



THE INDEPENDENT **FOOTBALL** COMMISSION



## Annual Report 2006

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Welcome to this, the fifth Annual Report of the Independent Football Commission, which marks an important milestone in the life of the IFC. When the Commission began its work in 2002, it was unclear how this new regulatory body would fit into football's structure of governance. Or indeed for that matter, whether the IFC would survive very long, given the scepticism of some about the role of a self-regulatory body. The IFC has, in fact, been given an extended and indefinite mandate and is now regarded by the football authorities as an integral part of English football's regulatory system.

# CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

THE IFC HAS HAD MUCH TO SAY AND I BELIEVE THAT THE COMMISSION HAS MADE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE EMERGENCE OF A REFORM AGENDA FOR FOOTBALL. IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS, THE LARGE MAJORITY OF WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED AND IMPLEMENTED, THE IFC HAS BEEN ABLE TO INFLUENCE AND SUPPORT IMPROVEMENTS IN THE WAY ENGLISH FOOTBALL IS RUN



five year period is sufficiently long to permit an assessment of how far the landscape of English football has changed since I and the first Board of Commissioners were appointed in the latter part of 2001. The most significant developments over that five year period include:

- The introduction of a fit and proper person test into football governance arrangements
- The reforms in the Football Association's governance arising from the Burns enquiry
- The stricter regulation of football agents, particularly the exclusion of dual representation and the requirements for players to pay their own agents' fees
- The spread of professional and prudent financial management and a growing commitment to financial transparency
- The development of comprehensive and effective anti-racism strategies and a more visible equal opportunities culture which aims to remove all forms of discrimination from English football
- The widespread improvements in customer care and the open commitment to improving the supporters' experience, as illustrated by the Customer Charters of both clubs and authorities
- An impressive and deeply rooted support for a diverse range of community initiatives which focus on the positive power of football to improve health, education and social conditions
- The willingness of football to address seriously concerns over child protection and the introduction of measures to ensure that children can participate in football in a safe environment
- A marked improvement in the dialogue with fans, as expressed, for example, in the growth of fans' forums, the evolution of *englandfans* and the success of Supporters Direct
- A welcome extension in the collaboration between the three football authorities, through the establishment of joint forums and working groups.

On these and many other issues the IFC has had much to say and I believe that the Commission has made a major contribution to the emergence of a reform agenda for football. In making recommendations, the large majority of which have been accepted and implemented, the IFC has been able to influence and support improvements in the way English football is run. Of course, concerns remain and there is always more that could be done to address the needs of a game which has such a unique and powerful hold over English popular life and culture. The IFC will continue to monitor actively the work of the football authorities and to research topics which are of most concern to supporters and other stakeholders.

To turn to the work of the Commission in 2006, it has been another active and busy year. Much attention was devoted to an extended and thorough enquiry into the experience of English supporters following their teams in Europe. A full separate report was published towards the end of 2006 and the relevance and currency of our comments and recommendations were confirmed when there were further difficulties in this season's Champions League. Most of the recommendations were addressed to UEFA. While we have received a response, as our chapter in this report discusses, it is somewhat disappointing that UEFA has not replied in detail to our very full list of recommendations.

We also continued our work on agents and, because of the work of the football authorities, such as the Stevens enquiry, it was decided not to publish a single report on this topic. The developments on the regulation of agents are fully discussed in this Annual Report. This report also reflects the regular work of the Commission in the areas of finance and governance, equal opportunities, child protection, community, charters and complaints. It is hoped that this inclusion of a regular list of IFC topics is helpful in measuring year on year changes in policy and practice.

I fully recognise that the work of the Commission owes much to our small and dedicated office team based in Stockton-on-Tees and I thank them for bringing the work of the Commission to fruition. This year again I have received invaluable support from my fellow Commissioners, for which many thanks. ●

**Professor Derek Fraser**  
Chairman



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## CHAPTER

1

### GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

2006 was a year that saw football come under the spotlight in terms of how it is run. There was the Independent European Sports Review and The Future of Professional Football in Europe. Both of these reports saw considerable involvement from the European Commission. The latter did not receive great coverage, but the former, despite being instigated while the UK held Presidency of EU, received a mixed welcome from the English football authorities. The IFC looks at these reports and gauges the reaction. There was also the FA's response to the Structural Review of the FA by Lord Burns. The work of the Financial Advisory Committee is reviewed, as is the Quest Report by Lord Stevens who looked into alleged financial irregularities.

## CHAPTER

2

### DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter looks closely at one of the key recommendations from last year's IFC Annual Report which stated that the authorities were not working in tandem in this area. Their response was the formation of the All Agency Review Team (AART). This features the FA, Premier League and Football League, plus the Professional Footballers Association, Football Foundation and League Managers Association. As this chapter shows, the AART is working well and could become a blueprint for similar forums to look at other areas within football.

There is a look at disabled supporters groups plus a recommendation of how the IFC feels the authorities need assistance in counteracting the tide of pressure groups.

## CHAPTER

3

### COMMUNITY

The IFC has again witnessed some magnificent community work going on within football. All of the authorities are working hard in this area; examples are given. There is also a look at the splendid work of Football in the Community, plus a question about the organisation's future. Although not directly part of its remit, the IFC is also pleased to look at the work of the PFA who, via the footballers, has a big impact on community activity at clubs.

## CHAPTER

4

### CHILD PROTECTION

The IFC produced a groundbreaking document in 2005 which is used by the authorities as a benchmark for Child Protection policies. This year's IFC Annual Report looks at the latest developments at all levels of football in England regarding this sensitive topic. One of the biggest steps forward has been the formation of the Child Protection Unit; the IFC looks at its work as well as studying the various new guidelines that have been produced.

## CHAPTER

5

### CHARTERS

2006 will go down as the year when the authorities refined and evolved their charters and the charters of their clubs. Previously, the charters have either missed the point or gone to the other extreme and become too bulky. It is part of the IFC's remit to study charters and, far from being an onerous task, it is something that reveals a huge amount of good work going on at clubs and a desire to do the very best for the football supporter who, in this instance, is seen as a customer.





#### CHAPTER AGENTS



The Quest Report, fronted by Lord Stevens, was instigated by the Premier League to look into allegations of financial irregularities. However, a large part of the report concerns itself with the activities of agents. 2006 also saw a steady trickle of media stories and revelations about alleged deals involving club managers and agents. The IFC spoke to the agents as well as to the authorities and the clubs. The IFC also spoke to UEFA and FIFA about agents. This chapter of the Annual Report brings everything up to date and looks at what the authorities are doing about controlling agents.

#### CHAPTER THE EXPERIENCE OF ENGLISH SUPPORTERS IN EUROPEAN CLUB COMPETITIONS 2005 – 06 UPDATE



The IFC mounted an extensive investigation into the experiences of English football supporters when they travel to the continent to watch their team. The IFC wanted to discover whether everything was being done to ensure the safety and security of fans. In the course of their investigations, the IFC travelled to seven different countries and attended eleven games. They travelled either in the official party, or joined an independent group, or made their own way. This chapter provides an update to what the authorities thought of the report as well as allowing those bodies mentioned either in the body of the report or in the recommendations, to respond accordingly.

#### CHAPTER THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS



One of the main roles of the IFC is to receive issues and complaints, and then, if required, make an adjudication. There seems to be a steadily increasing number of these coming into the IFC offices. Last year saw 20 issues arrive; 3 have transferred into complaints, although only one is featured here because it was resolved in 2006.

The IFC also undertook a series of forums around England to allow clubs, administrators, supporters groups etc, to meet the Commission. A full report on those three forums appears in this chapter.

#### CHAPTER COMING UP IN 2007



This chapter gives a preview of what the IFC will be up to during 2007. The main topics will be looking at whether standing areas should return to English football stadia. Whether the price of tickets or the way matches are scheduled is having an effect on attendances at football stadia; and whether the IFC can help the authorities deal with the steady increase in the number of organisations and pressure-groups who want to either be involved in football or have football involved in their activities. There will also be a reminder that in next year's Annual Report, the IFC will look back at the 30 months since the influential IFC Child Protection report was published, to study what has happened and what needs to be done. ●



# THE INDEPENDENT FOOTBALL COMMISSION

## Members of the Commission

### Professor Derek Fraser, Chairman

Until his retirement, Professor Fraser was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Teesside, a post he held for over 10 years. In February 2005 he was appointed Chair of Standards Verification UK. Other external experience includes board membership of ONE North East, Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council, and Chairmanship of the Department for Education and Skills Steering Group on Graduate Apprenticeships. He has been watching football since 1947 and his first love was Birmingham City. Career and location moves have brought affinity to Leeds United and to Middlesbrough. His best football moment was being at Wembley to see England win the World Cup in 1966.

### Alan Watson CBE, Deputy Chair

Alan Watson is a self-confessed 'football nut' and has a life long affiliation with Newcastle United. He has been active in grassroots football through a long playing career, coaching, refereeing and running youth teams. Until his retirement in 2003, he was Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman, in recognition of which he has received a CBE. He has extensive experience in customer care, codes of conduct and complaints resolution.

### Clive Betts MP, Commissioner

Clive Betts has been a Member of Parliament since 1992. He was a Government Whip 1997-2001. He is Treasurer of the Parliamentary All Party Group on Football and Chairman of the All Party Football Club. He is a lifelong Sheffield Wednesday supporter and is particularly interested in financial transparency in the game, and in the rights of football supporters and their involvement in the game.

### Brian Lomax, Commissioner

Brian Lomax is the chair of Supporters Direct, where he served as Managing Director over a four-year period. He had previously worked in the Probation Service and as Chief Executive of a charitable Housing Trust. In 1992 he was a founder member and first Chairman at Northampton Town, the first Supporters' Trust, subsequently becoming the first democratically elected Director to serve on the Board of an English football club. Both posts were held for seven years. He retains affection for his home-town team, Altrincham, but his loyalties as a supporter rest primarily with Northampton.





**Nicola Waldman, Commissioner**

Nicola is a partner at Central London law firm Cumberland Ellis. She is head of the Private Client department, specialising in wills and tax planning, estate and trust matters and she also advises various charities. She is a member of the Executive Board and is also the Staff Partner. As a football addict, she is happy watching most football matches, but her heart belongs to the Gunners. Her best football moment (so far) was the final whistle of the 2004-05 season, when Arsenal completed an undefeated campaign in the Premier League.

**Joslyn Hoyte-Smith, Commissioner**

Jos is an accomplished athlete. She won a bronze medal at the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games competing in the 4 x 400m relay. In the Commonwealth Games she won gold in the same event at the 1978 Games in Edmonton and bronze over 400m in the 1982 Games in Brisbane. Previous roles include lecturer in Sports Studies and Education; Drug Free Sport Co-ordinator for UK Athletics, and Performance Manager for the British Paralympics Association. She is currently working as an Athlete Support Manager for the English Institute of Sport. Jos supports Chelsea and also follows her local team Sheffield United.

**Andy Worthington MBE, Commissioner**

Andy was on Manchester Utd's books and played semi professionally in England and Scotland. After a period of teaching and working for the Scottish Sports Council in Edinburgh, he began a career in Local Government with Lothian Regional Council before moving to Harrogate Borough Council as Chief Recreation Officer. He has been Director of Leisure Services and Tourism for the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral; advisor to the Local Government Association on Sport, Leisure and Tourism issues; Chair of the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association; Chief Executive of the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, and chaired the National Coaching Task Force on whose recommendation in 2002 the Government agreed to radically overhaul the preparation and employment of coaches throughout the country. He is now Chair of the North West Regional Sports Board and a Board member of Sport England.

**IFC staff****Graham Courtney, Company Secretary and Chief Officer**

Graham leads the IFC staff based at offices in Stockton-on-Tees. After leaving Durham University in 1980 he joined Independent Radio as a sports reporter, becoming News and Sports Editor of two radio stations in North East England. In 1996 Kevin Keegan appointed him as Press Officer of Newcastle Utd FC. He was a founder member of the Football Press Officers Association. After working with Kenny Dalglish and Ruud Gullit he joined a Tyneside based PR firm and also returned to freelance journalism covering football for national and regional TV and radio. He joined the IFC in 2005.

**Claire Risker, Office Manager****Alison Bone, PA and Administration Officer****Karen Ramrekha, Part-time Administration Officer****The IFC can be contacted at:**

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# 2006 RECOMMENDATIONS:

## Chapter 1: GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

- 1 The IFC recommends that the FA make progress on the Burns reforms as quickly as possible. [\[page 19\]](#)

## Chapter 2: DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 2 The IFC recommends that the FA tries to give additional support, advice and resources to County FA's to let them take ownership of local issues in their area and promote equality at grassroots level. [\[page 25\]](#)
- 3 The IFC recommends that the Football League initiates a dissemination programme to ensure that all clubs are aware of initiatives in the areas of equal opportunities and anti-racism. [\[page 26\]](#)
- 4 The IFC recommends that the FA, Premier League and Football League freely circulate to all other interested parties, any research findings and relevant conclusions. [\[page 27\]](#)
- 5 The IFC recommends that the authorities look into having some sort of clearing house system to look into requests for sponsorship, support etc, whereby they can meet on a regular basis to discuss all of these requests as a whole, not just individually. [\[page 29\]](#)

## Chapter 3: COMMUNITY

- 6 The IFC recommends that the Premier League gives more coverage to the good Community work that is being done and where it is being done. [\[page 31\]](#)
- 7 The IFC recommends that research is done by the authorities to see how more disabled fans, both individuals and groups, can get their point across to the people who make decisions on how the game is run and how stadia are built. [\[page 33\]](#)
- 8 The IFC recommends that the FA adjusts their diversity figures to make the situation more realistic and therefore avoid building up any false hopes. [\[page 33\]](#)
- 9 The IFC recommends that a review is taken of all FA activity outside of the England national team set-up. [\[page 34\]](#)
- 10 The IFC recommends that the Football League ensures that their disability guide is updated on a regular basis and, if possible, added to with extra information. [\[page 36\]](#)

## Chapter 4: CHILD PROTECTION

- 11 The IFC recommends that clear guidelines are considered regarding the age at which children must be accompanied to football matches; what the adult-child ratio should be; whether a mixed group of children need a mixed ratio of supervisors etc. [\[page 43\]](#)
- 12 The IFC recommends that the sharing of information should start now and the portability of CRB disclosures should be agreed upon as quickly as possible. [\[page 44\]](#)
- 13 The IFC recommends that the format of the Child Protection Forum is reviewed. [\[page 44\]](#)
- 14 The IFC recommends that the possibility of an independent chairperson being appointed to the Child Protection Forum should be explored. [\[page 44\]](#)
- 15 The IFC recommends that, through the Child Protection Forum, the authorities get together and produce one set of guidelines on the use of images that would be applicable to all levels of football. [\[page 45\]](#)
- 16 The IFC recommends that the FA ensures it employs appropriately trained people to carry out the role of CFA Child Protection Officer and does not continue to rely on individuals giving their time freely to this important area of work. [\[page 46\]](#)

## Chapter 5: CHARTERS

- 17 The IFC recommends that the scope of fan surveys should be broadened. [\[page 50\]](#)

## Chapter 6: AGENTS

- 18 The IFC recommends that the Premier League look again at the point raised in the Stevens Report that the PFA should be removed from getting involved in organising transfers. [\[page 58\]](#)
- 19 The IFC recommends that the dual representation regulation should be strictly enforced. [\[page 62\]](#)

## Chapter 7: THE EXPERIENCE OF ENGLISH SUPPORTERS IN EUROPEAN CLUB COMPETITIONS

- 20 The IFC recommends that UEFA holds meetings on a yearly basis to update all of the senior people within national FAs of current trends and new ideas re safety and security. [\[page 68\]](#)

# FINANCE & GOVERNANCE

The IFC does not accept the basic premise of the Arnaut Report that 'sport in general and football in particular are in poor health'. Nor is the IFC convinced that the case is proven for a major intervention by political and government bodies. The IFC also opposes the designation of UEFA as a pan-European governing body.



2006 was a fascinating year in many respects regarding English football in terms of its financial state and how it is governed. As well as the usual reports such as those from Birkbeck and Deloitte, there were three other major events.

The first was the publication of the *Independent European Sports Review*. The second was the response from the FA to the 2005 *Structural Review of the FA by Lord Burns* that included, amongst other things a revamp of the FA Board and the appointment of an independent council chairman and the third was the Stevens Report, instigated at the request of the Premier League that looked into a series of transfer dealings. To avoid repetition, this latter report will be looked at in the chapter relating to Agents. The IFC appreciates that although the Stevens report was not purely aimed at the activities of agents, a large section of the report concerns them and how the three authorities deal with them. The Burns Report will be looked at later in this chapter.

The *Independent European Sports Review* is a weighty 165 page report published in May 2006 (there was a follow-up published in October 2006) and was the result of 6 months work that started with a meeting of leading Sports Ministers from around Europe in Leipzig on 8th December 2005. Despite being named as a review of European sport, it is almost entirely referring to football. However, this point is in itself rather puzzling because, as the Football Association point out in their response to the report, the initial remit on which various bodies were asked to comment, specified that the report was football based. The FA said:

*'We note that between consultation and publication, the remit of the inquiry moved from 'football' to 'sport', and we would welcome clarification on the issues raised in the report over which there are ambiguities because of this change.'*



The meeting to instigate the report was held at the end of December 2005. The Review body was formed in February 2006 and there were two conferences held in Brussels in March and at the European Parliament in May 2006. The Report was officially launched on 23rd May 2006. It is therefore most impressive that the Report was launched so swiftly. Unfortunately, the haste at which this Report moved from being an idea to a fully published document could hint that everything was rushed. Was six months sufficient time for the amount of research required for what was certainly anticipated as being a key piece of work? The IFC was invited to speak at the first of the Brussels conferences and attended the second, although the latter was more of a hearing about what had previously taken place and was, in effect, an update on progress. The review was instigated by the British Government under the leadership of Sports Minister Richard Caborn MP when it held presidency of the EU and was backed by both the European Union and UEFA. It was headed by Jose Luis Arnaut, a former senior minister within the Portuguese Parliament.

Mr Arnaut says in the opening chapter of the Report: *"The observations I have made, as a result of this review, have left me deeply concerned. Sport in general, and football in particular, are not in good health. Only the direct involvement of political leaders, working together with the football authorities, can put it back on the road to recovery. In particular, I believe that if these issues are not urgently addressed, there is a real risk that the ownership of football clubs will pass into the wrong hands, the true values of the sport will be eroded and the public will become increasingly disaffected with the beautiful game"*.<sup>[1]</sup> He points out that many football clubs across Europe are on the brink of going bust and that other clubs are swamped by debt. *"There are deficits of hundreds of millions of Euros"*.

It was noticeable from the second meeting in Brussels that UEFA and the EU are developing a cosy relationship. There is a distinct impression that UEFA wants to be in total charge of European football; that is all football, including leagues, national FAs etc as well as general cup competitions. To force this through, UEFA has a problem; legislation. Obviously, laws vary from country to country within Europe. This means that if UEFA comes up with some legislation, many countries will simply not obey it because it goes against their local or regional agreements. Arnaut comments:

*"The responsibility of tackling these issues rests not solely with football authorities themselves, political bodies have both the duty and the legal means to play their part in finding appropriate solutions"*.

Consequently, the only way that UEFA can make serious progress, is for the EU to become heavily involved in Europe-wide football. If the EU makes a legally binding decision then, presumably, all FAs, leagues etc will have to follow suit. This relationship between UEFA and the European Parliament should be monitored closely because it has the potential to dramatically affect our national game here in England. Arnaut said:

*"Our analysis leads to the clear conclusion that UEFA should be established as the formal partner of the European Union to engage in dialogue and to work in cooperation with the EU to tackle these issues going forward"*. Whether this should be taken as an observation or a threat is debatable.

The report is heavily wrapped in legal jargon but the main points raised are:

- Salary capping
- Player quotas, ensuring that home grown players are included in all teams
- Limiting the size of squads
- Establishment of a transfer 'clearing house'
- TV sales by a central organisation, not just by individual clubs
- Questioning whether certain individuals should be involved in football, especially those people and organisations that end up owning a club
- Warning that Internet betting could have a serious effect on the integrity of football. This of course comes hot on the heels of betting and match-fixing scandals in Italy and Germany
- The ever-increasing numbers of agents within football. Agents are seen as a drain on football without adding any significant value
- Recognising that racism / xenophobia are far from being beaten
- Assuring that safety standards are adhered to within football stadia and that they are properly equipped.
- Highlighting the potential problem of money laundering.
- Highlighting the risks of people / child trafficking whereby young people are brought into countries as trainee footballers, only for them to be discarded at an early stage
- The G14 clubs are criticised because they would worsen the imbalance between the rich and poor clubs.
- All clubs should be required to publish annual statements regarding their ownership
- Protecting the pyramid of football; FIFA at the top, local community football at the bottom
- European fans organisation.

[1] Independent European Sport Review 2006; report by José Luis Arnaut. Quote taken from Foreword



You may ask why these changes are being sought by UEFA. The answer is that they feel there is a real danger of a significant decline in the competitive balance of football. They pinpoint a financial imbalance between countries and a similar disparity within national leagues. The obvious comparisons in England would be between the Premier League and everyone else, and the English game in general when compared to countries like Greece, Turkey, Baltic States etc. They obviously feel that the rich clubs continue to become richer while all of the other clubs face an uphill struggle to survive let alone compete effectively. Unless one of the major clubs has a hiccup in terms of form or financial stability, you can assume that when every Champions League and UEFA Cup tournament gets underway, the vast majority of the clubs involved will be more or less the same from the previous season. Consequently, you can see why UEFA is becoming alarmed. They are trying to avoid a monopoly and a situation where results become predictable.

