum standards applicable to the operation of both their men’s and women’s professional teams. It is anticipated that most of the standards in CPA 2 will be the same for both teams. There will however be nuances in certain areas and some standards specific to the women’s

The framework opposite however provides a high-level overview of some of the key inputs and outputs for the standards that will apply to operating a Tier 1 women’s team. In addition to this and as part of the ITT pack, all FCCs and MCC will be sent separately a summary of the anticipated key terms of such standards – subject to final agreement – that will apply.

# TIER 1 STANDARDS: INPUTS AND OUTPUTS FRAMEWORK

	INPUTS	OUTPUTS
CRICKET	Players   Coaching   Sports Science & Medicine   Talent Pathway   Cricket Ops   Training Facilities   Match Day Facilities   EDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased number of and remuneration for full-time professional players</li> <li>Increased provision of specialist coaching support available to players</li> <li>Enhanced sports science and medical provision</li> <li>Improved quality of and access to training and playing facilities</li> <li>Enriched and expanded provision within the talent pathway</li> </ul>
FANS	Marketing, Digital & Comms   Match Day Experience   Match Day Venue Facilities   Community   EDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced match-day experience for players and fans</li> <li>Increased marketing, communications, and digital activity, driving deeper engagement and profile for the players and team</li> <li>Increased audience and fan base for the team</li> </ul>
VALUE	Governance & Leadership   Commercial & Finance   Policies   EDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective leadership, governance, and long-term financial sustainability</li> <li>Local value creation and revenue return through ticket sales and commercial partnerships</li> </ul>

## TIER 2 AND TIER 3

**The launch of Tier 2 and Tier 3 as part of the evolved women’s domestic structure in 2025 will require the creation of a new set of standards for teams competing in these tiers. The standards will therefore focus on establishing these new levels of cricket for the women’s game.**

For the duration of the Strategic Period, the standards for Tier 2 Clubs will primarily concentrate on creating high performance environments. Investment will therefore be focused on the provision of key personnel i.e. coaching and support staff, providing access to all-year-round training opportunities, deepening connections with the talent pathway, and building the competition structure. By concentrating investment in these performance-focussed areas, the launch of Tier 2 (and Tier 3) will ultimately help to contribute towards the delivery of the “Quality Cricket” objective within the overarching women’s professional game strategic framework.

## 4.4 FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

To deliver the standards – and more importantly, to maximise the opportunity – will require significant levels of central and local investment through the duration of this Strategic Period and beyond.

The ECB will therefore commit to investing a **minimum of £1.3m** annually into each of the eight women's Tier 1 Clubs throughout the length of the term. As set out on the right, this will include three areas of ring-fenced funding, mapped against delivering player and staff requirements, and activating the talent pathway.

It is projected that the £1.3m distribution will support most fixed costs associated with delivering the minimum standards. Opportunities to increase the central distribution will be reviewed year-on-year within the annual ECB budgeting process.

The financial terms will be set out in full in the Long-form Documentation.

## CLUB INVESTMENT

The ECB will not be mandating a minimum financial commitment from FCCs / MCC as part of this award process.

It is however expected that successful applicants will invest directly into their women's team over the coming years to maximise the opportunity afforded to them through the granting of Tier 1 status, and to ensure the delivery of best practice.

Through this tender process the ECB is therefore keen to understand the level of projected investment – in cash and in kind – that FCCs / MCC would be looking to make, if successful in their Bid, during the Strategic Period. This will form part of the Evaluation Criteria (section 5.3) and as such, applicants will be asked to outline their budget plans within the Application Response Form (supplied to FCCs and MCC separately).

### RING-FENCED FUNDING

Within the £1.3m ECB central investment there will be three areas of ring-fenced funding.

- **Player Salaries**
- **Sports Science and Medicine Provision**
- **Talent Pathway**

The total of each ring-fenced area will be confirmed and agreed as part of the finalisation of the Long-form Documentation.

All other non-ring-fenced funding comprising the ECB central investment can be used at the FCC's / MCC's discretion, providing all minimum standards are met and that it is only spent on initiatives associated with the enhancement of women's and girls' cricket.



## 4.5 TERM LENGTH

**1ST FEBRUARY 2025** —————→ **31ST JANUARY 2029**

The awarding of women's Tier 1 Club status to FCCs / MCC through this process – and therefore the delivery requirements, rights and obligations – will, subject to the execution of the Long-form Documentation, come into effect on 1st February 2025 and shall continue thereafter until the earlier of 31st January 2029 or the date that the Long-form Documentation is terminated by either party in accordance with its terms.