On several occasions during the conference attended by the IFC in Brussels, English clubs were held up as examples of bad clubs. One delegate compared Bayern Munich to Chelsea and said that both clubs had roughly the same turnover but by the end of the previous season, Bayern Munich had made a profit of 28m euros while Chelsea had suffered a loss of 205m euros. He complained that it wasn't fair when it came to playing in the same competitions that Bayern Munich were running their business in a responsible manner, yet Chelsea were losing a fortune without a care in the world. UEFA see this concentration of wealth within just a handful of clubs and a few countries as being detrimental to the game. From a European point, if you are playing in one of the poorer countries within the Union, it is hard to ignore UEFA's reasoning. However, it goes without saying that while some of the points raised in the Independent European Sports Review would be welcomed by English clubs, many would not. The English game is generally in a strong financial state and, although there will always be detractors, football in England is, on the whole, well run and successful.

Limiting the size of squads and ensuring a certain number of local players are included in teams, would certainly have some impact if it was made to apply to the English leagues. These restrictions will arrive in the summer of 2007 in all UEFA competitions. Salary capping would be a potential minefield. The Review says that the salary cap is to prevent the richest clubs acquiring all of the best playing talent by simply paying more money to players. During the Brussels conference it was frequently voiced that a small number of clubs are monopolising the best players, but many of the leading footballers are either sat on the bench or rarely seen. There was a feeling that clubs were merely buying players to prevent other clubs signing them; that they were stockpiling talent which was therefore to the detriment of the game as a whole because the paying spectator was being denied the chance to see these players in action on a regular basis. *The IFC feels that it is purely up to the clubs as to what they should do with their money. There is also a suggestion that the salary cap would be regulated by a special Euro-wide tax on clubs, thereby helping re-distribute wealth from the rich clubs to the poor clubs.* This latter point would be extremely contentious and it is difficult to see how it could work. It can also be assumed that money would be leaving English clubs if this ruling came into practice. And what would be the criteria? If it was done on a club's turnover, it would mean that small clubs would be prevented from signing top players because they couldn't set their own wage limits. Gone would be the days when a small club ruffles the feathers of the big boys and make a dent in their pride. After all, football is a business, so what right does UEFA have to tell the chairman of an English club how he should run his business and how he should spend his money? There is also the problem of whether such strict controls would be against the freedom of movement within Europe because people have the right to find employment wherever they want. UEFA obviously hope that their relationship with the EU will mean that football is exempt from these rulings,

The TV deal wouldn't seriously affect English football because TV deals are done centrally in any case.

There is a recommendation that rules should continue regarding clubs being forced to release players to play for their country, although the Review suggests that there should be some sort of legal protection to guarantee this. At the moment clubs are forced to release players without receiving any compensation. It is thought that some clubs are going to challenge this in the European courts. UEFA are obviously trying to head off that potential problem with an overriding bit of legislation.

The ruling on agents would be to make their deals more transparent and put an end to dual representation where an agent works for both the player AND the club. This would be strongly supported by English football as has already been shown with the latest changes to legislation regarding agents. Ownership of a football club would require a 'fit and proper'

test in a bid to protect the integrity of football. This is already in place in the English game and would again be supported by English clubs. There would also be support for an early warning mechanism across Europe to help with Internet betting and match fixing. The suggestion of a European fans' organisation is also likely to receive support as would the promotion of safe stadia across Europe. This point added weight to the IFC's report regarding the experience of English football fans travelling to Europe<sup>[2]</sup> bearing in mind the disgraceful state of some grounds that UEFA seem quite happy about. Clubs and the authorities will also support the Review's proposals regarding racism, player trafficking, xenophobia and money laundering. They are also likely to back any sort of proposals that would help clarify any legal issues and the much talked about specificity of sport. Anything, within reason, that helps to keep football out of the law courts will surely be backed by everyone.

Another idea floated in the Review was that the EU should establish a clearing house for all transfers of players. This is unrealistic. The FA is best placed to monitor all of this in England, especially now that their compliance unit has been beefed-up. Large sections of this Independent European Sports Review will rightly irritate the English football authorities. It seems to be acceptable for UEFA and the EU to tell English football what is required, but why don't UEFA / EU give suggestions as to how they should change. There is no point in UEFA informing English football of a host of potential rules and regulations that could be forced upon them without furthering those suggestions with positive ideas.

UEFA and the EU are going to become closer and closer. They seem to be preaching the same message and have similar sympathies. Bearing in mind the dire state of football in many countries and the fact that most clubs scratch a living, guarantees that this report is certain to find wide support within a large part of the Continent. The IFC during its research in following English football fans travelling to Europe witnessed some appalling conditions. It should be clearly noted that all of this is coming from the top of the EU so no matter how much the FA, Premier League and Football League comment and complain, there is a realistic danger that all of the changes being desired by UEFA will come to fruition. Arnaut believes that the changes should become part of EU law. This in turn would mean that our clubs will have to toe the line whether they like it or not. There is obviously support from within certain sections of the British Government that encouraged the European Review in the first place.

The IFC is extremely concerned about the external influence that seems to be being forced upon English football. As mentioned earlier, the IFC witnessed several occasions during events in Brussels when English football and certain English clubs and / or individuals, were singled out as being examples of what should NOT happen in football. The Independent

European Sports Review is seen by some as a sort of cloak and dagger way of ensuring that the control of football in Europe becomes centralised by the EU and UEFA, so there is rightly concern that football in England has much to worry about from this Review. While UEFA may say that the proposals in the Review would help protect football from being dragged into the law courts in an attempt to solve any argument, it should not be assumed that football in England is going to the wall. The opposite is actually the case. After a rather turbulent spell with clubs going into administration and a flurry of takeovers, there seems to be a settling of the situation. There are currently no clubs in administration and the levels of interest in English football are higher than ever. The Premier League continues to secure stunning figures for its broadcast rights and the Football League is enjoying success in particular with its Championship division. The FA is also responding to the Burns Review.

However, wrapped up in all of this, there is a nagging suspicion that UEFA is trying to become a governing body of European football. At the moment they purely control their own competitions. The only governing body beyond our shores that is relevant to English football is FIFA. The IFC is also concerned by the general statement that football is in crisis. While recognising the disparity of finance between clubs and leagues, which is certainly the growing case in England, the IFC feels that it is wrong to label all football as being in crisis. This is clearly not the case and, given correct management and financial prudence, there is no reason to suspect that the trend will be reversed.

The IFC therefore does not accept the basic premise of the Arnaut Report that *'sport in general and football in particular are in poor health'*. Nor is the IFC convinced that the case is proven for a major intervention by political and government bodies. The IFC also opposes the designation of UEFA as a pan-European governing body.

[2] The Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions 2005 / 2006





Time will tell as to which parts of the Independent European Sports Review are implemented and which parts affect English football. Certainly the IFC will be following this very closely and monitoring the actions of UEFA. To date, any work undertaken by the IFC has struggled to get any response from UEFA. There is also a general impression gained by the IFC that the authorities don't have too much confidence in UEFA. It should be remembered that UEFA is an association of associations and not a governing body. They have every right to be concerned about European football as a whole, but they have no right to tell English football what to do and how to do it unless it applies to the European competitions. Whether this is of much benefit to English football remains questionable. It will be interesting to see how the election of Michel Platini as President of UEFA affects the situation. It should also be noted that at several meetings and conferences attended by the IFC where UEFA representatives have been speaking, the officials have spent a considerable period of time stressing that the Arnaut Report and its recommendations are most certainly not a back door method of giving UEFA more power. The IFC isn't so sure. One senior official within an English football authority described UEFA's tactics as a 'land grab, in an effort to assert themselves as a European governing body'.

The response to the Independent European Sports Review from the English authorities was interesting. The Football Association and the Premier League worked closely in their response. There was general support for anything that could help any Europe-wide activity regarding hooligans, betting, money laundering, agents, trafficking of young players, match-fixing, corruption, ticket-touting etc. They question the current proposals for a salary cap or putting a 'home grown player' requirement in place, although the FA felt that if discussions could help the development of younger players and also look at possible cost controls within football, then they would be

willing to take part in any forum. And, both the FA and the Premier League are most definitely against the idea that UEFA should become a governing body of European football, working closely with the European Union. They also did not agree with the overall thrust of the Report that football was in a shocking state. As the FA pointed out, that certainly isn't the case in England:

*'The basis of the review, according to the Chairman's opening statements, is that European football is "not in good health." This view can be strongly contested from an English perspective. Football in England is in many ways as healthy and successful as it has ever been. The game has more spectators, participants, revenues and media interest than at any time in its history'.*

Due to the successful state of football in this country, it is refreshing to see that the FA turned the tables on the Review, stating:

*'...we believe that there are a number of policies, systems and processes in place in English football which could and should be implemented across the EU area'.*

The glaring point here that both the FA and Premier League point out, is that football varies widely from nation to nation and that there cannot be a Europe-wide solution to all ills. It is invariably better to resolve problems on a local level rather than bid to search for something that would cover everyone. It is not feasible.

The FA also point out that, in their opinion, it would be a backward step if the European Union got involved in the governance of sport, although they would support anything that helps the EU and its member states recognise that sport is frequently a special case or, as the EU and UEFA have now started to refer to as the 'specificity' of sport. This is essentially aimed at keeping sport out of the law courts. The FA quite rightly points out that if it is a footballing matter then it should be left to the clubs, national associations and FIFA to resolve the issue. With this in mind, they do not support the idea of setting up a European Sports Agency that would, in effect, monitor all European sport on behalf of the EU.

The Premier League give an impressive list of figures to show how strong football is in England. They estimate that football in England by the end of 2008 will be worth around 2bn euros per year. They even estimate that annual taxes levied on players and clubs across England will shortly reach 1bn euros. Add in the many thousands of people who are employed directly or indirectly in football, plus the increasing amount of funding pumped into community and charity work (the Premier League puts £80m into grassroots football and community schemes each year), points to a strong football industry. They admit that from time to time some clubs may suffer from an economic downturn and the associated problems, but that when looking at English football as a whole, it is in an extremely healthy state.

The Football League made two submissions to the Arnaut Report and the League's Chairman, Lord Brian Mawhinney, was also in touch with Mr. Arnaut who had previously attended the Football League's June 2006 Annual Conference. Lord Mawhinney highlights six areas that give the Football League concern:

- Solidarity with particular reference to the distribution of wealth. He hints that television revenue could be better split, especially with regard to the European competitions, suggesting that TV revenue from these games could be creamed-off and given to those clubs that are not in UEFA competitions
- Scrapping the transfer window which, he says, undermines the domestic transfer market
- The fixture list of international matches needs to be studied carefully as the proliferation of international games is damaging domestic competitions
- More youth development and an emphasis on a 'home grown' policy. He suggests that clubs with less available finance should be helped
- UEFA and FIFA have the power to legislate against national associations so, therefore, a system should be available that ensure the reverse is also possible, whereby affiliated bodies can seek re-dress against UEFA and FIFA
- Freedom to interpret the Laws of the Game, thereby allowing individual associations to experiment with new innovations such as goal-line technology or sin-bins.

The overriding issue for the Football League is that they see very little merit in creating another tier of governance in football. The League is also understandably miffed that the number of European cup matches is increasing. There has been a 50% increase in the past fifteen years; but for whose benefit? Certainly not the clubs in the Football League who frequently play midweek games when there is blanket coverage of attractive European games on TV, radio and websites. They even point to research that suggests a detrimental effect on domestic league football by the increase in European games.

Their desire to end the transfer window is likely to find favour with the other authorities in England. The Football League see this bit of legislation as an example of UEFA's negative interference in the English domestic game. Andy Williamson, Chief Operating Officer of the Football League told the IFC: *'Although introduced through FIFA rules, transfer windows were the invention of UEFA who had attempted on two occasions in the 1990's to foist 'harmonised registration periods' upon European football. These proposals were very firmly batted back by all the English authorities but when the EC questioned the validity of the football transfer system, UEFA seized the opportunity to factor in their own dogma. The effect has been to change the financial balance of the game in this country because its economic dynamics have been disturbed by outside interference'.*

The Football League even cites the handling of the Bosman ruling as another example of *'UEFA's self-interest and lack of foresight'*. Consequently, it is easy to see that when UEFA says it is working closely with the European Union for the benefit of all football, the Football League is decidedly sceptical and they see little relevance in how restructuring the game's ruling bodies would assist its 72 clubs. As Andy Williamson commented:

*'If we had a poor record, then perhaps there might be more of a case, but the game in this country is more developed, better organised and has a greater degree of sophistication than arguably anywhere else in the world'.*

The IFC had an interesting meeting with FIFA where the Arnaut Report was discussed at length. They have support for the idea of insisting that a minimum number of 'home grown' players are included in teams and they would like to see something whereby teams are encouraged to always field their strongest sides and ensure that teams play to win rather than merely try to avoid relegation. They were also happy to support moves to ensure the specificity of sport and that in certain areas like betting, doping, fraud, money laundering etc, there would be a need for some sort of government help required. However, FIFA could not understand why the European Union wanted to become heavily involved in football. They were not happy with such intervention. There was an admittance that some things would need to be looked at, especially bearing in mind, they said, that one footballer who had joined a wealthy club but seemed destined to spend his time sitting on the substitutes bench, was alleged to have said that he would prefer to be able to buy a Ferrari than play in every game for a club where he may not be so well paid. (FIFA is busy compiling a series of reports under the title of *'For the Good of the Game'*. A Task Force has been established to study three key areas; financial matters, competitions, and political matters. Results of the Task Force will be disclosed at the end of May 2007).

It should also be noted that another European report<sup>[3]</sup> covered much of the ground mentioned in the Independent European Sports Review, but it did not attract the same amount of attention. Written by Ivo Belet, a Belgian MEP, it was seen as another important step towards the White Paper that is due to be published in May 2007, aimed at defining the European Commission's approach to sport. Large parts of the Belet Report look at the legal and social aspects of football, but also emphasise concerns about how there is a danger that football could be driven purely by business motives, obviously referring to the influence of overseas investors buying into football clubs for profit rather than passion. The Report also likes the idea of a minimum number of 'home-grown' players in every team, plus the involvement of supporters in the running and ownership of clubs.

There is support for a strengthening of the UEFA Club Licensing System, plus a suggestion that UEFA could establish a body to monitor whether clubs and leagues are complying with these regulations. There is a request for UEFA to make extensive use of 'spot-checking'. This is something that the IFC recommended in its investigations into the experience of English football fans travelling to the Continent for European games. However, the IFC should point out here that the UEFA Club Licensing System is purely for those clubs that are competing in UEFA competitions like the European Champions League, UEFA Cup or Intertoto Cup. It has no direct relevance for clubs playing in any other competitions.

There is also a desire in the Belet Report for FIFA to be more transparent and democratic. However, the one major difference between the Arnaut Report and the Belet Report, is that Belet sees a need for strong governance of clubs at a national level. Arnaut promotes the desire for UEFA to control all national leagues and FAs. It would be interesting to discover how much input and influence UEFA had over the compilation of the Arnaut Report.

In conclusion to this section of the chapter looking at the Arnaut and Belet Reports, the IFC's overall feeling is that sport in general, and football in particular, can rarely fit into the ethos of 'one size fits all'. If English football was languishing in a state of financial ruin with sparse crowds and little interest, then there would be reason for concern. However, the indications are that the game in England is stronger than ever, generally very well run and needs little in the way of assistance from the European Commission or UEFA to help it to continue flourishing. It is then completely understandable why the

football authorities in England are wary of greater European involvement and, most certainly, handing more power and influence to UEFA. The latter point is especially fascinating because while most observers are of the opinion that UEFA is trying to assert more power and control, UEFA themselves always strenuously deny this. The Arnaut and Belet Reports will form a large part of the work that leads into the European White Paper scheduled for May 2007. It is to be hoped that the English football authorities and the UK Government have had extensive input and have been fully consulted. It should make for interesting reading.

As mentioned earlier, another significant event regarding the governance of football in England was the FA's response to the Burns Report that had been published in the summer of 2005. The report was instigated at the request of the Government following what had been a turbulent spell for the FA. The FA were criticised for taking a long time over their response. Many saw this as the FA dragging their feet; a delaying tactic. However, the IFC feels this was unfair criticism. *The FA is a sizable organisation with a large number of members. Organising what amounted to the biggest reform in the FA's 143 year history was never going to happen overnight. If they had rushed through their response, they would have been criticised for not fully considering the implications; they were caught between a rock and a hard place. The IFC feels that the FA should be congratulated for dealing with a tricky problem in a sensitive yet thorough manner that concluded with the Football Association's 91-man Council adopting the Burns Report in its entirety.* The key features of Lord Terry Burns' review will see the appointment of an independent chairman and the restructuring of the board. The National Game and the Professional Game would each have 5 members on the main board. There will be a new regulation and compliance unit that will, in effect, make sure that the regulatory function of the FA is enforced. This unit will be semi-autonomous.

The FA Council will be re-jigged and broadened so as to include members from across the football spectrum such as supporters, players (the PFA), managers (the LMA), administrators, referees and representatives from disabled, black and ethnic minority groups. There will be two new subsidiaries within the FA to look after both the professional game (Professional Football Alliance) and the grass roots aspects of football (Community Football Alliance) often referred to as the National Game throughout England. The National Game would have the same voting rights as the Professional Game at shareholder meetings.





There has been general approval of these moves which appear to look after the interests of most people within football. The Premier League and Football League have voiced their approval and see this as a healthy move for English football. Even the Government felt it was a step in the right direction. It now remains to be seen what sort of timescale will be required by the FA to implement all of the changes. No doubt there will be more frustrations along the way. The final vote on the various reforms was due to take place on 13th March 2007, but this was delayed due to the amount of material that needed to be disseminated to members. It now looks as though the vote will take place in May 2007. As in our 2005 Annual Report,

**THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE FA MAKE PROGRESS ON THESE REFORMS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. THE LONGER IT TAKES FOR THE REFORMS TO BE PUT IN PLACE, THE MORE THAT PEOPLE WILL SUSPECT FOUL PLAY AND INCOMPETENCE, AND THEREFORE LEAVE THE ORGANISATION OPEN TO CRITICISM.**

The Football Association Financial Advisory Committee (FAC), chaired by the former IFC Commissioner Kate Barker, is a key element of the way football is run in England. It first met in 2003 and has followed a policy to '*promote and protect the financial long-term health and stability of clubs in their communities*'. The Committee's terms of reference are to review and assess the adequacy of financial controls in football. They look at corporate governance within each level of the game, keep an eye on the overall financial health of clubs and generally monitor the way football goes about its business. This is a similar remit to that of the IFC and an early decision was taken following the formation of the FAC that the two organisations would not duplicate their work. Consequently, the IFC continues to review football finance and works closely with the FAC.

The Financial Advisory Committee met three times in 2006 (same as 2005).

One of the issues they looked at was ownership of football clubs. They noted that there seemed to be a certain amount of disquiet about the foreign ownership of clubs mainly because supporters did not associate with someone who, despite being apparently totally detached from their club, wanted to own it. There was a suspicion that foreign owners merely saw the purchase

of a football club as being a business opportunity. However, the FAC felt that these concerns were unfounded. In general, those clubs that had attracted foreign investment had done well out of it and the fact that the money was coming from a foreign investor was irrelevant. However, the FAC felt that the ownership of club was a vitally important issue and was something that would certainly be a key feature of their work in 2007.

The Financial Advisory Committee felt that it was progressing with the Fit and Proper Person Test and that the vast majority of clubs seemed to have found this helpful. A guide to good governance that had been sent to clubs in the higher echelons of football within England had gone down well. However, it was felt that there was a degree of concern about the significant shareholdings being held by certain people at various clubs. Although not necessarily related, the Committee was also drafting a document to help clubs on the issue of possible money laundering and what they should watch out for.

Security of tenure is also seen by the FAC as something of great importance. This is essentially an assurance that football grounds will be protected and therefore avoid the danger of asset strippers doing their worst. It should guarantee the long-term use of this facility for the club. This latter point is particularly important when it comes to planning. The FAC will continue to monitor security of tenure and explore whether the Football Association should be a statutory consultee.

*Something that the FAC promotes strongly is Best Practice. It is felt that clubs are generally improving in this area but that perhaps more examples of what they should and shouldn't do, could be given to the clubs by the authorities.*

The Deloitte company continues to produce interesting reports focussing on football. They provide an insight into the state of the financial health of football. The first to be published was the 2006 Deloitte Annual Review of Football Finance, '*All eyes on Europe*',<sup>[4]</sup> This makes fascinating reading and paints a generally favourable picture of the state of football in England in the 2004-05 season. The Premier League as a whole continues to go financially from strength to strength, and the Football League appears to have laid to rest problems generated by the collapse of ITV Digital. In the 'pecking order' of European leagues, the Premier League is at the top of the earnings chart while the Football League Championship comes 6th, following on from the other major leagues in Europe (England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain). The one disappointment for the Premier League is that their rate of growth in 2004-05 had slowed to just 1%, the lowest annual growth rate since the Premiership began. The figures still make impressive reading though and following the latest round of broadcast agreements, the growth rate will quickly resume.

[4] Deloitte Annual Review of Football Finance; '*All eyes on Europe*'

It is also encouraging to note that while revenue seems to be rising, costs are falling. Another plus point is that, if Chelsea is removed from the equation, Premiership clubs are operating at a pre-tax profit for the first time since the 1998-99 season. However, Deloitte do point out a problem with all of these figures. They recognise that while the overall financial situation is good, nearly all of the top European leagues are seeing a large percentage of their revenue generated by only a handful of clubs. This individual club strength is mirrored by the amount of money they spend and this, they feel, is reflected by the on-field performance. They add that the various governing bodies need to ensure that competition stays strong both within leagues and between leagues, warning about an 'us and them' situation developing. This latter point was something that was emphasised in the Independent European Sports Review.

However, in terms of profits, Deloitte says that as long as the Premiership clubs manage to control their costs, they should be able to increase the amount of revenue coming into them. The biggest chunk will come from improved broadcast deals. The race for promotion from the Championship into the Premiership is now estimated to culminate in a competition that has the biggest financial prize in World football. The club that wins the 2007 Championship play off will earn in the region of £50million. The Football League overall, saw an increase in total revenue, but nearly all of this rise was to be found in the Championship. Revenue figures for Football Leagues 1 and 2 were almost unchanged, but the Championship losses increased. This is put down to a rise in operating costs and a fall in the money generated from transfers, although it is predicted that revenues will be unchanged for 2005-06. Deloitte also recognises that many small clubs in the Football League are fighting for survival, relying on benefactors to keep them afloat. Although many clubs are operating at a loss and many are saddled with a legacy of debt, the situation doesn't appear to be getting any worse. However, it wouldn't take too much for a club to be tipped over the edge and into a serious financial state.

Deloitte give a warning for the Premiership clubs, saying that they shouldn't put all of their eggs in the broadcasting revenue basket and aim to attract finance from other deals and of course match attendance. On the plus side, they recognise that some clubs have managed to secure sizeable new sponsorship deals.

It appears that good governance is settling in at many clubs. The race into debt is slowing. Some clubs are now operating at a profit. The percentage of a club's turnover that is used for wages is also showing a decline. Life is still tricky in the lower levels of the Football League and, of course, there is always the temptation to try and buy your way into the top flight of football. The figures for the Premiership and Championship can also be slightly distorted by the size and calibre of clubs that are promoted and relegated between the two divisions. There is also the influence of increasing capacity at various stadia.

For example, the new Emirates Stadium and the increased attendances at Old Trafford following extension of the stadium, will also affect future figures.

The second Deloitte report, '*Football Money League*'<sup>[5]</sup> was published in February 2007 and looks back at the 2005 / 06 season, using figures published by clubs in their annual financial statements. Deloitte provide us with a league table that shows the income generated by Europe's top 20 clubs. As with the previous year, Real Madrid sit at the top of the table, followed by Barcelona and Juventus. Then comes the first of 10 English clubs in the European top 20; Manchester Utd. Overall, there are 8 English sides in the top 20. West Ham is the latest recruit to this select cream of football clubs coming in at 19th place. Manchester City are unchanged at 17th place. Tottenham Hotspur have slipped two places to 15th position; Newcastle Utd down one to 13th; Liverpool down two to 10th; Arsenal up 1 to 9th and Chelsea down 1 to 6th place. However, such has been the increase in broadcast revenue, that Deloitte expect English clubs to make up half of the Top 20 Money League clubs by the 2007 / 08 season.

Broadcast rights are seen as the big money spinner for clubs and leagues. It is expected that there will be further revenue increases for clubs in future seasons. However, Deloitte also fires off a warning shot that clubs need to spend this new-found wealth wisely and ensure long-term sustainable growth. They recommend that clubs don't, in effect, put all of their eggs into the 'broadcast basket' and endeavour to improve the revenue streams for things like match ticket sales, merchandising, advertising etc.

Deloitte also reflects on the trend for English clubs to fall into foreign ownership. At the time of publication, seven English clubs are now controlled by foreign investors (Manchester Utd, Chelsea, Portsmouth, Fulham, Aston Villa, West Ham Utd and Liverpool). Provided wages can be kept under control, Deloitte expects profits to increase and the Premier League will continue to reign as the most profitable league in world football and maintain huge levels of interest in terms of viewing figures around the globe. Consequently, Deloitte come to roughly the same conclusion as the FA's Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) that as long as the new owners, albeit foreign, continue to operate in a right and proper manner and maintain levels of transparency, then there isn't a problem. However, they feel that there may be a case for some sort of European or worldwide framework to ensure that everyone does stick to the rules and that Best Practice and Good Governance are maintained at all times. They do express a concern that the authorities need to be aware that, in the case of takeovers of small clubs or in smaller leagues, there is some sort of awareness regarding the independence of clubs and the integrity of competitions. Deloitte feels that the international football authorities need to take a lead on this. This latter point is certain to find favour with the authors of the Independent European Sports Review, as discussed at the start of this chapter.

[5] Deloitte; Football Money League, 'The reign in Spain'. February 2007

Another snapshot of the state of English football can be found in the latest Birkbeck 'State of the Game – The Corporate Governance of Football Clubs 2006'<sup>[6]</sup> report. In the preface, Jose Luis Arnaut, author of the Independent European Sports Review, states that *'sport in general and football, in particular, are not in good health.'* The foreword to the Birkbeck report is written by Sports Minister Richard Caborn MP. He also points to the influence of the Independent European Sports Review stating that *'At the heart of the Review is a growing concern that the increasing commercialisation of football poses a threat to its long-term stability and success and that action is needed to reconcile the business side of football with its sporting nature.'*

The general flavour of those two comments is that football is in trouble and the future looks bleak. The IFC doesn't agree and sways more towards the feelings of Deloitte in their report that clubs are now more aware of what is required in terms of prudent governance and that the financial situation should not worsen and, assuming the growth pattern continues, those clubs particularly in the Premiership should continue to do well.

Birkbeck state in their report *'it is clear that the tail that wags the dog, namely the Premier League clubs, have actually moved in the wrong direction over the past year, with takeovers resulting in many of these clubs now being owned by multimillionaires who have no connection with or allegiance to the club, its local community or its supporter base.'* They even quote a UEFA representative as saying *'This is a wake up call, and the UK Government has a responsibility to start investigating'*. All of this is in contrast to the findings of the FA's Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) that felt the takeover of clubs by foreigners hadn't had any detrimental effect on them. Granted, most supporters would prefer someone to either buy their club or inject money into it who had a background of supporting their club, of having being brought up as a child standing on the terraces, but this is a romantic view. Once the realisation sets in that there are no local investors, they seem content with the money coming from anywhere. The FAC could find no financial reason to criticise takeovers from 'outsiders'. Birkbeck is obviously a huge supporter of the Independent European Sports Review. One of the authors of the Birkbeck report was also a member of the Review team.

Birkbeck is keen for the Burns Review to be implemented as soon as possible especially with respect to the format of the FA. They are worried that the FA Council is being undermined rather than being turned into a genuinely representative body. They would prefer a slimmed-down Council with a membership that represents key stakeholders with authority over the Executive.

They have a major concern regarding the *'inadequate state of regulation and governance within the football industry in England, Europe and globally'*. They want to see *'greater coordination on governance and regulatory issues across Europe, together with an urgent need for the legal recognition of the specificity of sport'*. There is also extensive backing for supporters' trusts and an encouragement for the Premier League to allow supporters to have more of a say at their clubs. They even hint that if the authorities don't introduce some sort of self-regulation, then Government could enforce it, although Birkbeck does say that this places a lot of emphasis on the supporters' trusts to have high governance standards themselves.

Their final concern relates to agents in football. They want agents to be employed solely by the players and never by the clubs. They do not want to see agents involved in any way when it comes to clubs, even when they are trying to sell a player. They reckon that 87% of clubs they surveyed would welcome this move.

Birkbeck's 'State of the Game' is a valuable exercise in looking at the way football is run. They are a respected body that provides a detailed look at football, not only in England but also from a wider perspective. They are building a powerful database of material and are obviously well thought of within Government circles and amongst the European and World football regulators.

One point mentioned by the IFC in last year's Annual Report was a request that more football club directors underwent some specific training for this role. With this in mind, the IFC warmly welcomes the Institute of Directors devising a course aimed purely at senior people working at clubs of all levels. The Certificate of Football Management course is due to be held in mid 2007. The IFC will monitor the course and report on how effective such intensive training is for football club directors and senior administrators.

Lastly, returning to Europe, the summer of 2007 will see another important publication that is certain to cause a lot of discussion. The European Union aims to publish a white paper on sport. As this IFC Annual Report was going to print, a major public consultation was underway which will inform the white paper. This document will outline the EU's current approach to sport and include recommendations for the future. As with the Independent European Sports Review, it can be assumed that a large chunk of this sports review will focus purely upon football. At a seminar on European Affairs in Brussels (30th November / 1st December 2006), Odile Quintin, the European Commission's senior official in charge of sport, is quoted as saying that the white paper will concentrate on three areas; the social aspects of sport, its economic dimension and the structure of sports governance. The IFC looks forward to commenting on this in next year's Annual Report. ●

[6] Birkbeck, Football Governance Research Centre, 'State of the Game – The Corporate Governance of Football Clubs 2006'





All of the football authorities and bodies spoken to by the IFC over the past year have shown a real determination to tackle issues of racism and equal opportunities. Whether it is within the clubs, the leagues or within the offices of the various organisations themselves, there is a serious endeavour to improve things and work together. It is also an area that attracts intense scrutiny from outside. Sports Minister Richard Caborn MP, speaking at a Commission for Racial Equality event<sup>(1)</sup> summed-up what was expected of everyone involved in football by saying:-  
*'English football has taken a lead in eradicating racism from the terraces, but it can go further. From the local park to the Premiership pitch the game must inspire and nurture black and ethnic talent. It must also create management structures that reflect the game in all its diversity and continue to work hard to welcome officials, volunteers and spectators of all backgrounds.'*

In areas like Racism, Equal Opportunities, Child Protection etc, the Football Association sets the standard and takes a lead. The Premier League and Football League also work hard on their own initiatives, as do the PFA, LMA and Football Foundation, but it is the FA, as the governing body of football in England, that is best placed to oversee and control issues that affect everyone within football, whether it is the club currently residing at the top of the Premiership or the club languishing at the bottom of a local league in some remote corner of England.

# DIVERSITY & EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

One of the key features of previous IFC Annual Reports was a desire for all three football authorities to work together and provide a united front regarding Racism and Equal Opportunities. This was tricky because each had their own particular issues and logistics, and preferred to deal with things in their own way. However, they now meet quarterly via the All Agency Review Team (AART) which was set up to provide a common approach to equal opportunities and equality with an initial main emphasis on tackling racism strategies that could be developed across the game as a whole.

The Professional Football Association (PFA), Football Foundation and the League Manager's Association were also included in the original formation of the forum, and more recently the Football Conference and Football in the Community have been invited to attend. It makes sense to have these agencies included in discussions because they are so intertwined with everything that goes on within the game. The fact that the IFC is now invited makes it a hugely worthwhile exercise from the Commission's point of view because it feels as though it too can now be a part of what is going on and therefore be more up to date. The various decisions that arise from these meetings are then tailored according to each authority. In addition the AART sets up sub-groups to discuss and develop action plans for various topics relating to equality. Without doubt, there is huge benefit in having everyone sat around a table discussing various issues. Each person may have their own vested interests according to the authority or organisation they represent, but in general the discussions are worthwhile and fruitful.

The setting up of the All Agency Review Team by the FA was a major move forward in the battle to stamp out racism. This forum does good work and seems to cut through a lot of paperwork and unnecessary delays by simply gathering key people around a table to thrash out various topics. The FA's research for the National Game Strategy is already demonstrating that more needs to be done in grassroots football to engage ethnic minority and emerging communities as well as continuing to tackle racism. As with many initiatives, the FA feels that clubs and local FA's have had a lot to absorb over the recent year or so and that time was needed for things to bed-in. However, there is a growing sense that inclusion is a major factor in grassroots football and there needs to be a much greater awareness of the issues facing under-represented groups and those who are still on the receiving end of abuse and discrimination. The IFC looks forward to seeing how these plans develop as a large amount of emphasis will be placed on the role of the County FA's (CFA) in this.

As seems to be the case with various schemes emanating from within the FA, there is going to be an increased workload for the CFA's around England. An Equality Coordinator has been put in place to have a main focus of supporting County FA's with their equality work and CRE Action Plans. They will also work on developing a training programme in Racial Equality, building on the Football For All – Equality workshop. Many

of the CFA's are rightly concerned about allegations of racist abuse and are keen to discover what they should do, how they should handle sensitive situations and, more importantly, how to get investigations underway and how to resolve them. The FA has designed and developed a training programme for people in CFA's who handle allegations that range from racism, homophobia and abuse of women, to looking into concerns of disabled people. This programme was piloted at the end of 2006 and is now being rolled out from March 2007 onwards. It is to be hoped that the tutors will be able to furnish the CFA's with sufficient information to allow them to deal with issues locally rather than refer them to Soho Square. This is a major development by the FA. The IFC hopes that sufficient funding is in place to maintain this and provide sufficient staffing. The FA intends producing a report about the progress CFA's have made with their CRE Action Plans in 2007. The IFC will include this in next year's Annual Report.

The FA is aware that it needs to increase opportunities for players, coaches and managers who come from an ethnic minority background. This is becoming a really awkward problem and one that is proving tricky to resolve. It is also easy to reflect on this issue in a rather negative fashion as the number of black managers within the professional game has remained at only two at the time of this Annual Report going to print (Paul Ince at Macclesfield Town FC and Keith Curle at Torquay Utd). The Premier League has never had a black English manager, despite around 25% of its players being non-white.

With this in mind the FA is setting up various pilot projects to help identify talented Asian players, give specialist coaching to Asian youngsters and look at how aspiring ethnic minority coaches / managers in grassroots football can be given the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and experience to assist them to move up the football pyramid. The FA is working hard to start at school level and promote football to all age groups. However, there needs to be a concerted effort to get professional clubs to link with their communities more. The clubs not only need to ensure that the Asian community is encouraged to attend stadia as supporters, but to also identify potential talent. There is a huge untapped pool of potential amongst the Asian community. Coaches and scouts need to be encouraged to either invite Asians to attend coaching courses or ensure that scouts watch football matches where Asians are playing. The more the Asian community feels that they are wanted by the football club and football in general, the more they are likely to embrace the game. This will all come under the slogan of Football for All which is used by the FA to publicise its commitment to equality to the wider footballing audience. The FA is using the considerable experience of Brendon Batson in this area. More work is planned for 2007-08 and the IFC will look to see if the pace can be quickened in this area which has so far seen disappointing results.

This issue is especially important in some towns and cities where the Asian / ethnic population is increasing. In some regions, although the population is staying roughly the same, the percentage of the indigenous white population is falling while the Asian / ethnic percentage is rising. This spells danger and financial problems for some clubs in these areas if they fail to attract Asian fans. If they fail to bring in more people from the Asian / ethnic community, their match attendances will begin to fall and, correspondingly, their income from turnstile takings will also fall. The authorities must continue with their research to try and uncover reasons why Asians and ethnic people show a lack of interest in attending football matches and how measures can be taken to address this problem.

Another area being looked at by all of the authorities is homophobia. The All Agency Review Team will be monitoring this during 2007 and decide whether the clubs need any help in tackling this issue but, as with so many things, a lot of the work done in this area and others will come down to finance. It should be noted that the FA has announced that from the start of next season (2007-08), homophobic chants are to be banned at every football ground in England. Fans singing anti-gay songs will be ejected from the stadium and police will be urged to arrest and prosecute serious cases under disorderly behaviour laws.

The FA should be applauded for being the first governing body to achieve the Foundation and Preliminary levels of the Equality Standard administered by Sport England. They aim to submit for the Intermediate level during 2007. The authority is also looking closely at the way it goes about dealing with racial equality itself. Building on the existing Race Equality and Disability Equality Advisory Groups reporting to the FA's Football Development Committee, part of the proposed restructuring to comply with the Burns Review includes proposals for a Race Equality Advisory Group and a Disability Advisory Group reporting directly to the FA's Board. In addition it is proposed that each group will elect one member to the FA Council from 1st August 2007, and that committees and forums within the FA and County FAs will strive to diversify their membership.

The AART was central to determining a common set of diversity competencies or behaviours that they want to see at all levels of the game. As a result the FA now has its own equality training programme that all staff must attend. There will even be an online facility to allow staff to continually update equality and diversity training. In addition they have designed a three-hour training programme – Football For All – Equality workshop for administrators in grassroots football. This was launched during 2006 to assist Football Development teams with their work in CFA's. At present this is not mandatory for all people in football and it has been left to the CFA's to determine the roll out of the training. West Riding CFA for example, has provided in excess of 30 workshops for their clubs and is making it a pre-requisite for the Level 1 Coaching Certificate. *The IFC would like the FA to evaluate this and consider whether the training should be made mandatory for all people involved in football.*

There is a special section in the workshop for all referees so they can understand what is and isn't acceptable regarding, for example, what may constitute racist and homophobic behaviour. They look at disabled people and the abuse of women, but the FA needs to implement this further so that all referees will know what to be aware of. The IFC would like to see this being developed in 2007.

The FA has set targets to increase the percentage of *englandfans* that come from an ethnic background. However, as is mentioned in the Community chapter of this IFC Annual Report, it will be extremely difficult to do this because of the high number of current fans who reapply every year and that the total figure of fans is already at its limit. The FA is aiming to hit a 5% target of ethnic '*englandfans*' by 2008 but this is extremely unlikely and, to be fair to everyone and avoid building any false expectations, the IFC feels that this figure needs to be reduced purely because 5% is unrealistic. There is no point in merely increasing the number of fans because there is no chance of these additional supporters getting a ticket. It may be necessary to apply the ethnic minority target to Tier 2 and Tier 3 members only and the FA should consider this.

One area where the FA admits it has a problem, is not knowing the number of ethnic minority people who are involved in grassroots football. This is now being partly addressed by a survey taking place throughout the current 2006-07 season, however some of the CFAs are reluctant to send out the forms due to the time taken to administer them and concerns that the returns will be insufficient in number and quality to be of any statistical use. The IFC would welcome some progress in the FAs ability to monitor individual applicants for ethnicity as this data is crucial to assess progress, allocate resources and determine if barriers to participation do still exist in some areas for ethnic minorities. The Football Association has asked the County FAs, through the Key Performance Indicators that are linked to financial distributions, to aim for a 10% ethnic involvement in all football development programmes.



Overall, the amount of work being undertaken by the FA in the area of racism and diversity is huge. There is a whole world of difference between dealing with professional football clubs and those clubs at grassroots where many people are volunteers. Monitoring of the situation must be a logistical nightmare. With this in mind, the FA needs to place a large degree of emphasis on the people who work 'out in the field,' the County FA's. It would appear that while professional clubs are doing some excellent work regarding racism and equal opportunities, clubs at the grassroots level are finding it more difficult to deal with issues. The football authorities are supportive of their clubs and it is good to see the FA, Premier League and Football League supporting campaigns and organisations. However, at the grassroots level of football, the IFC feels that the time has come when clubs and leagues need to take charge of this. We are not advocating that the FA steps aside, rather that they try to put measures in place that will allow grassroots clubs and in particular County FA's, to implement their own initiatives. With this in mind, **the IFC recommends that the FA tries to give additional support, advice and resources to County FAs to let them take ownership of local issues in their area and promote equality at grassroots level.** This will mean that personnel within the County FA's will need additional support and training to broaden their skills base. This should allow the Football Association to devote more time to additional issues and that eventually there will be less direct involvement or necessary contact with Soho Square.

The Premier League launched its first Equity Plan in 2004 to cover its own activities. Their 20 clubs were covered by the Kick it Out Racial Equality Standard (a framework document that sets out a series of measures to support the development of race equality policies and practices at clubs) that was initially trialled at 3 clubs during the 2003-04 season but has steadily been rolled out to the remainder of the Premier League clubs. Every club is now taking part in the scheme. 14 have achieved Preliminary level while 4 have moved onto Intermediate level. It is hoped that by the end of 2008, all 20 clubs will have achieved Intermediate status. Equality and diversity is given commendable prominence by the Premier League at their clubs and within their own organisation. They have also developed a close working relationship with the Kick It Out (KIO) campaign (the League describes them as a 'delivery partner'). Much of the work is done by the clubs themselves, therefore allowing them to involve the local community as much as possible. Some initiatives are driven from the Premier League headquarters.

The Premier League obviously works closely with the clubs in the area of racism and diversity. All of their clubs have Equal Opportunities Policies that have been checked by Premier League lawyers to ensure they meet Best Practice guidelines. All clubs have racial harassment procedures and monitoring systems across all levels. There is extensive equity and diversity training for staff with everyone at the Premier League itself being trained on a rolling programme. All 20 clubs take part in a similar training scheme with a mixture of administrative

**THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE FA TRIES TO GIVE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT, ADVICE AND RESOURCES TO COUNTY FAS TO LET THEM TAKE OWNERSHIP OF LOCAL ISSUES IN THEIR AREA AND PROMOTE EQUALITY AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL.**

staff, community coaches etc. being fully involved. A Code of Practice for recruitment and employment has been produced specifically for football and sent to all clubs. Attention has been paid to ensure that all players know what is expected of them. This includes a diversity training video, produced in conjunction with the PFA and Kick it Out and aimed at scholars. At the Premier League, 14% of the staff are from ethnic minorities, working in a variety of areas and within every level of the organisation. At club level, there are 50 countries represented amongst playing staff. The Premier League has consistently employed a diverse group of people and is leading by example in terms of its policies and procedures.