# 5 THE TENDER PROCESS

## 5.1

### INTRODUCTION

This ITT is being issued, subject to the terms and conditions detailed in the Appendix, by the ECB to each FCC and MCC for the purposes of selecting eight professional cricket clubs to be awarded Tier 1 women's team status with the requirement to participate in the Tier 1 Competitions, in an evolved three-tier domestic structure for women's cricket from 2025.

Successful applicants will be required to sign the Long-form Documentation (CPA 2 or other suitable funding agreement and the Venue Agreement) with the ECB, setting out the delivery requirements, rights, and obligations – of each party – associated with this award. Drafts of the Long-form Documentation are being worked on and will be circulated to FCCs and MCC in due course.

No joint or consortium submissions between FCCs and/or MCC are permitted as part of this ITT.

## 5.2

### EVALUATION PANEL

The ECB Board shall appoint an Evaluation Panel to assess each bid submitted in accordance with this ITT ("Bid") with reference to the ECB's weighted Evaluation Criteria, as set out in section 5.3. The Evaluation Panel will include members who are independent from the ECB alongside representatives from the ECB Board and ECB Executive. The final composition and named personnel will be confirmed with FCCs and MCC in due course.

## 5.3

### EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Evaluation Panel will use a balanced scorecard to assess each submission against a set of 11 Evaluation Criteria covering four key focus areas.

Three of the focus areas are aligned to the three objectives defined within the women's professional game strategic framework for 2025-2028: the delivery of Quality Cricket, Passionate Fans, and Long-Term Value for the women's game.

The fourth key area focuses on assessing the applicant's overarching vision for the women's game, with the intention of evaluating the depth of feeling and ambition each applicant has for becoming a women's Tier 1 Club.

The balanced scorecard has been shared in full with FCCs / MCC.



## 5.4

### TIMETABLE

The timetable to deliver this ITT process has been shared in full with FCCs / MCC. The table below provides an overview of the seven steps that will apply.

WHAT
Invitation to Tender issued to all FCCs and MCC
Deadline for submission of Bids to the ECB
Evaluation Panel to assess Bids and shortlisting for interview
Presentations by shortlisted applicants to Evaluation Panel for adjudication
Evaluation Panel makes recommendations to the ECB Board for approval
Notification to shortlisted applicants of the results
Confirmation and announcement of FCCs / MCC to be awarded Tier 1 women's team status



## 5.5

### SUBMISSION OF BIDS AND PRESENTATION STAGE

Bids must be received by the ECB by 23:59 (London time) on 10th March 2024. The ECB, in its sole discretion, may extend the published deadline for the filing of Bids. Any such extension will be notified in writing to all relevant FCCs / MCC as soon as possible.

Bids should be sent in electronic form by email to [progameteam@ecb.co.uk](mailto:progameteam@ecb.co.uk) before the stipulated deadline.

Bids must include the following documentation:

- A completed Application Response Form (a copy of which will be sent separately to each FCC / MCC in electronic form for completion), signed by a person (or persons) duly authorised to submit the Bid.

- Such other supporting documentation as is required by the ECB that is mentioned in the Application Response Form or which the FCC / MCC would like to include as part of their Bid submission.

Following the submission deadline, the ECB may invite applicants to attend an interview with the Evaluation Panel to present their Bid and participate in a confidential discussion about their aspiration to become a women's Tier 1 Club.



## 5.6

### AWARD

The ECB Board is the only entity empowered to award Tier 1 women's team status and its decision on such awards shall be final. The ECB Board shall have no obligation to give any reasons for its decisions or to enter into any correspondence or other communications in relation to its decisions.

Please note that any award under this ITT is strictly subject to the relevant FCC / MCC executing the Long-form Documentation by the deadline stipulated by the ECB.

## 5.7

### CLARIFICATIONS

The ECB will respond to reasonable requests by an FCC / MCC for clarification of any aspect of this ITT. All such request should be submitted electronically to [progameteam@ecb.co.uk](mailto:progameteam@ecb.co.uk).

# EVOLVING TOGETHER

WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL GAME STRUCTURE 2.0  
**TIER 1 CLUBS: INVITATION TO TENDER**

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EVOLVING TOGETHER 2024