Each year the Premier League surveys around 80,000 fans. The survey gives some indication of the ethnic breakdown of fans attending Premiership matches. They admit however, that the results don't really reflect the true picture. The figures suggest that 2% of all fans attending Premiership matches come from the ethnic minority community. However, in practice, this figure is much lower than what most clubs experience. This is explained by a large proportion of the responses for the survey coming from long-term season ticket holders who are typically white. To counteract these problems, many clubs are doing simple head counts of fans entering the stadium. This has revealed a higher proportion of ethnic supporters than was evident through the survey of fans although many clubs still do not reflect their local community. The clubs may be situated in an area with a large ethnic minority population, but the crowd attendance does not reflect that. The Premier League admits this is a problem that needs to be addressed. Research is now underway to look into the pattern of support and to try and pinpoint reasons why some ethnic minority communities don't attend football matches in great numbers and, importantly, how to resolve this. The research will continue during 2007 along with initiatives to help clubs embrace their local communities.



The Premier League should be congratulated for the level of work they have, and are, putting into this. They have also been imaginative. The IFC particularly likes the way the League is involving the media to 'spread the word' and encourage new fans from the ethnic community to feel wanted by football. For example, the Premier League has instigated a special programme called 'Kickin' Off with Nihal' on the BBC Asian Network, focussing on Premier League football as well as music. The Premier League was included in the programming and initial ideas of what to cover and how to cover it. They have established excellent links with other Asian based print / web media that is leading to fresh coverage of the many and diverse communities surrounding English clubs. Journalists are being positively encouraged to approach both the League and its clubs to chase stories and put them into ethnic minority newspapers, magazines, radio shows, websites etc. This typifies the way that new avenues can be opened as a method of reaching various communities.

When it comes to the playing staff within the 20 Premier League clubs, there is a distinct lack of Asian players. 22% of all players are from ethnic minority backgrounds, however only around 2% are from Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, other Asian or White-Asian backgrounds. The Premier League says that clubs are determined to increase the number of players, coaches and managers from an Asian background but recognises that it will take time for many of them to pass through from the academy, into the reserves and finally into the first team. Clubs need to attract these Asian youngsters in the first place. The Football in the Community scheme is an ideal route, although the Premier League admits that one problem is that many Asians play in Asian Leagues and could therefore be ignored by scouts. The Professional Footballers Association is currently involved in research that will identify why people from Asian backgrounds are not involved in football. This research will go some way to identifying where the problems lie and, more crucially, what can be done to rectify the situation. The results will be fed into the All Agency Review Team. The National Asian Football Federation (NAFF) is helping to gather data.

The Premier League admits that there is still a lot of work to be done when it comes to racism and diversity and that the initiatives now in place will need to evolve. However, their keenness to promote the Kick it Out Racial Equality Standard at its clubs reflects extremely well on their intention to encourage clubs to be aware of their responsibilities and how to improve the situation. It is also encouraging to see that the Premier League is willing to work alongside other authorities

and organisations to promote awareness and not concentrate purely on the higher levels of the professional game in England. For example 'Your Game' was run as a pilot event in 2005-06. It uses the power of football to reach out to marginalised groups in some of the most economically deprived areas of the country, and is a partnership between the FA, the Premier League, the PFA, the Football Foundation, Kick It Out, the BBC and Streetleague. Over 2000 players and 100 community groups from London, Liverpool, Newcastle, Manchester, Birmingham and the Solent were involved. Teams were from a wide and diverse spectrum of society such as the homeless, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as representatives of disabled and crime prevention initiatives. The Premier League also intends to run further equality and diversity workshops for its clubs to promote good practice.

Overall, the IFC was impressed with the level of work being undertaken by a comparatively small number of people within the Premier League. They have recognised the problems within football as a whole and are attempting to address these concerns.

When it came to racism and diversity, The Football League felt that each of their 72 clubs was an individual business and that they should make their own decisions and take any action they felt was necessary. The League also considered that it, as a body, was not best placed to provide training with regards to race and equality policies and objectives. However, a regular complaint from Football League clubs was that they did not receive much in the way of information. In response to this, the Football League has recently launched its Diversity Advocacy Group that guides and monitors policy. It is left up to the clubs to choose the agenda with the hope that as a steadily increasing number of clubs attend meetings, the more chance there is of spreading Best Practice.

**THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE INITIATES A DISSEMINATION PROGRAMME TO ENSURE THAT ALL CLUBS ARE AWARE OF INITIATIVES IN THE AREAS OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ANTI-RACISM.**

At the Football League's offices, all staff are given diversity training and there is an assurance that advertising for new posts within the organisation all meet recruitment guidelines.

Some clubs are providing excellent examples of how to address local racial issues. Wolverhampton Wanderers draw their fans from a wide and varied community. There are many ethnic groups in the area, particularly the Sikh community. There was an interesting issue regarding a ceremonial sword that is worn by most Sikhs, called a Kirpan. As part of their religion, Sikhs are supposed to wear this sword at all times. It is not a weapon but a symbol. Wolves have instigated a scheme whereby Sikh fans are given a letter of exemption, allowing them to enter the stadium with this sword under their clothing. The Sikh Council of Great Britain has seen this as an excellent example of how football clubs and the community can mix.

The Football League is also working closely with the Kick it Out organisation. More of the League's clubs are working towards the Racial Equality Standard. At the time of this IFC Annual Report going to print, nine Football League clubs are involved in the initiative: four have achieved the Preliminary level. The League intends to produce a good practice guide for its clubs and will undertake research into why ethnic minorities seem reluctant to attend football matches. The Premier League is looking at similar findings, so it is to be hoped that both authorities pool their data. The Football League is also aiming to work closely with businesses in those communities with a large ethnic population.

**THE IFC WOULD RECOMMEND THAT THE FA, PREMIER LEAGUE AND FOOTBALL LEAGUE FREELY CIRCULATE TO ALL OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES, ANY RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RELEVANT CONCLUSIONS. AS HAS BEEN SHOWN BY THE ALL AGENCY REVIEW TEAM, A COMING-TOGETHER OF AS MANY INTERESTED PARTIES AS POSSIBLE, CAN ONLY LEAD TO THE COMMON GOOD.**

The Professional Footballers Association (PFA) should be commended for the work it does in the field of racism and equity. They support several of the anti racism initiatives such as Kick It Out, Show Racism the Red Card, Football Unites, Racism Divides and the FARE network (Football Against Racism in Europe) and perform a useful role in monitoring the actions of these organisations. Although they don't necessarily favour one or the other, they can keep an eye on what each is doing and ensure there isn't any duplication or conflict. The PFA also assists in the education of players and staff at football clubs. For example, they have an excellent DVD that is issued to all scholars at the academies. There is a diversity training programme tailored to players and scholars within the Premier League. Without doubt, education is at the forefront of the PFA work and they should be congratulated for the amount of material that is covered by a small dedicated team.

The PFA is heavily involved in the Black Players Coaching Forum which they set up three years ago to promote ethnic players to join clubs and for those players to make the transition into coaching and management. They also endeavour to get former ethnic minority players into coaching and management. 14% of the players currently attending the PFA's Pro Licence course, which enables them to train and manage within the highest echelons of football, are from an ethnic background. 4% are on the UEFA 'A' Licence course. The PFA has influenced coaching courses to be alerted to the need for a greater mix of players from all backgrounds. The experience that has been gained by the PFA in dealing with racism and equity is also being put to further use in other fields outside of football. They are organising a Best Practice Equity Forum, inviting various institutions and bodies to attend. They are also being utilised by the Trades Union Congress in a programme to encourage education within the workforce. The PFA is included

in the All Agency Review Team that monitors various issues within football. It is interesting that the PFA is also trying to introduce players to the experiences of other people outside football. They have held various seminars featuring senior business people in the field of finance and the media, allowing them to explain how they have tackled the problem of ensuring a fair ethnic mix amongst the workforce.

It is good to see the PFA assisting players in preparing for life outside football. They have launched a special journalism course that will train players who fancy switching into covering football rather than playing it. The organisation sets a good example itself by having a 25% ethnic minority representation on their governing Management Committee. Their website is also an excellent source of information giving both players and fans alike, full details of how to tackle racism and various hotline numbers to call in the event of needing to report racism.

The Football Foundation is in a position of influence because of the amount of funding it has available. It is estimated that since July 2000, the organisation has provided £30m worth of support to 200 projects, all of which specifically tackle inequality. This can be broken down even further to reveal that 32 projects worth £6m are run directly by ethnic minority groups, while £2.6m goes to nine anti-racism projects. It is also interesting to note that 40% of the overall funding from the Football Foundation goes to 20% of the most deprived areas, and that 50% of the target beneficiaries are tackling issues in ethnic minority communities. The Foundation is also holding various workshops to raise awareness amongst ethnic groups to explain exactly what the Football Foundation does, what is available and how funding can be obtained.

It is encouraging to note that all of the authorities and relevant football bodies are leading by example. All of their staff have undergone training and education programmes regarding racism awareness. Overall, football in general can be proud of the work that has been done in the field of racism. UEFA looks to England in many respects as a good example when it comes to dealing with racism. It is now rare for players to be openly abused by either the crowd or their fellow professionals, but incidents do occur. However, there now seems to be an excellent system in place that sees the incidents reported and acted upon speedily. Whether players, clubs and organisations are now more willing to speak out cannot be confirmed, but there recently appears to have been a steady increase in the number of reported incidents where players are being subjected to racial abuse, both from the terraces and from opposing players.



It is to be hoped that the newly-found confidence of people willing to stand up and be counted, meets with similar willingness from the authorities to look into and resolve any issues. It would appear that the authorities are taking a firm stance against these issues and are imposing fines and bans. It is good to note that UEFA and FIFA seem to be following a similarly hard approach. Racism hasn't gone away, but the awareness levels now make it much less likely that something would be ignored. Research and education needs to continue though because discrimination can surface in various forms.

The Kick it Out and Show Racism the Red Card organisations continue to produce excellent work which gets extensive coverage in the media. Kick it Out's week of action is now a regular feature of the football calendar and appears to be extremely well supported by football clubs, communities, schools etc. They also have a football tournament aimed at asylum seekers and refugees called the Unity Cup Festival. The 2006 tournament took place in Sheffield, but it is envisaged that this initiative will be staged at various cities across the country in future years. Kick It Out has organised what it calls Community Chest grants that allow community groups to source funding for awareness campaigns. In 2006, 37 awards of up to £1,000 were granted. The Football Foundation sponsored a series of free Stand Up, Speak Up workshops around the country aimed at helping and assisting groups access grants and other funding. There was specific advice and information on how to apply for Football Foundation Small Grants and Community and Education Grants for diversity and wider social engagement schemes. Kick It Out are aware that their week of action needs to remain fresh and not just be seen as a flag-waving exercise for a few days each year. Plans are afoot to develop a theme of 'One Game, One Community.' They are also aiming to target more of the grassroots clubs and County FA's and it is hoped that The Football Association will give them every assistance with this.

Show Racism the Red Card, which also includes the PFA and the Football Foundation amongst its sponsors, continues to link in to players and offers various campaigns. They use players as anti-racist role models and, to this end, have been extremely successful.

2006 saw the three authorities plus the PFA and Football Foundation produce a combined front to the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). Each body was invited by the CRE to publicly demonstrate what they have done and what they intended to do regarding racial equality. This concluded with the CRE staging a gathering at the House of Commons on 30th January 2007 entitled 'Racial Equality in Football: Achievements, Aims and Ambitions.' This was a chance for the football bodies to provide an update to the original Race Equality in Football survey that was published in 2004 which suggested



that football was doing little to make sure racial equality was addressed both on and off the pitch. The IFC appreciates that the update is staged outside of the time scale scheduled to be covered in this Annual Report but, as the update looks back on work undertaken during the previous years, it would have been logical to include it. Sadly, despite being on the invitation list sent to the CRE by the football authorities, the IFC was not asked to attend this event, and even when they did manage to arrange last minute admission, it was withdrawn. Therefore the IFC is unable to comment on the proceedings.

In conclusion to this chapter, the IFC wishes to make two points. First, there needs to be a note of caution here. While there continues to be a high level of concentration on racism and diversity issues within football, it is very easy to therefore assume that racism and discrimination are rife. If there is a continuous flow of local and national campaigns, projects, schemes, conferences and the desire for more and more reports, it can lead to the sensation that racism and discrimination within football is a bigger problem than it really is. The IFC would not want to give any sort of impression that it does not take this issue very seriously indeed, but if the extent of coverage focussing purely upon football continues, it gives an impression that nothing is being done and that there has been no effect. There has been an effect and a lot of work is going on, and yes there is still a lot that needs to be done. However, this is not a problem that will be resolved overnight and, although everyone wants to see things move as quickly as possible, it is unreasonable to expect instant miracles.

Secondly, the IFC wishes to raise a further concern. Hardly a month goes by without a new organisation or action group being set up to further the cause of ethnic groups, disadvantaged groups, welfare groups, disabled supporters, disgruntled fans, fans who want to sit, fans who want to stand,

fans who want to sing, fans groups looking for funding, charities wanting to involve football, etc. This is on top of the 'normal' requests from government organisations, official bodies and of course the IFC. Whilst not wanting to diminish the enthusiasm and no doubt good intentions of these people, the IFC feels that at some stage, a line needs to be drawn under a lot of these organisations. It is impossible for the football authorities to liaise with every single group and, unless there is some sort of commonality amongst these organisations, there could start to be a degree of confusion. Without doubt, all of the organisations will approach the football authorities for either financial or verbal support, but it must be recognised that there is not a bottomless pit of finance or endless amount of spare time.

The internet is to blame for a lot of these groups. There seems to be a fashion of one or two people setting up a website, attracting some support and, once they have a dozen or so names registered on it, heading straight to the football authorities with a proposal. This cannot go on because there is a real danger of the authorities being overstretched and, by no real fault of their own, therefore neglecting some of their established good causes and possibly allowing things to unravel slightly. For example, the IFC attended a meeting where various groups that were requesting funding and / or support were being discussed. One delegate at the meeting suggested one particular group, adding that they weren't sure about them and felt that support should not be given. It then turned out that another delegate had already decided to back them.

**WITH THIS IN MIND, THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE AUTHORITIES LOOK INTO HAVING SOME SORT OF CLEARING HOUSE SYSTEM WHEREBY THEY CAN MEET ON A REGULAR BASIS TO DISCUSS ALL OF THESE REQUESTS AS A WHOLE, NOT JUST INDIVIDUALLY.** This will

then prevent groups and / or individuals cherry picking the authorities and, if they are turned down by one, immediately barracking another with the same request. There should be some sort of registration process whereby anyone wishing to ask for funding, suggest an idea, argue for some sort of attention by the authorities, or even propose a partnership or joint venture, must first of all get in touch with a single body made up from the three authorities and other interested parties such as the PFA and Football Foundation. This body or forum would then decide on the merits of each case and make a decision on behalf of football as a whole. It would instantly stop people or organisations from wandering from authority to authority in the hope of catching one of them off their guard. It would prevent any conflict of interest and potentially allow a more even spread of initiatives. In short, if someone approaches this forum with a good idea or a sensible proposal, then it can be decided what sort of support, whether financial or verbal or both, may be given.

If one of the authorities thinks a suggestion is worthy of support while the others do not, at least it means that everyone knows what's happening. At least if something is rejected, it prevents any one authority or body being labelled as negative, discriminatory, showing a lack of understanding, etc. On the other side of the argument, it would prevent one authority being labelled as showing favouritism or indulging in a bit of one-upmanship.

The subject of equality and diversity is now high on the agenda within football at all levels. The CRE seems reasonably satisfied with the amount and quality of work that the football industry is putting into racism, although the lack of ethnic minority people involved in coaching, management and administration within football still needs to be addressed. However, all of the bodies are keen to push ahead for 2007 and it will be interesting to see how everything develops over the coming year. As the Premier League Chief Executive, Richard Scudamore commented:

*"There's still plenty to do, but the fact so much has been achieved in a relatively short period of time gives an indication of just how seriously the Premier League and our clubs take this issue."* ●

It is encouraging to see the amount of community work that is going on within most football clubs across England. Some excellent initiatives are in place at all levels of the game, whether it be at the top of the Premiership or at the most basic of grassroots clubs. The people who are involved in these various schemes, many of whom are volunteers in the grassroots areas of the game, should be warmly congratulated for their efforts.

# COMMUNITY

**F**ootball clubs have a terrific influence on their community; they are a powerful brand. Match days are frequently the biggest event in the community calendar and the club is probably the town or city's highest profile business. The players are huge role models. Because of this influence, football clubs are a focus of attention and, as long as this focus is managed correctly, can be of terrific benefit to everyone and the general social good.

The Premier League seems to be stepping-up their emphasis regarding work in the community, with every club involved in various initiatives. As with the previous two years, the Premier League has compiled an annual Community Report,<sup>[1]</sup> devoting a single page to each of its twenty clubs and outlining some of the various ventures taking place at those clubs. They estimate that around 4 million people are involved in community activities at their clubs and that 25,000 places are available at club learning centres. They even estimate that the clubs and the

league itself pump around £80m worth of goods and services into the community. In his forward to the report, the Premier League's Chief Executive, Richard Scudamore comments: *"Premier League clubs are all about using their success both on and off the pitch, to engage with their communities and, using football's popularity, help effect change in people's lives"*

Sports Minister Rt. Hon Richard Caborn MP commented that the Premier League is now producing community work that simply wasn't there beforehand.

A popular trend is to work closely with local education authorities. Others aim to promote a social issue, while many clubs take part in the Kickz programme. Launched in April 2006, it initially targeted young people living in some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in London. This scheme, originated by the Metropolitan Police, involves all three football authorities plus the Football Foundation, the Government,





THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE PREMIER LEAGUE GIVES MORE COVERAGE TO THE GOOD WORK THAT IS BEING DONE AND WHERE IT IS BEING DONE. WHILE APPRECIATING THAT IT MAY BE UNREALISTIC TO PRODUCE A DOCUMENT OR BOOKLET OUTLINING ALL OF THIS, IT WOULD BE SOMETHING THAT IS PERFECTLY SUITED TO THEIR WEBSITE ([WWW.PREMIERLEAGUE.COM](http://WWW.PREMIERLEAGUE.COM)) AND A SEPARATE SECTION ON THE COMMUNITY PAGE WITHIN THE ABOUT US SECTION.

Football in the Community and Supporters Direct. However, the whole initiative has been very successful and is now being rolled-out to other areas across England with involvement from 25 Premier League and Football League clubs. Some examples of work underway at football clubs are given in a chart later in this chapter.

Many clubs have their own Learning Centres; some have a bus that tours around their communities offering advice regarding education and health. There's even the Premier League Reading Stars, now into its fourth season, whereby football clubs have a player who becomes a Reading Champion, thereby encouraging children to read. Many clubs work closely with the Football Foundation, National Literary Trust and the Arts Council and appoint one or more of their players to act as an Ambassador to promote their work. Some clubs have links with their local Primary Care Trusts to promote healthy attitudes amongst the community.

The Premier League is involved in the Barclays Spaces for Sports scheme. This is a partnership between the Premier League and Barclays (the league's title sponsor), along with Groundwork and the Football Foundation. The scheme has pumped £30m into the creation or improvement of sports facilities at grassroots level over the past 3 years. There are various education programmes aimed at both youth team players and the wider community in general. Playing for Success is a partnership with the Department for Education that attracts under-achieving pupils into Study Support Centres at football grounds after school. They work closely with the Kick It Out anti-racism organisation, something that is covered in the Racism section of this Annual Report. The Premier League, PFA and Football Foundation fund the Prince's Trust Football Initiative, something that will continue following the signing of a new agreement. The three football bodies have jointly donated over £5m to the Trust since its launch in 1997 and it is estimated that over 10,000 young people have been helped in various ways. The latest initiative to come from the Trust is 'Get Into' which allows young people to experience what it's like working within a football club. The Premier League

also established strong links with the BBC for Sport Relief. All Premier League clubs supported this event by donating 50p from the sale of every matchday programme on their final home game of the season.

One of the main routes for the authorities to provide feedback into the local community is via the Football Foundation. The Premier League pumps £15m each year into the Foundation's coffers. This organisation is the UK's biggest sports charity, investing money into grassroots and community projects. It is a joint partnership between the Premier League, FA and the Government. Since its formation in 2000, it has provided over £400m worth of funding to almost 2,800 projects. It has given an estimated 100,000 children brand new football strips as part of the Junior Kit Scheme. What this shows is that, while on the surface it may appear that the Premier League and the FA are not doing much for your local community, the money is actually coming from various directions. The Premier League has also confirmed that, thanks to favourable broadcast rights deals, they will be distributing more cash via the Football Foundation from the beginning of the 2007-08 season. *The IFC recommends that the Premier League gives more coverage to the good work that is being done and where it is being done. While appreciating that it may be unrealistic to produce a document or booklet outlining all of this, it would be something that is perfectly suited to their website ([www.premierleague.com](http://www.premierleague.com)) and a separate section on the Community page within the About Us section.*

This list of activities goes nowhere near covering the scope of what's going on at football clubs in the top division, but it does give a flavour of the wide and varied activities that are benefiting the community as a whole within the reach of Premier League clubs.

The Premier League has also produced a helpful document that rounds-up much of their work away from the football field. This is the first edition of *The Corporate Social Responsibility Review*<sup>[2]</sup> and provides a taste of what the Premier League is up to and what it expects to achieve in 2007 in respect of off-pitch activities. This document has, in effect, replaced the Premier League Customer Charter Report and now performs several roles (more about the relevant sections in the Charter chapter of this Annual Report). It makes for fascinating reading. An interesting section is devoted to the environment which, although initially not seeming to have much to do with community work within football, is actually quite enlightening and shows how clubs can do their bit to be 'green' and set a good example.

Overall, the IFC feels that the breadth and quality of work being encouraged by the Premier League and the clubs under its banner is terrific. The only negative point, as mentioned earlier, is that too few people know what is going on. If more people were aware of the amount of money being pumped back into football by the Premier League and the extent and variety of work being done, it would certainly help members of the local communities realise what is on offer and increase the amount of proactive dialogue between the general public and the clubs. It would also deflect some grumbles from those detractors who feel that football is earning millions of pounds from the fans, yet puts nothing back.

The Football Association continues to offer a wide range of initiatives involving everything from the England national team and their *englandfans* supporters group, to grassroots football schemes. A visit to their website, [www.thefa.com](http://www.thefa.com), reveals a whole raft of activities. They are busy with several programmes of work regarding disabled football, girls and women's football, communities etc. The Ability Counts programme for example, concentrates on people with disabilities and ensures they have the opportunity to play and train at a local level. 2006 saw 60 clubs scattered across England providing this facility. In addition, there were 270 Disability Football clubs operating throughout the country with up to 2,700 players registered. There are nine regional Pan-Disability leagues offering three ability bands to ensure players are challenged at the right level. The aim of the FA is to make sure that the local County FA's use the clubs



as a hub for disabled football activity, therefore fully utilising any funding given to those individual Ability Counts clubs. Around £500,000 was pumped into disability football by the FA in 2006 with a further £750,000 coming from the Football Foundation, of which the FA is a one-third funding partner. It should be emphasised that the FA supports seven England national squads of players with various disabilities including blind, partially sighted, deaf, hearing impaired, cerebral palsy, amputee and learning disabilities. The FA has also been the driving force in the establishment of a Great Britain Paralympic football group with the intention of entering teams in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, should they qualify. The aim of the FA is to ensure that any football player, and they really do mean any, has the chance to progress through the footballing pyramid and ultimately represent England at international level. This is magnificent encouragement for any disabled person within the community who wants to take part in football.

The IFC understands that the FA is currently developing a National Game Strategy where Football For All is one of the five key strategic elements. In addition, the Disability Football Player Development Pathway sits firmly in the section dealing with long term player development indicating that disability football has become much more mainstream than ever. The main vision and strategies for disability football will be included in this document. To complement this, a detailed Disability Football Operational Plan will be developed and launched later in 2007. Currently, all disabled football comes under the Ability Counts banner but it is hoped that the number of clubs where disabled football is being played at some sort of level will exceed the 60 mark during 2007. The FA has put guidelines in place to make sure that funding goes to the right clubs and the right people. Most of this will be done via the County FA's.

It should also be remembered that there are a huge number of disabled people who don't take an active part in football from the playing perspective, yet love to follow football as a fan. From the IFC's experience, disabled football fans include some of the most passionate fans in the game. They generally have to plan away trips well in advance; they need to frequently set off very early and in many cases need to make sure that they have someone who can travel with them to provide assistance. As with many fans, the football club is their overriding passion.

The IFC feels that the FA could look at the way it deals with disabled supporters. This in turn would be of assistance to the Premier League and Football League. The FA has had great success with a discussion panel called the All Agency Review Team (AART). This initiative was recommended by the IFC and had the aim of bringing together the authorities and relevant

bodies to look at racism within football. The authorities should be congratulated for the speed in which the AART was initially organised and the swiftness of the way in which they consider and deal with issues. This has been a particularly welcome development and follows on from the IFC concerns that the three football authorities needed to work closer together. This seems to have led to many issues being worked on collectively. The IFC attends the AART meetings and is impressed by the way topics, some of them sensitive, are dealt with.

With this in mind, the IFC feels that the FA is perfectly placed to provide something similar with regard to disabled football supporters. At the moment, there is the Disabled Supporters Groups (DSG) that meets on a regular basis. The IFC has attended several of these meetings and, while not wanting to detract from the good work that is being done and reference being made to the potential of future projects, the scope of discussion with regards to the supporters themselves seems limited.

It should also be pointed out that whenever the IFC has been involved in these DSG meetings, the only organisation to attend that actually represents disabled fans is the National Association for Disabled Supporters (NADS). This organisation does excellent work, but there is a danger that the 'agenda' of just one group of disabled fans is being heard. The scope needs to be expanded.

**THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT RESEARCH IS DONE BY THE AUTHORITIES TO SEE HOW MORE DISABLED FANS, BOTH INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS, CAN GET THEIR POINT ACROSS TO THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE DECISIONS ON HOW THE GAME IS RUN AND HOW STADIA ARE BUILT. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE WITH A WIDE GROUP OF PEOPLE AND COVER ALL AREAS OF DISABILITY.**

The authorities have worked closely in the development of the National Association of Disabled Supporters awareness scheme called Level Playing Field. While football clubs in general are very aware of their responsibilities in this area, the Level Playing Field initiative helped focus their attention. The initiative seems to have found overall approval with the clubs. It should also be said that facilities for people with disabilities of any kind have improved immeasurably at football stadia across England. Funding is in place for the Level Playing Field initiative to continue in 2007.

In an effort to research the general mood of disabled supporters, the IFC met with a representative from another disabled supporters group, Association of Wheelchair and Ambulant Disabled Supporters (AWADS) and was impressed by the thorough nature in which details are provided for fans via the organisation's website ([www.awads.co.uk](http://www.awads.co.uk)). Rather than

being an organisation run on behalf of fans with disabilities, this group is largely run by the disabled supporters themselves. The website, although still being developed, has specific details for the vast majority of league clubs and many non-league clubs too. On each club page there is a section where fans can give their own opinions regarding the stadium looking at details such as access, parking, facilities, location of viewing area etc.

Another example of where the FA reaches into the community is via their *englandfans* supporters club. The FA is conscious that it needs to try and attract a varied membership that reflects the modern-day community in England. At the moment though, they are failing to reach their diversity targets. England supporters are a passionate and determined bunch, typified by the 64% membership renewal rate of *englandfans*. Obviously this makes it extremely difficult to attract new fans into the *englandfans* ranks. This in turn is causing a problem for the FA which, on first impression, leaves the authority in a poor light. The FA states in their Customer Charter that one of their aims is to increase the level of diversity within *englandfans* membership. For example, they want to raise the percentage of ethnic supporters from just 1% (as of December 2006), to 5% in 2008. They want the same for disabled fans. The target for female membership is an increase from 14% to 25%, while an increase of 3% is desired for Under 18's. As is mentioned in the Diversity and Equal Opportunities chapter of this Annual Report, with such a high renewal rate these percentage increases are not going to happen over such a short space of time. The FA has been a victim of its own success. The IFC feels that the ethnic minority figure needs to be reduced purely because 5% is unrealistic. Perhaps the FA should consider that it may be necessary to apply this target to Tier 2 members only.

During 2006 the FA held a series of focus groups with women and ethnic minorities. During the course of 2007, the FA will be considering the feedback from these groups and developing an action plan to assist with recruiting a more diverse membership. With this in mind,

**THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE FA ADJUSTS THEIR DIVERSITY FIGURES TO MAKE THE SITUATION MORE REALISTIC AND THEREFORE AVOID BUILDING UP ANY FALSE HOPES.**

The IFC is in no way implying that the FA is being discriminatory or selective in any way, but is merely stating that such has been the success of *englandfans* and the high number of people who keep coming back for more, that it makes it impossible to achieve the desired increases in diversity within the space of under two years. The IFC is aware that the FA is undertaking research into diversity. Perhaps this will allow a sensible re-jigging of the figures.



THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT A REVIEW IS TAKEN OF ALL THE FA ACTIVITY OUTSIDE OF THE ENGLAND NATIONAL TEAM SET-UP. THE IFC RECOGNISES THAT, IN THE SHORT TERM, SOME PROJECTS MAY SUFFER, BUT NONETHELESS FEELS THAT IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE TAKING STOCK OF THE SITUATION TO SEE WHETHER THE FUNDING COULD BE BETTER UTILISED IN LARGER AMOUNTS IN FEWER AREAS, RATHER THAN SPREADING IT THINLY ACROSS A PLETHORA OF ACTIVITIES. THIS IS NOT A CRITICISM OF THE FA, MERELY A SUGGESTION THAT MAY HELP THE OVERALL PICTURE.

The National Game or grassroots football is a key area at the other end of the FA's spectrum of responsibilities. In recent years the FA has invested an average of £30m in the lower levels of football in England. Part of that funding goes towards women's and girls football. Women's football continues to be very strong in England; much of this success is down to the FA. 2007 will be a very big year for women's football in England as the national team has successfully reached the World Cup finals in China. Good luck to them in September. There's likely to be plenty of support back home too because latest figures show that football is the most popular sport played by females in England and that last season 133,000 players competed in various league and cup competitions. The FA also reckons that more than 1.5 million girls under the age of 15 played some form of football over the past 12 months. The FA has appointed a National Football Development Manager for women's football in England to co-ordinate activity on the back of this. This is an obvious massive bonus for the sport. The FA, with support from the Football Foundation and Sport England funds 45 full-time officers to develop the game in every county. There are now 52 Centres of Excellence for talented girls, so the future is looking good for women's football in this country. In addition, it is good to see that the Professional Footballers' Association is willing to help and advise in the field of women's football. Obviously, they represent professional footballers which, at the moment, do not include women amongst their ranks, however the PFA is willing to use their expertise to advise on what women players can rightly expect as footballers. The organisation regularly sits on panels to offer guidance. Their advice is greatly welcomed.

Overall, the FA estimates that there are over 38,000 teams at grassroots level, providing opportunities for everyone, no matter what their age, gender, ability, race, culture or background. This forms part of the FA's Get into Football campaign which was launched in 2006, targeting children and adults to get involved in the game. They say that getting people into football is one of the main roles of their 270 Football Development Officers around England. They not only aim to get people to play football, they are looking for coaches, referees, administrators, volunteers and supporters.

Another of the FA's community projects is the Hat-Trick initiative. This is two-thirds of the way through its 3-year programme. The scheme was set up in March 2005 with joint funding totalling £4.5m from both the Government and UEFA. The money is used to fund 19 new Community Football Workers as part of a regeneration scheme, using football to tackle a wide range of social problems. The role of the officers is to provide football opportunities for young people aged 7-16 while helping to address issues such as health, social exclusion and anti-social behaviour.

The work of the FA seems to be ever-increasing. The IFC can't help but feel a huge amount of admiration for the army of people who make all of this possible. But thereby lies a concern. Is there too much going on? Is there a possibility that the FA is overstretching itself and, rather than implementing a vast array of programmes and initiatives that try to please everyone in society, would they be more effective in concentrating on fewer projects and boosting the funding for that reduced number? There may be the potential to give a few projects a massive launch and then pull back to let things take care of themselves, allowing the FA to move on to consider something else or respond to a change of policy elsewhere. The IFC recommends that a review is taken of all the FA activity outside of the England national team set-up. The IFC recognises that, in the short term, some projects may suffer, but nonetheless feels that it would be worthwhile taking stock of the situation to see whether the funding could be better utilised in larger amounts in fewer areas, rather than spreading it thinly across a plethora of activities. This is not a criticism of the FA, merely a suggestion that may help the overall picture.

Overall, the number of people who are in contact with football in any manner is staggering. A large part of this is down to the magnificent work of the FA. Again, as mentioned in the section looking at work done by the Premier League, perhaps more coverage could be given of this work, including examples, on the FA's website ([www.thefa.com](http://www.thefa.com)). There are some examples already on there, but they are tricky to find and to a certain extent don't get the sort of billing they deserve.

The Football League has a big job when it comes to community work purely because it has more clubs across a much bigger area than something like the Premier League, yet its clubs have more of an impact on their community than the FA's National Game clubs. For this reason, a large part of the work done at the Football League is done at club level. For example, although the Football League Community Cup and U13 Girls Cup are national competitions, they are run individually by the league clubs across England and Wales. The Community Cup is a 6-a-side tournament aimed at U11 schoolchildren with boys and girls playing in mixed teams. Many games in the later stages of the competition are played at Football League club stadia. This is bound to be a big occasion for the youngsters. Winners of the regional finals go through to the national final, staged prior to one of the showpiece Football League Finals. There are over 20,000 school children involved in the tournaments each year.

Another impressive figure is the Football League's estimate of one million children at over 7,000 schools across England benefiting from some sort of football activity generated by an army of 4,000 qualified coaches, every season. This is a terrific commitment by the authority and its clubs, and is certain to be welcomed by the children involved.

'Fans of the Future' is a massive initiative launched by the Football League in the 2005-06 season. It is estimated that in excess of 200,000 children attended games during the season as a result of this exercise. 'Fans of the Future' is also being heavily promoted during the current season with 60 of the 72 Football League clubs taking part in some sort of activity. 38 clubs are running Kids Go Free schemes for all home games, amounting to 874 football matches. These are impressive figures and will no doubt encourage 'new' children to go to a live football match rather than stay at home to watch it on television. It should also help generate interest amongst those children who've previously shown no desire to go to a live game. Granted, there are bound to be some children who would normally pay the normal price but will take full advantage of the reduced rates, however this is a risk well worth taking in an effort to encourage a new generation of

supporters. Any serious football fan will grudgingly admit that going to matches becomes a habit, irrespective of how the team is performing. It isn't easy to come up with initiatives to attract people to something that is perhaps becoming too expensive so the IFC applauds the Football League for this focussed idea. The figure of 200,000 children attending games last season seems to suggest that it is working. As is mentioned in the Child Protection chapter in this Annual Report, there are one or two concerns about the monitoring of children at games, although the Football League is aware of this and is looking to address the issue. Overall, teething problems aside, the initiative seems to be a good one and can only be



of benefit to the communities surrounding the clubs involved. It is particularly interesting to note that Football League clubs quite rightly make full use of Kids for a Quid, Kids Go Free, family fun days, etc when the Premier League is inactive, such as the opening two weeks of the season when the Football League kicks off earlier, or when Premiership games take a break

due to International fixtures. New technology is also being utilised, with fans being contacted by viral emails and having access to pod casts.

The Football League should also be congratulated for their excellent guide to help disabled fans at all of their 72 grounds.<sup>[3]</sup> Each club is given a page that lists contact details, including in most cases the name and direct line telephone number of someone who deals specifically with disabled people. This point came up in a discussion the IFC had with AWADS. It was felt that the most important feature of any club's information to disabled fans was the name of someone they could speak to. This was crucial to solve specific questions such as whether they could get a minibus carrying disabled fans close to the appropriate entrance / exit at the ground or how they could inform the club of any last minute changes.

The Football League guide even tells fans where that point of contact can be found at the stadium. In most cases this seems to be the ticket office. There is also a contact for the club's own disabled organisation, if they have one. It is encouraging to note that the Football League has addressed another problem that was highlighted during the IFC investigations. It would seem that many clubs only 'recognise' a supporter as being disabled if they are sat in a wheelchair.

[3] Guide to facilities for disabled supporters at Football League grounds 2006-07



However, the Football League Disabled Supporters Guide addresses this by giving details of whether there is a hearing loop in the ticket office and whether visually impaired fans have access to radio matchday commentary via headsets or speakers. Of course, information is only helpful if it is accurate.

With this in mind, **THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE ENSURES THAT THIS GUIDE IS UPDATED ON A REGULAR BASIS AND, IF POSSIBLE, ADDED TO WITH EXTRA INFORMATION SUCH AS CATERING FACILITIES AND, AS MENTIONED EARLIER, DETAILS REGARDING EASE OF ACCESS.**

The Football League, as with the Premier League, is heavily involved in the Kick It Out week of action. Each of the clubs has some sort of activity to raise awareness.

There are dozens of examples of really good Community work going on within the Football League clubs. The IFC was particularly impressed when they visited Wolverhampton Wanderers FC. Wolves draw their fans from a wide and varied community. There are many ethnic groups in the area, one of the largest being the Sikh community. The club is trying to make the stadium more representative of the local population and attract an increased number of fans from the ethnic groups.

The club has an interesting social inclusion scheme called Dusk, Twilight and Midnight Leagues. These run during the week and attract children and adults of varying ages. The Midnight league for example, is for 16-21 year olds and kicks off at 8.30pm running through to midnight. As well as providing them with physical recreation, it also acts as a focus for presentations by police, local community groups, pregnancy prevention groups, health organisations, etc. Wolves, via their Football in the Community department, try to link into as many agencies as possible, but to do this they need a certain amount of support to have access to junior and secondary schools. Support from the PFA and Football Foundation had been crucial, although the staff and core FITC programme was paid for by the club. It was good to hear that the club's players are heavily involved. Last year around 140,000 youngsters passed through this scheme at Wolves, proving that it is a huge success. The IFC understands that this and many other similar schemes are being circulated to other clubs for consideration.

Brentford FC was named as the Football League Community Club of the Year in 2006. Their Community programme has been in operation for 19 years and the level of staffing shows how things have developed considerably. There was initially just a single person in the department; now there are 20, assisted by 50 part time staff. During the course of a season, they have contact with over 30,000 young people and have formed a hugely beneficial partnership with the local authority.

Some examples of work underway at Football League (and Premier League) clubs are given in the chart opposite.



<b>Arsenal</b>	'Double Club' where children start their day with classroom activity and then have a practical coaching session.
<b>Blackpool</b>	Adopt a Player. Giving children an insight into football.
<b>Chelsea</b>	Weapon awareness scheme to prevent young people from carrying weapons.
<b>Bolton</b>	Breakfast Club' which encourages children to attend school on time.
<b>Wolverhampton Wanderers</b>	Dusk, Twilight and Midnight leagues aimed at improving social inclusion.
<b>West Ham United</b>	Make it Work. Helping 16-25yr olds to develop enterprising skills.
<b>Northampton Town</b>	Street Football programme aimed at youngsters with anti-social behaviour problems. To develop enterprising skills.
<b>Burnley</b>	Futsal Brazilian Midnight League aimed at allowing youngsters from across the borough to interact as well as improve their football skills.
<b>Coventry City</b>	"Get Active" scheme to encourage youngsters to participate in exercise.

These examples show that clubs are involved in all manner of activity. The emphasis is now on the Football League (and Premier League) to ensure that each of its 72 clubs is fully aware of what is going on.

There is an excellent level of Community work going on within Football League clubs and at the League itself. There is also a regular newsletter called Real Football that gives examples of some of the plethora of projects. There's a similar newsletter that concentrates on youth football, explaining the League's desire to discover and develop the next generation of players.

### Football in the community

Due to the amount of good work being done at club level, there is a tendency to overlook the value of the Football in the Community (FITC) scheme which has been in operation for over 20 years. Although FITC freely admits that a typical club will devote only 10% of its efforts to the 'official' Football in the Community initiatives, that low percentage is an important part of the overall picture. There seems to be a feeling within certain circles that clubs and perhaps the authorities can now control their own community based schemes. Whilst the IFC would not want to hamper this work, it does feel as though there is still a need for one single body to be able to oversee what is going on throughout the country. The danger is that if, for example, the Premier League clubs or the larger Football League clubs decided to increase their community work and develop certain ideas then this could detract from the work being done by smaller clubs falling within their hinterland.

<b>Doncaster Rovers</b>	Together with the RNIB help blind and partially sighted young people to play football or become involved in coaching.
<b>Wycombe Wanderers</b>	Community programme which encourages good relationships between various ethnic groups.
<b>Preston North End</b>	'Wordplay', helping to improve children's reading skills.
<b>Stoke City</b>	Allowed youngsters to express themselves by encouraging graffiti on the wall of the Family Enclosure.
<b>Southend United</b>	'Getting on with the Blues' scheme aimed at preventing the misuse of alcohol in children.
<b>Manchester City</b>	'Blue Zones' study support centre for children to improve numeracy, literacy and IT skills.
<b>Manchester United</b>	Coaching in a South African township.
<b>Middlesbrough</b>	Enterprise Academy to help youngsters apply for jobs.
<b>Tottenham Hotspur</b>	'AS Football'; a coaching programme for children with Asperger Syndrome and high - functioning autism.

There could easily be a duplication of messages or, even worse, a conflict of messages. If a single body like Football in the Community could oversee all of the activity within clubs, then this conflict should be avoided.

There will also be an understandable temptation for the bigger clubs to try to poach from the smaller clubs. This poaching could be both for the potential audience and for the pursuance of funds or support. It would be a shame if an excellent scheme was lost because the local education authority, Primary Care Trust, individual schools, etc decided to ignore it and support a different scheme purely because they wanted to be involved with a more glamorous club. There is also a need to make sure that community schemes and the Community Department staff are maintaining high standards. The best way to judge this is both long term and short term. In other words, keep in constant touch to discover how schemes are developing and also perform spot checks. The FITC organisation, thanks to their lengthy experience, is perfectly placed to perform both of these roles.

There is also a chance that the spread of best practice would be lost. Football in the Community, as well as providing a service to educate and train Football Community Officers and other professionals linked to clubs, helps the flow of information from one club to another. At the moment, nearly every professional club in England is part of the Football in the Community scheme. The organisation has assisted many clubs to develop their own community initiatives and guide them through the bureaucracy that allows community departments to become charities.

Almost 40 clubs now have their community work registered as a charity. It is hoped to increase this figure to 60 within a further two years. Being a charity also allows the Community Department to be less affected by the on-field and financial vagaries of the football club. If the club was relegated, the impact upon the community work is lessened. FITC keeps in touch with every club and knows most of the senior officers who operate the community schemes. They can therefore monitor the schemes that are in place and help avoid any clashes. Conversely, they can also spot the potential of clubs working together rather than competing. In many areas of the country, there is bound to be an overlap of the influence that clubs have on a community. It may be to the advantage of everyone that clubs work in tandem rather than competing. For example, the excellent Fit for Football programme includes Hull City, Grimsby Town and Scunthorpe Utd football clubs. Each club has its own Community Department but they all work together to promote the single scheme. Football in the Community has helped to facilitate this.

FITC has also developed the highly imaginative ECHO programme (Equality, Coaching and Healthy Option.) This has seen Fulham Football Club link up with Surrey County Cricket Club. The scheme was launched in November 2006 and has already attracted a lot of interest from elsewhere around the country. 60% of the funding comes from the Football Foundation, with the rest coming from local authorities, Primary Care Trusts etc. This 3-year programme has been devised and developed by FITC and is an excellent example of diverse thinking when it comes to involving sport within the community.

This, and other programmes, can now be rolled out across the rest of England by Football in the Community. The experience gained by the clubs mentioned earlier will be passed on to other clubs who can either duplicate the schemes or perhaps slightly amend them for their own community. It aids collaboration and deters duplication. Whether this would happen if clubs or the authorities controlled their own schemes remains to be seen. It should also be emphasised that community work at football clubs is both a major generator of finance and also a major user of finance. It is estimated



that Community Departments overall, have a turnover of £25million. 60% of this goes on staff salaries so it is an important part of the financial management of football in general.

There appears to be a temptation for the authorities and clubs to become more and more self-sufficient. They prefer to control everything themselves. However, the IFC feels that a reduction in the amount of interaction between all football clubs in terms of the flow of ideas and information in relation to community schemes would be a retrograde step. The Premier League, Football League, FA and PFA are partners in Football in the Community, it would be a shame if they can't get together to do something to rectify what could damage the magnificent work that is going on at so many clubs.

The PFA is obviously fully supportive of Football in the Community and has been since its inception in 1986. They have recently launched a new magazine called Profile that looks at the community and charity work going on at clubs throughout England. At the launch of Profile in Stockport, (Feb 2007) John Hudson, the PFA's Community Liaison Executive commented: "The PFA was instrumental and responsible for the development of one of the most exciting innovations in football in 1986 with 'Football in the Community' and has remained loyal to it ever since. Community development is dynamic in nature and the PFA members can continue to play a leading role to produce positive Community impact."

However, the IFC understands that there could be changes in the way Football in the Community is run and funded. These changes had not been confirmed by the time this Annual Report went to print. Consequently, any developments and their effects will be reported on by the IFC in next year's Report. It remains to be seen what happens, but the IFC looks forward to seeing how Football in the Community and community work at all 92 clubs, develops over the next twelve months. Whether Football in the Community ceases to exist as a stand-alone organisation, or possibly becomes part of another organisation, time will tell, but it is to be hoped that all of the magnificent work done by Football in the Community over the last 20 years is not forgotten and that any new developments will build upon that success.

The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) is in a unique position to help with community work. Although they are involved in a whole raft of schemes and charities, each year sees the PFA nominate one charity or good cause to support. Last year was Oxfam; this year is the 'One Goal - One Million' initiative where the PFA is aiming to raise £1 million to build a children's wing at a Manchester hospital. £250,000 has already been donated. However, this is by no means their only route for support. For example, they are one of the key partners, along with the FA, in 'Keep your eye on the ball' which aims to raise awareness of prostate and testicular cancer.

As well as their involvement in the Football in the Community scheme, nothing stirs interest amongst the local population than an appearance by one of the footballers themselves. This is especially so with children who will idolise many of the players. As the PFA say in their literature:

*'In football, profitability is based on winning more than losing, but the PFA also measures success by how many lives have been transformed as a result of a player's participation out in the Community'.*

The PFA has compiled a full evaluation of all community activity at each of the 92 Premier League and Football League clubs. The reason for this was to allow them to discover exactly what was going on and, importantly, to let them learn new initiatives for the future and to spread as much best practice amongst the clubs as possible. There's a helpful league table of how clubs performed in terms of player community visits in the 2005-06 season. They even outline which particular players were the most active. However, it should be recognised that many players do some terrific work in their own time and without looking for any sort of publicity, and this is therefore unlikely to appear in the PFA records. Wigan led the way in the Premiership with 277 appearances; Leeds Utd were a shining example in the Football League Championship totalling almost 400 visits. Mansfield led by example in League Two with 337, while the star of the show across all four divisions was League One side Blackpool who managed to achieve 410 visits by

players. This displays an impressive commitment by the clubs and, in the case of Blackpool, what enthusiastic members of staff can do when it comes to cajoling footballers to represent their club in community matters. Overall, across all four divisions of English professional football, there were more than 10,000 visits made by players but, as many players or clubs will not have responded to this research, the figure is certain to be much greater.

Several clubs take the diplomatic approach and point out that they operate a rota system for player visits (Everton, Hull City, Leeds Utd, Torquay Utd, Wycombe Wanderers) or that everyone plays some sort of part (Boston Utd, Sheffield Wednesday, Tottenham Hotspur). Some players have received an extra special mention when their clubs have responded to the survey. David James (Manchester City when this survey was done) is referred to as being 'always engaging and helpful'. Work done by David Prutton at Southampton is described as being 'above and beyond expectation,' while Steve Basham at Oxford Utd can take a bow because 'he's been fantastic' apparently. As the IFC has frequently witnessed the presence of a footballer in a room full of people, and children in particular, has an immeasurably beneficial effect. Although many players are initially reticent of taking part in these events, they invariably find it extremely worthwhile and enjoyable. It also helps hammer home the fact that they are a key role model within communities and that there is a large responsibility that goes with that label. 25 players have also become 'Ambassadors' for the Prince's Trust. The PFA puts half a million pounds each year into the Prince's Trust which is celebrating 10 years involvement in football. 60 clubs are involved in this initiative.

It is also interesting to discover the various themes that player community visits generally follow. The fact that Soccer Schools lead the way shouldn't come as much of a surprise, but education also scores highly as do health, social inclusion, disabilities and anti-racism topics. Each of these categories along with Child Protection, girls / women's football and of course general presentations, will each be given a massive boost by one of the PFA members in the shape of a footballer, attending. For this reason, the PFA and Football in the Community or club community schemes will be much more effective and beneficial to everyone if they can all work hand in hand. It is a similar story with the PFA and the three authorities. The PFA has obvious influence within the playing staff at football clubs and, with this being such an important factor, it is refreshing for the IFC to report that in every dealing they have had with either the PFA or the authorities or at meetings when everyone is together, there appears to be a high degree of cooperation and understanding between the various bodies. As with all democratic organisations, there are the inevitable arguments and standoffs, but on the whole, everyone seems to be rowing in the same direction.



The PFA has responded to a recommendation from the IFC that players need to be fully aware of Child Protection guidelines. This is to not only ensure that children are safe, but that players are also reminded of basic dos and don'ts when in the company of young people. It is in the players' and the clubs' own interests to ensure that everyone knows what is and isn't acceptable behaviour. The IFC understands that the PFA is compiling a pamphlet regarding Child Protection that will be distributed to 4,000 footballers. The IFC welcomes this move by the PFA because every player, whether a senior member of the squad or a young trainee, needs to be fully aware of their responsibilities. The PFA prides itself on the amount of education work it does in its role as the Players' Union. The organisation has received wide recognition for this and has even been used by the Trades Union Congress as a good example of what can be done to help workers. They are part of the UnionLearn scheme.

The PFA is also moving things forward in their Community Department. They have announced a series of new objectives which, in part, are a natural evolution of the original Football in the Community scheme. There is now a far greater emphasis on the involvement of players themselves in getting out and about in the community and being seen to provide an active support. However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the IFC understands that the entire Football in the Community scheme could be under review, and this is bound to have a knock-on effect regarding the work of the Professional Football Association in this area.

There are some interesting recommendations to be found regarding communities and how they can be helped by their local football club in research published in May 2006 that was funded by the Football Foundation.<sup>[4]</sup> There is a feeling that football needs to work as a whole rather than as individuals; in other words the leagues and the authorities all need to work in tandem. There is a recommendation that clubs need to set up independent community organisations that are 'outward facing' and develop programmes to look at community health, education, regeneration, and community safety. They would like to see all areas of football activity to have a community link and to work closely with outside agencies or groups, plus make more use of the club stadium as a facility for the community. The report feels that football supporters are rarely seen as 'communities', more as individual customers. There is a need for better training and education within the football workforce. Clubs should investigate precisely who lives and works in their community. This could be discovered by conducting community mapping. There is an interesting suggestion that the Premier League and Football League should liaise with the FA about the setting-up of a supporter volunteer programme whereby supporters work on behalf of their club within part of the community.

Overall, the IFC is impressed by the level of commitment shown by the authorities and the agencies that work alongside them, in developing ties with the local community. It would be easy for some clubs to ignore this and blindly sit back and hope that as long as the football club continues to perform adequately, then they can take supporters and the general population for granted. Most are not so short sighted and as well as appreciating the benefits of working with the local community, they also realise that they have a moral responsibility. If it wasn't for the local community, many football clubs would have disappeared without trace decades ago. Clubs and the authorities are now doing their bit to help and are 'putting something back'. It is therefore to be hoped that the community will respond accordingly and continue to back their club. Everyone must work together. ●



# CHILD PROTECTION REPORT

In August 2005, the IFC published a report covering Child Protection in Football. This was a wide-ranging document and took 18 months to compile. A total of 23 recommendations were given. Since then, the IFC has monitored what the football authorities have been doing regarding this important and frequently sensitive area within football. Children are increasingly the focus of attention for a whole raft of reports, whether it is looking at their safety, education or general well-being.

**F**ootball as a whole should be congratulated for the manner in which it has approached Child Protection and promoted the well-being of children. It cannot be emphasised sufficiently that sport, and football in particular, can certainly improve the self esteem of children, make them feel wanted, to be part of a team and give them some sense of purpose. It is critical therefore that these children feel safe and are safe while they are under the umbrella of football. Several other sports have implemented their own Child Protection initiatives, but none of them come near the scale of the operation that faced the football authorities.



It is estimated that around four million children are involved in football at various levels in England; there are in excess of 44,000 clubs affiliated to the Football Association, many of which are run by volunteers. This army of willing helpers is thought to number about 500,000. No other sport comes anywhere near these figures, so the fact that football has made such progress in a comparatively short space of time should be warmly applauded. The Football Association takes a lead in the core areas of Child Protection; whatever they do or say affects all football from the England national teams down to the grassroots game and school football. This is a huge undertaking. The Premier League and Football League do excellent work on their own and tailor things accordingly to suit their clubs, although they are also in regular contact with the FA. The FA has worked closely with the NSPCC and Sport England in the matter of Child Protection, and the IFC fully supports an endorsement from the NSPCC Chief Executive Officer, who states:

*"The FA's commitment to safeguarding children and young people in football is to be applauded. As the country's largest governing body of sport, they have an unenviable task. The professionalism with which they have approached the NSPCC / Sport England National Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Young People in Sport is commendable".*

The IFC has noted an increase in the awareness of Child Protection issues in football. People seem generally more aware of their responsibilities and obligations. IFC officials have attended various forums over recent years involving clubs from both the professional and grassroots game, and whereas previously the topic of Child Protection was rarely mentioned, it is now one of the foremost subjects on any agenda. Even when it isn't expected to be mentioned, there is invariably some reference to Child Protection at various stages within the proceedings. The fact that Child Protection is now being talked about within seemingly non-related conversations, is a good sign. There is certainly a general impression that the people in authority or those holding senior positions like club chairmen / directors and leading administrators within the game, are now more aware of their responsibilities in this area and are taking an active interest rather than simply passing the buck to someone else lower down the pecking order purely because they know they need to do something about Child Protection, but aren't sure what it really is. It would appear that the education of these people is finally starting to bear fruit.

Of course, there is little point in increasing the awareness of Child Protection if there is no response to concerns and queries. The IFC noted several comments made at a Football League customer service seminar that raised a whole host of questions regarding Child Protection. It all centred round a new scheme called Fans of the Future. This is an initiative by the Football League to try and attract more young people to watch live football. While the idea behind the scheme is very laudable, there was a lot of uncertainty about making it work. There seemed to be confusion about whether there was an underage limit; in other words, if a 6 year old child came alone to a football match, should they be admitted? Who is in charge of children on the club coaches to away games? Who is in charge of small children that may have entered the stadium without a parent or guardian? And, in the event of a game suddenly being abandoned, who is responsible for the children that may have been dropped-off at 2.30pm by their parents in the assumption that they'll return to collect them at 5pm?

Other questions that need to be answered are, for example, what should be a sensible child to adult ratio; is it feasible for one adult to come to a match with most of the children from the neighbourhood crammed into a mini-bus? Should there be a mandatory age limit below which children cannot attend a game unless accompanied by an adult? If a man attends a game with several children in a mixed group, what happens when one of the children needs to go to the toilet and, more pointedly, what happens if a girl needs some assistance? Does he rely on another member of the public to help? All of these questions, if left unanswered leave clubs, and football in general, in a position of uncertainty and vulnerability.

It was clear during the Football League seminars, that the clubs were expressing a need for further support in the area of Child Protection. The Football League has been slow to respond to this, but the IFC understands that they are now engaging with and acting upon this issue. The Football League has put a



great deal of emphasis on its Fans of the Future initiative and must ensure that when clubs bring young people onto their premises, they are well catered for and safe. The Customer Service Seminars highlighted various areas that clubs are uncertain about. The Football League needs to take a lead and ensure that its member clubs meet and are fully aware of their necessary commitment.

**WITH ALL OF THIS IN MIND, THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT CLEAR GUIDELINES ARE CONSIDERED REGARDING THE AGE AT WHICH CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED TO FOOTBALL MATCHES; WHAT THE ADULT-CHILD RATIO SHOULD BE; WHETHER A MIXED GROUP OF CHILDREN NEED A MIXED RATIO OF SUPERVISORS ETC. THIS GUIDANCE SHOULD THEN BE DISSEMINATED TO ALL CLUBS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.**

It is pleasing to note that the Football League makes reference to these problems in their report on the various seminars and that action is being taken. The Fans of the Future will no doubt be a success and the Football League should be congratulated for coming up with an imaginative scheme to encourage youngsters to go to football matches. However, during the planning stage, the IFC feels that it would have been appropriate for the Football League to have fully explored these issues before Fans of the Future was launched. Child Protection is currently managed via various departments of the Football League. It would be more appropriate for there to be a central resource with expertise in this often complicated area. It would also mean that other departments and any of the 72 clubs would know precisely whom to contact. The IFC understands that this topic will be on the 2007 Football League Chairmen's agenda when they have their annual meeting in the summer. However, it must be emphasised that a lot of work is going on behind the scenes and that a great deal of research and development is taking place before information and new projects can be rolled-out to the clubs.

When the IFC published its 2005 report, it commented that football clubs at all levels, County FA's, local leagues etc, had been rather overwhelmed by the sudden influx of Child Protection material. To a certain extent this was understandable due to the newness of the subject and the need to educate a lot of people about a complicated issue. It was recommended that the authorities should perhaps take a while to let things bed-in, monitor the situation and then ascertain whether they needed to alter anything or push ahead with further developments. Consequently, with that in mind, this latest Annual Report re-addresses the Child Protection issue and studies what has happened over the past 12 months and what is in the pipeline for the coming year.

In response to the IFC recommendation for better communication between the football authorities, one of the key developments has been the setting-up by the FA of a Child

Protection Forum. This forum, which mainly looks at Child Protection issues concerning professional football, includes not only the Football Association, Premier League and Football League, but also:

- The Professional Footballers Association
- Football in The Community
- The Football Foundation
- The League Managers Association
- The Child Protection in Sport Unit (NSPCC/Sport England).

As with any new initiative, the key area is to make sure that everything is fully communicated to all parties. Bearing in mind the vast number of leagues, clubs and personnel involved in football, this in itself was always going to be a daunting task. The Child Protection Forum's first duty was to establish clear terms of reference and set up a series of sub-groups to address the key areas as identified in the IFC report. The sub groups formed to date are:

- Education of professional players
- Case Management and recruitment (which includes Criminal Record Bureau checks)
- Mascots, ball boys/girls, images and stewards.

The education of professional players group is being driven by the Professional Footballers Association whilst the other sub-groups have contributions from all of the football authorities. The education of players has been considered with a view to some immediate action in the form of guidance notes and with the intention of developing a longer term plan for a tailored education programme.

As for Case Management and recruitment, the Child Protection Forum is currently engaged in discussions on the implications for the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act and in particular the Vetting and Barring Scheme, which is due for implementation in September 2008. This scheme will affect all areas of football including club staff whether paid or voluntary. The clubs and the authorities will now have an obligation to ensure that all staff have been through the Vetting and Barring scheme. It will not be a voluntary undertaking.

This new scheme will not replace the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). It will add to it. In effect, the CRB will continue to process all of the information and monitor the situation. There will be a newly formed Independent Barring Board that will oversee any appeals and maintain the barred list. Although the scheme is likely to be launched in September 2008, it will take a while before everything is completed and it could be as late as 2012 before football is covered. The FA (through whom the checks are carried out in the Football League and grassroots football) and the Premier League have been collaborating on the development of an information sharing agreement to explore the possibility of the portability of recruitment decisions across the FA, the Premier League and Football League clubs. The IFC looks forward to receiving confirmation of the outcomes of this important collaboration in due course as it would reduce any duplication of work.

# CHILD PROTECTION

At the moment, there is an unnecessary log jam. Each Premier League club, for instance, sees itself as a stand-alone company and does not transfer relevant Child Protection information between other clubs in the same division. There is a similar situation when clubs move between the Premier League and Football League. The new Vetting and Barring Scheme has the potential to end all of this at a stroke. Bearing in mind an obligation will be forced upon the authorities and clubs after September 2008 to report information and therefore have access to it, why not start sharing information immediately. There could be the unfortunate situation that if the Vetting and Barring Scheme doesn't get around to the people involved in football until near the end of the setting-up process, it could take a further 5 years before football is fully included.

**THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT, WHILE RECOGNISING THE CHILD PROTECTION FORUM IS ALREADY LOOKING INTO THIS TOPIC, IN AN EFFORT TO AVOID DELAY AND REMOVE THE RISK TO CHILDREN, STAFF, CLUBS AND AUTHORITIES, THE SHARING OF INFORMATION SHOULD START NOW AND THE PORTABILITY OF CRBs SHOULD BE AGREED UPON AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.**

One worrying comment made to the IFC was that the Child Protection Forum wasn't doing the job for which it was originated. The general principle behind the Forum was to allow the three authorities to get together and speak candidly about Child Protection matters. However, as mentioned previously, along with delegates from the FA, Premier League and the Football League, there are also invited members from other football related bodies. In certain respects it may be handy to hear what these other people have to say, but that must not be at the expense of the three authorities.

The danger is that rather than having a detailed meeting that addresses key issues, it could be considered that focus is being lost. The IFC is concerned that this loss of attention will lead to a delay in any action.

**THEREFORE THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE FORMAT OF THESE IMPORTANT CHILD PROTECTION FORUMS IS REVIEWED.**

The IFC does not want to advocate more meetings via this suggestion; to the contrary, it should make the Forum itself more efficient whilst including the others, as and when appropriate, in the work of the specialist sub-groups.

**IN ADDITION, THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INDEPENDENT CHAIRPERSON BEING APPOINTED TO THE FORUM SHOULD BE EXPLORED.**

Perhaps someone from the NSPCC could be invited to lead. This would help concentrate the meeting on Child Protection issues and avoid the possibility of distraction.

In the 2005 IFC Annual Report, it was recommended that the football authorities clarified the circumstances surrounding the recording of photographs and video at football events.

The IFC had noted that there was much confusion on this matter. How do you control the vastly contrasting actions of an innocent proud grandparent taking a photo of a grandchild making their first appearance in the local U7's league, or the dangerous paedophile taking advantage of children who are unaware of what's happening. The IFC is pleased to note that the Child Protection Forum through extensive consultation has produced revised guidelines which are much clearer. Although there are slightly different variations appropriate to the differing circumstances of the professional and grassroots game, everyone follows the same core principles.

One way of reducing the potential backlash of the aggrieved grandparent who is asked not to take photos of their grandchild, is to explain to them exactly why the guidelines have been put in place. Communication, or rather the lack of it, is frequently at the root of many problems. The IFC feels that as long as parents are fully aware of why there is a need for guidelines, not only will they be understanding of what is going on and why, but they are likely to become another set of eyes and ears, ready to alert the Club or Youth League Welfare Officer of any potential problems.

The FA has produced an excellent leaflet<sup>[1]</sup> that outlines many of the dos and don'ts relating to the taking and storing of images, and explains why the guidelines have been introduced. There are useful tips on how organisations should take care when commissioning photographers or inviting local media to come along to an event. There are also contact details both for the FA and other organisations, should anyone wish to report any potentially unlawful materials on the Internet. The Premier League has also produced, in association with Children's Services Officers at the 20 Premier clubs, a special booklet<sup>[2]</sup> that looks at this sensitive issue in the light of the particular circumstances of professional football clubs. At the back of the booklet, there are some helpful sample letters and consent forms. This is an excellent, clear and concise publication. The Premier League has also provided training for Children's Services Officers on this matter at its Annual Training Conference.

One point highlighted by this booklet and the training however, is that this is another area where the authorities have differing guidelines and training arrangements. What therefore happens to those clubs who move from division to division or join the

[1] Celebrating Football Through Photographs and Video.

[2] Premier League Code of Practice: Images of Children's Participation in Activities at Premier League Clubs.



ranks of professional football after being promoted from the grassroots level? Surely it would make sense for there to be a standard procedure for all clubs to follow. It is important that different information is not given and vital guidance lost between clubs moving from one division to another.

**THE IFC THEREFORE RECOMMENDS THAT, THROUGH THE CHILD PROTECTION FORUM, THE AUTHORITIES GET TOGETHER AND PRODUCE ONE SET OF GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF IMAGES THAT WOULD BE APPLICABLE TO ALL LEVELS OF FOOTBALL.**

The Football Association is making great strides in its efforts to appoint key people at the grassroots level of football. Since 2000 all County FA's have had a Child Protection Officer. They liaise directly with the FA's Case Management Team on child



protection referrals and are key in promoting a proactive approach to the child protection agenda locally. The FA is currently recommending that a Club Welfare Officer (CWO) is appointed in every youth club, and at youth league level there should be a Youth League Welfare Officer (YLWO).

The Welfare Officer initiative is being promoted via local seminars where clear guidance is given as to the requirements for this role and the opportunity for specific training via the Welfare Officers Workshop which builds on the FA's awareness workshop attended to date by 184,000 people. The response from the CFA's, which run the game at a local level, has been excellent. Thirty five of them (there are forty three in total) have either staged or are due to stage these seminars as well as being committed to running the workshops. The FA has also provided guidance via theFA.com on how to go about appointing a welfare officer for youth leagues and youth clubs to ensure this message is communicated as widely as possible. The FA has had direct requests from many clubs asking how they can appoint a Welfare Officer.

The Welfare Officers Workshop is largely based upon the excellent FA document 'Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football.'<sup>[3]</sup> It looks at the Child Protection policies, procedures and implementation guidance for people in grassroots football and basically explains the skills required for

these roles and what the job entails. There is advice on how to recruit volunteers and staff, what needs to be done in terms of criminal record checks, plus examples of action that people should take if they become aware of poor practice or possible abuse situations.

The vast majority of folk who end up in these positions of responsibility are volunteers. They should be commended for giving their time. It is also encouraging to note for example that CFA's in the North West Region have confirmed there will be no costs incurred for any Charter Standard club Welfare Officer who attends this specific training. It is anticipated that Welfare Officers from various clubs will be encouraged to be in regular contact and therefore spread examples of good practice. The FA sees the role of the County FA Child Protection Officer being critical in supporting this sharing of best practice locally. Whilst the FA is currently encouraging youth clubs and youth leagues to appoint Welfare Officers it seems to be only a matter of time before this becomes a stipulation. It would appear that this would be a significant step in getting the safeguarding of children firmly positioned within the operations of all clubs at the grassroots level.

The issue of further guidance for mascots and ball boys / girls is still in development. The FA has reviewed its selection process of ball boys / girls and enhanced its orientation programme for those selected. The other football authorities are committed to looking into developing collaborative guidelines for ball boys / girls and mascots at professional games.

What's next for Child Protection? The Football Association now feels that the bedding-in process is working well and that clubs and leagues at all levels are now ready to enhance current good practice and raise awareness with those involved in and connected to their clubs and leagues who do not yet fully understand the impact of their actions and behaviour. This challenge is one that everyone has a responsibility to own but it is anticipated that it will be driven by the appointment of both youth league and youth club Welfare Officers. For this vision to come to fruition it is essential that the CFA CPO infrastructure is in a position to support such a potentially large volunteer workforce. One particular aim of the FA is to review the current infrastructure and reconsider the necessary skill base of the County FA Child Protection Officers. The FA has engaged an external consultant through the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) to give an independent view for consideration.

[3] Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football: Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Implementation Guidance for Grassroots Football.

THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE FA ENSURES IT EMPLOYS APPROPRIATELY TRAINED PEOPLE TO CARRY OUT THE ROLE OF COUNTY FA CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER AND DOES NOT CONTINUE TO RELY ON INDIVIDUALS GIVING THEIR TIME FREELY TO THIS IMPORTANT AREA OF WORK. THIS NEEDS A FINANCIAL COMMITMENT FROM THE FA. HOWEVER, THIS DESIGNATED PERSONS STRUCTURE WILL NOT ONLY SHOW A LONG TERM COMMITMENT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ROLE, BUT ALSO SHOW THAT SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN REMAINS A HIGH PRIORITY ON THE FA'S AGENDA.

The Football Association should be applauded for talking to the people who really matter in all of this; the youngsters. In June 2006 a Football Festival was staged involving a youth group in Warrington. The aim of this was to get feedback from the young people. Many of them came from an NSPCC drop-in centre. Others were from local schools and grassroots clubs. They all had one thing in common; a love of football. Rather than preach to the kids, the FA encouraged them to operate on a peer to peer basis; speak to one another and compile a report. It is anticipated that during 2007, these youngsters will be invited to the FA headquarters to give a talk to the FA's own Child Protection Unit and reveal what was in their report. The FA should be congratulated for not adopting the 'big stick' approach and actively consulting with the children to sound them out and discover exactly what they felt should be happening rather than simply imposing regulations on clubs and leagues.

There was a similar situation with the FA's seminars entitled, 'The National Game; Your Game, Your Say'. The FA has been consulting widely for the past 12 months in relation to the focus and content of the new National Game Strategy through to 2012. As part of this process stakeholders across the game have been asked to identify the key aspects required to move the game forward. Child Protection has been central to these discussions and it is encouraging to see that there is widespread support for responsible recruitment and the continued roll-out of CRB checks for all those with access to children in youth football. It is good to know that there is support at grassroots for something which is mandatory in Law for football to embrace. This obligation will increase further when the Vetting and Barring Scheme arrives next year. In addition the consultation process has widened the understanding of and support for Club Welfare Officer's (CWO) in every youth football club. The CWO is an essential role to support clubs to put child protection policies into

practice, including responsible recruitment, which is something clubs will become liable for as the Vetting and Barring Scheme is implemented. They are also critical to assisting clubs with creating supportive learning environments and addressing issues of poor sideline behaviour by parents, spectators and coaches, towards referees and players. The FA needs to provide clear and unambiguous messages about clubs responsibilities regarding welfare.

The FA's Child Protection staff will continue to work closely with the NSPCC, especially the Child Protection in Sport Unit. This allows the FA to analyse not only what goes on within football circles re Child Protection, but also observe what happens in other sports. The NSPCC's CPSU will continue to feed into the Child Protection Forum and guide the football authorities as necessary.

Awareness training will continue to be a key feature of the FA's Child Protection team, as it is essential that as many people as possible continue to attend the Safeguarding Children Workshop. The FA will continue to update Child Protection Officers and Child Welfare Officers (CWO) with latest information and new techniques and guidelines. The aim is that CWOs will take responsibility for Child Protection at their clubs, and for the Youth League Officers to consider what influence they can have to monitor behaviour. This will then afford more time to the Child Protection Officers at the CFA's who will be able to look at the bigger picture across an entire county.

It is this latter point where perhaps the FA can have most immediate impact; by employing people to lead the delivery of the child protection agenda locally whilst reporting to the FA Child Protection Team nationally. It is clear that for a change in behaviour and culture to take place in grassroots football this area of work needs to be appropriately resourced and managed. This would mean the CFA can instigate local initiatives and develop a local communication network based on national guidance. This would help ease the pressure on the FA and allow them more time to devote to fine tuning and evolving the Child Protection programme strategically. There is also more chance of local people owning and resolving

local issues. Although the FA will still be there for support and guidance, it is asking a lot of them to get involved in every single issue on a local basis.

The IFC feels if more of the Child Protection issues can be resolved locally, there is more chance of clubs and leagues being willing to adapt and let everyone get on with the job of allowing children to enjoy all of the benefits that getting involved with football can bring. This will require funding, but the benefits should outweigh the expense. Consequently, the IFC recommends that the FA ensures it employs appropriately trained people to carry out the role of CFA Child Protection Officer and does not continue to rely on individuals giving their time freely to this important area of work. This needs a financial commitment from the FA. However, this designated persons structure will not only show a long term commitment and acknowledgement of the importance and significance of this role, but also show that safeguarding children remains a high priority on the FA's agenda.

In the 2003-04 season, the Premier League extended its arrangements for Child Protection to all activities involving children at its 20 clubs. Each club had to register with the Criminal Records Bureau and ensure that all staff who worked with children were given the appropriate screening. A member of staff had to be nominated as the club's Children's Officer and various policies and procedures to ensure the safety of children were put into place. In the 2006-07 season, in order to be consistent with national developments in Child Protection, the Premier League moved the focus of its Child Protection Rules to a Safeguarding approach. In a minority of clubs, these developments have taken time to settle-in, but the Premier League, via independent monitoring and assessment is now confident that all key measures are in place at its clubs. As well as attending any FA Workshops, there are additional opportunities for club staff to update and refresh information through a programme of conferences, meetings and seminars. This programme links in to a new Premier League qualification that requires each Children's Services Officer to undertake continuous professional development training regarding Child Protection. The lead person at a Premier League club who deals with children, is now referred to as the Children's Services' Officer. There are also departmental Safeguarding Officers who ensure that every aspect of the football club is fully aware of its Child Protection responsibilities. These people report to the Children's Services' Manager who in turn reports to Chief Executive and / or board level.

The Premier League also has an impressive training and update programme for all of its Children's Officers.<sup>[1]</sup> It outlines three basic requirements for Children's Officers; to be trained in Child Protection issues and procedures; to complete a Child Protection awareness training programme; and to undertake yearly professional development in Child Protection. The thinking behind this detailed programme was that the Premier League felt that it was impossible to adopt an 'off the shelf' attitude to Child Protection, and that there needed to be something that was specifically targeted at its clubs. The

Premier League responded to this by working closely with the NSPCC CPSU and formulated its own scheme. There are four modules within the programme, plus an encouragement by the League for Children's Officers to undertake their own research or devise a programme that is tailored purely to their particular club. In this latter case, the Premier League is willing to cover 50% of the funding, with the host club paying the other 50%. Overall, this really is an excellent example of how an authority can respond to its own requirements rather than rely upon guidance from elsewhere. The Premier League should be congratulated for investing time and money in this programme.

The Premier League has a detailed set of rules and regulations relating to Children.<sup>[2]</sup> It outlines the League's policy regarding children and explains what is expected of the clubs. The Rules provide for the Premier League to monitor clubs to ensure their compliance. As with the Premier League leaflet that discusses the capturing of images of children, this booklet also provides a series of forms that can be used for registering staff, gaining consent from parents etc. The Premier League has done a lot of really good work in the area of Child Protection. The Child Protection department should be applauded for their diligence.

Overall within football, the issue of Child Protection has moved from being something that was initially ignored or deemed irrelevant, to being something that suddenly everyone knew they had to catch-up on but weren't really sure about, to finally being a topic that is very close to the top of any football agenda. The FA has taken a lead in this with excellent support work coming from the Premier League and Football League. Both of the leagues have followed the core FA principles, but in many areas they have added to them and also implemented their own ideas.

Whenever the IFC meets with the authorities and the organisations involved in football, it is encouraging to hear so many people talking about Child Protection as something that needs to be continually addressed and must never be allowed to slip. The education process is key. Everyone involved in football needs to be aware of their responsibilities. Any possible fear or reticence of getting involved with children must be removed, and judging by the current excellent work going on within the game, the IFC is aware that the future of youngsters in football and the protection they receive is better than ever.

**A lot of excellent work is in the pipeline. The IFC looks forward to reporting on these developments. The IFC also intends to revisit the recommendations made in its Child Protection report that was published in August 2005. The IFC's 2007 Annual Report will consider the level of progress made during the 30 months that will have passed since the publication of the Report on Child Protection in Football. ●**

[1] PFCO: Premier League's Portfolio for Children's Officers, Pilot Programme 2005 / 06

[2] Premier League Rules, Section O, Child Protection



# CHARTERS

**Charters have become part and parcel of football administration. They were originally introduced in March 2000 as a result of the Football Task Force, with all three football authorities, (Football Association, Premier League and Football League) agreeing to publish their own Customer Charters in much the same way as many other organisations and companies do.**

**L**ater that year, changes were introduced to encourage every professional football club to publish their own Charter. The essence of a Charter was to explain to fans (the customers) what the clubs and authorities intended to do over the coming 12 months and explain various issues such as how to complain if he / she wasn't satisfied about something.

Consequently, since the 2000-01 season the IFC has received a steady flow of Charter reports from the three authorities, plus a compilation of reports from the 92 Premier League and Football League clubs. All of them make interesting reading and give a fascinating insight across the whole range of football from what goes on at international and grassroots level in the case of the FA, to what is happening at club level from the top of the Premiership to the bottom of League Two. They are valuable documents for this reason alone and should be recognised as such.

However, Charters are much more than just a glossy document. They explain to the fans what they can expect from either their club or their club's governing body and will give them guidance for when things go wrong. It should be pointed out that Charters are produced for the benefit of the fans and not solely for the IFC. It is the role of the IFC to monitor what is going on and comment on whether they feel as though the Charters are doing a good job and telling fans what they need to hear. The IFC also has a duty to review Charter Reports to fulfil its remit.

Charters are evolving. In the past the IFC encouraged clubs to include much more information in their Charter reports and suggested that they should use them as an opportunity to promote their community work. This meant that, on occasions, rather than run the risk of omitting something, some clubs went to the other extreme and their Charter Report document included anything and everything from the past 12 months of the club's life. As mentioned earlier this creates a fascinating look into what goes on at football clubs across England but didn't really serve the purpose of what a Charter should provide. It would certainly put off most fans that were looking for a few brief details. It was tricky finding precise information. For this reason, we are seeing Charter reports being reduced in size and becoming more concise. This is something the IFC welcomes. These documents provide a brief and enlightening resumé of what's going on within the clubs and authorities.





The Football League reduced their Charter report<sup>[1]</sup> by simply allocating each club fewer pages. The clubs were also asked to state three promises as what the future season would hold. These were definite aims that the club hoped to achieve. Bearing in mind that the Football League has 72 clubs, it was interesting to note that their Charter report was about one quarter the size of that produced by the Premier League regarding their 20 clubs. However, all of the authorities have worked hard to review the Charter process and the reports are now restricted to the most relevant details only.

### The Football Association

The latest Customer Charter from the FA follows a similar pattern to that of last year. It is a neat A5 size publication. There's a touch of quality about the way it looks and feels. It also fits into the way the FA is going with many of its publications in that the photographs are stylised and the writing is done in such a way that it addresses the reader in a friendly manner. It is an inviting read. As with all Charters, the FA's Customer Charter is developing. The FA of course, has to deal with two extremes. They have the England team and they have grassroots football. Their Charter reviews the FA's performance over the last 12 months and gives details of their commitment to continuing and improving their relationship with the public throughout the course of 2007. They are also trying to raise the awareness of the Customer Charter by referring to it in their match programmes for all major games including the FA Cup Final and Semi Final, the FA Community Shield and all England home games at Senior, youth and women's internationals.

It is refreshing to read the FA Customer Charter and find that it not only explains to people how they can complain and what they should expect from the game's governing body in England, it also provides a rundown of what the organisation is up to. This latter point is important because a lot of people who think that the FA is simply a band of people who run the England team and the FA Cup, will be surprised to find out what else they do. The opening page of this 42 page publication gives a quick rundown of the amount of teams and competitions the FA is accountable for. Did you know that there are 23 England teams? (This includes the Senior team, six youth sides, three women's teams, seven disability teams and the National Game XI.) And did you know that along with the FA Cup, there are ten other FA competitions? Add in their work with communities, clubs, schools, counties, leagues, administering the Laws of the Game in England, disabled and

ethnic minority groups, looking after 'englandfans' etc etc, and it's easy to see that the FA is a hectic place to work in. The Customer Relations team is one of the busiest groups of people at any club or authority, and the FA is no different. Their 10-strong team dealt with over 190,000 pieces of correspondence from customers in 2006. This is a mammoth work load and it is unrealistic for the FA to respond to all of them. A percentage of these contacts will be merely people ringing up or emailing the organisation to have a grumble and not expecting a response. In the future the FA is looking at a system whereby anyone who contacts them, needs to leave their name, address etc if they want a reply. If they don't leave any contact details then the FA will assume, quite rightly, that they simply wanted to register a complaint or vent some anger without expecting any sort of response.

This also has a secondary benefit in that the FA will then be able to build a database of reasons why people contact the organisation and, although at the time it may seem like a small number of complainants are raising a particular issue, it may show that after a while, the problem is bigger and more pressing than originally thought. This will provide an interesting topic for research and the IFC looks forward to reporting on how the system works and the facts it throws up in next year's Annual Report.

The FA is working hard to liaise with the football public. They go out to the communities and can be seen most weekends at a ground somewhere in England. They attend U21 and youth games, FA Trophy and FA Vase matches thereby having the opportunity to speak to supporters who may be different from the fan that goes to 'normal' league and cup games.

The general idea is to set up an information desk in an area where the fans congregate, and encourage them to ask questions and give opinions. It is estimated that around 100 matches will be utilised each season. The Customer Relations team is also looking to visit schools so that when a school gets in touch with the FA asking for badges, information etc, they will be offered the chance of having a visit from the FA to give a presentation. This is a great idea and should be warmly applauded. It proves that the FA is working hard to be more visible, more interactive and not merely making decisions and issuing guidelines from behind locked doors in Soho Square.

[1] 'Goals, 2006-07, Improving the Supporter Experience'

In order to be able to judge the general feeling amongst fans and how they view the clubs, the leagues, and the work they do, the authorities regularly survey the fans. The FA surveyed *englandfans* and the Football League e-mailed almost half a million of their supporters, while the Premier League got in touch with 80,000 of their fans. However, the IFC feels that to a certain extent, the authorities are going back to the same customers with the same questions. What about the fans who used to attend football matches, but stopped going? Why did they stop? What about those people who never go to a game? Why don't they go? What would encourage them to attend? Is there anything the authorities or individual clubs could do to attract the stay-away supporter?

**THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE SCOPE OF FAN SURVEYS SHOULD BE BROADENED. THE MORE THE AUTHORITIES KNOW ABOUT THEIR FANS, THE MORE LIKELIHOOD THERE IS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE BEING FURTHER IMPROVED AND THEREFORE ENCOURAGE FANS TO RETURN TO THE GAME.**

The FA is also making strenuous efforts to speak to fans as frequently as possible. They attended a series of forums in 2006 and spoke directly to the fans organisations. This will continue in 2007 and is listed as one of their commitments for the coming year. The IFC attended the Supporters Direct National Conference in October 2006 where the FA was well represented to speak to the fans about their role and promoting the adoption of good governance. A presentation by two of the FA's senior officials frequently became rather heated, but they must have realised that it wouldn't be an easy session and at least showed they were prepared to meet the fans face to face and argue their point.

There is a chapter dedicated to the FA's involvement in the National Game or grassroots football. 2006 saw the culmination of the FA's 5-year Football Development plan. The figures make impressive reading and again exemplify the amount of work that the FA does and encourages around England. It is encouraging to note that the work begun in the Football Development plan will continue under a new guise; the National Game Strategy. This will be another 5-year plan starting in 2007 and continuing through until 2012, linking in nicely with the London Olympic Games. The campaign will be complemented by the FA's 'Get into Football' initiative that aims to attract children in the 5-11 age range to play football and encourage parents to get involved in any way such as being a referee, volunteer helper, coach or simply going along to give support as a spectator. It emphasises that when it comes to getting involved in football there is no barrier irrespective of

age, race, gender, ability, religion or background. In October and November 2006, the FA undertook a massive online consultation called 'Your Game, Your Say'. It was a survey that consisted of eleven questionnaires targeting coaches, teachers, parents, youth and adult players, referees and those people who simply enjoy football for recreational reasons. The aim is to improve the game for those 1.5 million people who can be found in 123,000 teams across England and increase participation, raise standards, improve facilities, tackle abusive behaviour, etc. This is another huge undertaking, the results of which will be monitored by the IFC. Details of the 'Your Game, Your Say' questionnaires were due to be revealed shortly after this Annual Report went to print. However, as the FA Customer Charter points out, it is anticipated that around £700m worth of funding will be pumped into football, so it is important to get the grassroots priorities right.

There is an interesting section in the Football Association's Charter Report regarding FA Learning and the use of online courses. This is followed by an update on the England official supporters club, *englandfans*. There are two tiers of membership; *englandfans* and *englandfans+*. Membership for the latter category is for fans who intend to travel to home and away games. The number of members is capped at 25,000 and is currently fully subscribed. This figure is chosen because there is little point in registering more fans into the club when there is no realistic chance of providing them all with tickets. Ticketing is one of the biggest problems facing every football



organisation. There will always be times when demand easily outstrips supply and there will always be people who feel that, for no fault of their own, they have fallen on the wrong side of the divide that means they don't get a ticket. Many will feel hard done to. 2006 saw 84 Charter Complaints from *englandfans*, nearly all of which were related to the way tickets were allocated for the World Cup. The FA has listened to these complaints and revised the loyalty scheme to further reward members who attend away matches during a membership period.

Another part of the Customer Charter that will interest every England fan is the section devoted to Wembley Stadium. This will become a flag bearer for the FA and they will take the opportunity of making sure that there is a large FA presence throughout the ground. It is anticipated that there will be at least eight information kiosks scattered around the stadium

on all levels, with FA staff on duty to give information to fans and further the 'Your Game, Your Say' ideal. Shortly before this Annual Report went to print, a completed Wembley Stadium was finally handed over to the Football Association (9th March 2007). The IFC is proud to be one of the first organisations to make use of Wembley, staging its Annual Report launch and AGM there on 23rd April 2007.

The penultimate chapter of the FA Charter Report is devoted to what they refer to as 'Football for All'. This takes the reader through some of the vast array of work undertaken by the FA to encourage people from all walks of life to get involved in football. There is coverage of disability football, work on racial equality, the Goals project (what amounts to a 5-week training course for unemployed and disadvantaged young people, using football as a motivational tool), tackling homophobia, women's and girls football, and investigating whether the rules relating to mixed football should be changed. At the moment boys and girls can play in the same team until the age of eleven. The FA Charter Report states that 'Football for All' has become a part of everything they do at the FA.

Lastly, there is a section devoted to complaints, highlighting the involvement of the IFC.

Overall, this is a really good 'report' by the Football Association. And a 'report' is precisely what it is. It doesn't merely explain about what the FA intends to do in 2007 and reiterate what it did in 2006. This is an overview of the principle features of the FA, as well as giving a steer of how they see things developing and giving a hint of the more distant future. Perhaps the time has come to develop a new title for the FA Customer Charter. One route could be to include the Charter details in the half yearly FA Report booklet.

### The Premier League

The Premier League produces a set of charter reports for the IFC and for a limited number of stakeholders. Each Club also produces its own version of their report for their fans. This enables the IFC and other interested stakeholders of the League itself to see what all the clubs are reporting on, and allows the fans of each club to read a detailed report of its own club's activities. This is to be welcomed as it ensures that the documents are reaching the right audiences and covering the relevant topics.

Overall, this is an excellent document that the Premier League has produced both for the IFC and for a general publication that will go to all of its 20 clubs. The Premier League has worked hard to reduce the amount of content and restrict the clubs to important information. They have taken note of what the IFC recommended last year, that the Charter Reports should be kept to what amounts, largely, to a factual document outlining precise information that will be of interest to the vast majority of fans. In certain respects it is sad to see references to some of the other work going on within the

clubs being omitted, although it is out of place in a Charter Report. However, as mentioned earlier, there is a reason for this. All of the clubs have their own Customer Charter Report publication which is either mailed out to the fans directly, or is available on their websites. These documents provide a plethora of information that gives a fascinating insight into what goes on within the Premier League clubs. The new system of having a concise Clubs Charter Report and 20 individual customer reports is much better and, the IFC feels, allows the clubs to produce something which is more personal to them and their fans. The Premier League itself produces a *Community Report*<sup>[2]</sup> but clubs are restricted to a single page and mainly feature just a single topic. More of this in the Community section of the Annual Report.

The Premier League has obviously given the clubs a template to work from. Most of the Club Charter Reports follow a similar pattern and, in the main, this works well and has concentrated the attention of most clubs. It also allows comparisons to be made between clubs. Some of the clubs have presented things slightly differently while one of them (Charlton Athletic) dispensed with headings altogether. Some begin with an introductory note from their Chief Executive and / or manager. In the main though, most reports follow a sequence that is typified by the Newcastle Utd report where the first section is devoted to Customer Service. This includes the Customer Charter, explaining what it is and where it can be found (website, copies in club stores / reception areas and in the matchday programme for the first game of the season) and looking back at what's happened over the previous 12 months. There are also details of staff training. The next section is devoted to how the club consults with its fans. This is followed by various examples of the club investing in the local community including charity work, The Prince's Trust, the excellent Learning Centre, and an initiative called the 100% Attendance Club that encourages children to be punctual and always go to school. The Newcastle Utd report concludes with details regarding ticketing, Football in the Community, disabled facilities, eliminating racism, and contact details including the name, email, telephone number and address of the Customer Services Officer. The IFC feels this is perfect.

Some clubs offer other interesting insights. Middlesbrough have a section devoted to Supporting the Environment, explaining that the club is aiming to develop the Riverside into Europe's first Eco Stadium. They are planning to install a wind turbine to provide all power. Manchester Utd are involved in a scheme that sees training shoes recycled. Liverpool raised an estimated £300,000 for the Marina Dalglish Cancer Appeal by staging a re-run of the 1986 FA Cup final against Everton. Fulham take the unusual approach of including some quotes from fans who comment on their experiences of being one of the club's supporters.

[2] The Premier League Community Report 2005-06

# PREMIER LEAGUE CHARTER REPORT

Aston Villa is the only club to provide a table showing the number of complaints they received and how it compares to the previous two seasons. In the 2005-06 season they received 350 complaints (04-05 - 442; 03-04 - 359). The table also shows how long it took to acknowledge the complaints (one day) and how long, on average, it took to resolve the complaint (6 days). They even reveal how many complaints took longer than a fortnight to resolve (14), adding that on fewer than ten occasions did they feel the need to resort to issuing the IFC's 'I'm Still Not Satisfied' leaflet to explain the complaints procedure. This is an extremely handy and honest assessment of their Customer Service performance. The club should be congratulated for this. It also serves as a good example to other clubs.

By comparison, the individual reports that are produced by each of the 20 clubs are aimed more at the supporters. Fulham for example, produce a brochure that is similar in size to a matchday programme. Called 'Off the Pitch', it takes you through the club's achievements for the 2005-06 season and looks ahead to the current campaign. There are forewords from both the club's Manager and Managing Director, followed by several pages that include a whole raft of headings that exemplify what's going on and what's in the pipeline at Craven Cottage. It really is a most enjoyable read and shows the amount of excellent work that is taking place 'off the pitch' at a football club.

Reading refers to their Charter as a Supporters' Guide and is mainly restricted to being a factual publication. It may be slightly less attractive than equivalent offerings from other clubs, but it still does the required job. One reason for the difference in style is that this document will have been prepared while the club was still part of the Football League. The majority of pages are given over to the club's ticketing details including prices and who is eligible for concessions. There is a 6-point promotion as to why fans should apply for a membership card, the most important of which is that members get a £4 reduction on ticket prices for every game. Interestingly, Reading also has what it refers to as a 'movers week'. This is when season ticket holders can apply to move their seat to another area of the ground.

Birmingham City, although no longer part of the Premier League after being relegated at the end of the 2005-06 season, produced a Customer Review in the manner of a question and answer session. For example, the opening page has questions such as 'Who is Birmingham City FC's point of contact for Customer Service and where can I obtain further

information?' ...and... 'What process do you follow when a complaint of general correspondence is received?' These questions are then followed with relevant details, including names and contact details. It is a novel approach, but it works well. Everton's is written in a similarly informal 'fan-friendly' style.

Spurs produce two high quality documents (Club Charter and a Supporters' Report) both of which include stylish photography and comprehensive details. There is a useful section at the rear of the Club Charter where the club provide a list of frequently asked questions, plus the answers. The final page, entitled 'To Dare is to Do' gives a full list of the club's 'Communication Channels' plus full details of how to obtain weekly email newsletters and desktop news alerts. The reports are very well designed with concise information that is bound to appeal to the fans.

The examples given above are a snapshot of what can be found within the club documents. It gives the clubs a chance to add some extra detail to what is found in the normal Club Charter Report and, in the case of many of the publications seen by the IFC, an opportunity to let everyone know about the excellent work going on at many clubs around England. If every Premier League club read the reports from all of the other clubs, the IFC feels certain that most clubs will spot something that would be relevant to them.

It is also refreshing to read about the number of fans' forums, focus groups, customer surveys etc. that are now being utilised by clubs around the country. Ten years ago, it was a rarity for a football club to have a single person to look after Customer Service let alone an entire department. Nowadays this is the norm. The issuing of Customer Service Charters or, as Arsenal calls it, a Club Fans Report, shows that clubs take this very seriously and realise that they need to take note of customer issues if they are to retain their fan base.

Overall, the Premier League Club Charter Reports 2006 document is excellent. It might not be as glossy as last year's equivalent publication, but it is much more concise and relevant to what a Charter Report should be.

## PREMIER LEAGUE CHARTER REPORT

This should not be confused with the compilation of Club Charter reports as in the previous paragraphs. The Premier League produces its own Report. This has evolved into what the Premier League now calls its Corporate Social Responsibility Review 2006 document. It makes for fascinating reading and is a helpful document that rounds-up much of their work away from the football field. An interesting section is devoted to the environment which, although initially not seeming to have much to do with community work within football, is actually quite enlightening and shows how clubs can do their bit to be 'green' and set a good example.



It also previews what's coming up in 2007. The Premier League intends to launch an automated feedback system and ticketing information service on their website, implement a new training scheme for club ticketing staff, assist clubs in furthering the Racial Equality Standard and improve environmental policies. They are also introducing a service standard for all clubs to work towards during the 2006-07 season.

silences. This is a sensitive issue that often reflects the feelings of a local community. Quite rightly, the Premier League will leave most of this to the clubs because they are best placed to judge the general atmosphere. Safety at clubs is seen as being good by 87% of fans. The role of the club in the community was also recognised in this survey. 94% of respondents felt that their local club was important to the community as a whole.

THE PREMIER LEAGUE ISSUED OVER 80,000 FORMS OF WHICH AROUND 25,000 WERE COMPLETED AND RETURNED. THIS ALLOWED THE PREMIER LEAGUE TO DISCOVER AREAS OF CONCERN AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM. PREDICTABLY, MATCH SCHEDULING FEATURED AS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR GRUMBLES, ALTHOUGH THIS SEEMS TO BE SOMEWHERE WHERE BOTH THE PREMIER LEAGUE AND THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE ARE GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THINGS

Last year they were aiming to reduce the length of time it took to respond to customer complaints. The Premier League says that most complaints were dealt with within 48 hours and that 97% had been responded to within 14 days. They were to look at new ways of promoting football within the ethnic community. This has been achieved with the excellent BBC Asian Network football show. There was an intention to expand the Level Playing Field initiative for disabled fans. This has been done, with funding in place for the 2007 campaign. The Racial Equality Standard, in conjunction with Kick It Out, was to be further promoted. This initiative seems to be going well as 12 clubs have now achieved Preliminary status and one, Manchester City, has gone even further to the Intermediate level. The Premier League's final objective was to launch a service whereby fans would be sent emails to notify them of any fixture changes. This idea was launched, although after talking to various fans' groups, it was decided to use a telephone text messaging service rather than emails.

All of this shows that the Premier League is willing to set targets and disclose whether or not they've achieved them. As a well-known and powerful organisation, this sets an excellent standard for the rest of football. They, as with the FA and Football League, also set a good example by surveying their fans. The Premier League issued over 80,000 forms of which around 25,000 were completed and returned. This allowed the Premier League to discover areas of concern and how to address them. Predictably, match scheduling featured as one of the main reasons for grumbles, although this seems to be somewhere where both the Premier League and the Football League are getting to grips with things. The level of complaints has declined and more fans seem to be content with the way their fixtures are spread throughout the season. Another issue brought to the Premier League's attention was that of minute's

The Premier League fans' survey shows that a majority of people are happy with their club's customer relations and that this is an improving trend.

Customer Service is important. However, the Premier League is not resting on its laurels and has brought in an outside agency to give advice and training to all relevant staff at its clubs in a bid to improve things even further. They are also introducing a service standard for all clubs to work towards during the 2006-07 season. Overall, the Premier League's continued attention to detail and a willingness to research their fan base bodes well for the future.

The IFC has only one note of caution here, and that surrounds the Customer Services Department at the Premier League. It seems to be the department that, as well as dealing with its own workload, also handles most of those things that can't be given a label. This should be treated as a compliment by that department because they evidently have the skills and ability to deal with problems. However, in terms of staffing, this is a small department. There is a risk that the excellent work that should be part of their standard remit could suffer due to the amount of additional distractions. There is a similar situation at the Football League where a small, hardworking band of people seem to end up with more and more responsibility.

# FOOTBALL LEAGUE CHARTER REPORT

## FOOTBALL LEAGUE CHARTER REPORT

The Football League's Charter is also evolving. Entitled 'Goals, 2006-07, Improving the Supporter Experience' this is another impressive effort by the Football League and provides the reader with an excellent snapshot of the work of the League itself and of its 72 clubs. It really is a most readable document and, while doing what it is supposed to do (reviewing and previewing commitments made to supporters), it looks good too.

As with previous years, each club lists three promises for the coming season. They look back on how they performed over the previous twelve months. The same applies to the Football League itself. Last year, the League promised to promote participation in football through a cup competition for young children, mount a survey of fans and to publish a guide outlining facilities for disabled fans at Football League grounds. All three have been achieved. The Football League Disabled Supporters guide was published in August 2006; over 40,000 fans responded to the Football League Supporters Survey, and more than 20,000 children from in excess of 3000 schools competed in the inaugural Football League Community Cup and Girls Cup.

The Football League has announced the sweeping legislation that prevents smoking at all of their stadia. This will be in place for the start of the 2007-08 season. Clubs will implement new agents' regulations. The League has also instigated a mystery fan exercise to ensure that supporters are getting the best possible service from the clubs. The results for this were due to be announced at the same time as this IFC Annual Report went to print, but we look forward to giving details next year and any action that may have been taken in response to the results.

There will be the second year of the Football League's 'Fans of the Future' campaign, aimed at attracting young people to attend football matches. It is estimated that there will be free tickets available to children at over 800 league matches during the 2006-07 season and there will be free tickets available to Under 16s for every game played in the Johnstone's Paint Trophy. This is all part and parcel of the Football League's re-branding exercise. All credit should be given to the Football League for coming up with this wide reaching initiative to try and attract the next generation of football fans into their stadia. It is estimated that over 200,000 children attended matches last season free of charge or at a discounted rate. The only caution recommended by the IFC, as mentioned in the Child Protection chapter of this Annual Report, is that care is taken when it comes to admitting large numbers of young children into a stadium. It must be ensured that these children are correctly monitored and supervised. However, as is again reported in the Child Protection chapter, many clubs flagged-up

concerns during the Football League seminars. As a result, the League is looking to appoint a dedicated Child Welfare Officer to work closely with the clubs and the appropriate authorities. This should help allay any fears the clubs may have and aid in their education.

The Goals document also provides a useful précis of the 2006 Supporters' Survey. This is a fascinating piece of work and provides the League with a clear message of what their current fans like and dislike. A total of 43,590 people responded, which is roughly 3-times the number who responded to the League's last survey in 2001. This is a decent response to an online survey and shows that the Football League targeted the right people and asked the right questions to generate such a good response. 50 per cent of respondents follow clubs in the Championship, 28% from League One and 22% from League Two. The general view of what can be described as an average Football League football supporter is a 36yr old, white British, married man, who earns £38,000 per annum and has followed his team for 22 years. The main reason he decided to follow that team was because he lived near the ground. He goes to the match in his own car, stands / sits with friends and attends 15 home games and 5 away games per season. For anyone interested in further details regarding this survey, it can be found in full on the Football League's website.

An interesting part of the survey worth mentioning though is that it came up with data from people who don't currently attend games. Over half of them said they could be tempted to return to watch live matches if ticket prices were reduced or if there were better on-field performances. It shows that this group of fans isn't a totally lost cause. It also raises the question of what other reasons there are for fans not attending matches. Perhaps this could be an area that all of the authorities should consider looking into more closely.

The fans' survey is a good example of how football is becoming more open. All surveys have a certain risk factor whereby they can unearth some rather unexpected unsavoury data, but there is generally some good that can be derived out of a negative. The Football League is also open about the correspondence it receives. For example, in the year up to June 2006, they had received 4,243 letters, faxes and emails, with the majority asking for information. The most typical requests will be added to the Football League website and therefore improve the service to fans online. There is also an explanation of how the Independent Football Commission becomes involved in Football League matters.

The bulk of the Football League Goals document is given over to the 72 clubs, allowing them to outline their three promises for next season and also to review what happened last season. Some of the clubs are allowed to fill an entire page while others keep things brief. There is a pleasing mix of photographs showing action shots, crowd scenes and examples of community work. Most clubs seem to have had success in achieving their promises. Some examples of these can be found on the chart.

CLUB	PROMISE
Barnsley	Set up a Junior Supporters' Club. Achieved
Brighton and Hove Albion	Improve club website. Achieved. Radical revamp undertaken
Stockport County	Launching a new Charter
Norwich City	Introduced an audio match-day programme
Burnley	Ticketing policy in school to encourage children to attend matches
Queens Park Rangers	Increase community work. Launched 'Moving the Goalposts'
Sheffield Wednesday	Launch disability football programme. Began in August 2006
Hull City	Stage two fans forums involving the chairman and manager. Achieved
Cardiff City	Respond to more complaints within 5 days. Achieved. Received 31 complaints, all dealt with within the 5 days target
Ipswich Town	Launch automated telephone ticket sales. Achieved
Oldham Athletic	Launch of "healthy stadia" campaign
AFC Bournemouth	Launched a newsletter for the local community
Yeovil Town	Organised a committee to look at traffic congestion and helping fans with car parking
Millwall	Launched a season ticket scheme for their fans travelling to away games (although their supporters' committee decided it wasn't necessary)
Boston United	Flexi-ticket which gave fans the chance to pick and choose any 10 games to attend for the price of 8
Northampton Town	Helped 1000 local charities and events
Torquay United	Installed new towel dispensers in the toilets!

As can be seen from the chart, there is a huge variety of promises scattered around the Football League. To those fans affected by these promises, their implementation will have been important. Next season, the varied selection of promises will no doubt crop-up again, but this time at different clubs. The IFC looks forward to reporting on the raft of imaginative projects that will surface and hopes to see a continuing spread of good practice. This is where a document like 'Goals' from the Football League or the Premier League Club Charter Reports, is extremely valuable to football as a whole because it allows all clubs to see what's going on elsewhere. Many of the ideas revealed by clubs, both large and small, will be noticed by other clubs and hopefully acted upon. Overall, the benefit to football in general is tremendous and should not be underestimated. The IFC appreciates that a lot of hard work goes into these Charter documents and congratulates the hard pressed Customer Services personnel at the authorities and the clubs.

As for the Football League clubs promises for the 2006-07 season, as well as clubs adopting many of those promises highlighted earlier, watch out for supporters being nominated to become a director on the club's Board; involvement with AIDS and HIV awareness programmes in Africa; painting the concourse area; improved matchday training for staff and stewards; working with the local Fire and Rescue Service to promote fire and road safety awareness amongst young people; setting-up a partnership with other clubs in the area to work together on various community issues; try to get more players involved in community work; endeavouring to provide better entertainment on the pitch. Whether the latter is entertainment of the football kind or singing and dancing variety remains to be seen.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, Charters are evolving. They have been refined and now hit the target. Although some clubs and some fans will struggle to equate football supporters as customers of a football club, that's exactly what they are. Granted, the loyalty shown by a football fan is sometimes an act of blind faith rather than supporting a product, typified by the huge anomaly that no matter how awful the product may turn out to be, or how badly they are treated, the customer in this case will invariably continue to buy into that product. **This, however, should never mean that football fans can be taken for granted and it is therefore up to clubs and the authorities to continually monitor what is going on between themselves and their fan base and always strive to improve.**

For this reason, the Customer Charter shows the fans that the club really is trying its best to offer a good service and that it is aware of the needs of the customer. It can explain what the very minimum should be and also provide an insight into what the club is aiming for. The vast majority of fans will be unaware of what a Charter is or even that their club has one. Few fans will think to reach for a copy of their club's Charter if they have a complaint. However, if all else fails, the Charter can prove extremely useful to all parties. For that reason alone, the Club or Customer Charter should be something that is supported rather than derided. Whether it continues to be referred to using the word 'Charter' should not be a distraction. ●

# AGENTS

In the IFC 2005 Annual Report, it was announced that agents would be one of the main topics of investigation for the Independent Football Commission during 2006, along with the experience of English football fans following their team into Europe for competitions like the Champions League, UEFA Cup and Intertoto Cup. All three of the football authorities gave their backing to the agents' investigation.

**T**he reason why the IFC decided to follow the topic of agents was that it seemed to be slowly but surely attracting more and more attention from the media and football supporters. Various stories surfaced about 'dodgy deals' and the 'tapping-up' of players. The general consensus amongst fans was that something was going wrong within football and that 'bungs' were rife. The image of the game was suffering.

Although the IFC had no intention of mounting its own investigation to see if it could uncover some sharp business, it felt that the time was right to see if the authorities were going to do anything about transfer deals where agents were involved; whether they felt anything needed to be done and, if they did, what they intended doing.

It should be pointed out that although there seems to have been a flurry of activity surrounding agents over the past 12 months, the authorities had previously been working hard on this subject. They knew there was a problem and that something had to be done. However, various events and circumstances have brought the issue to the fore and progress has been speeded-up, although it could never be referred to as being rapid. As with many areas within football, it seems to take a long time before the three football authorities can finally reach some sort of agreement and formulate a course of action. It is also interesting to note that the result is often very similar to what was first talked about several months or even years previously. The issue of dual representation, where an agent acts for both the club and the player, is a classic example. The Football League wanted this banned and to become part of the regulations regarding agents. The Premier League wasn't so sure.





This meant that on 21st December 2005 when the FA decided to publish various new rules and regulations regarding agents, they had to leave the dual representation issue for later discussion. Consequently, the main points of the 2005 regulations were:

- fuller transparency between the parties involved in a transaction and in relation to payments
- requirements are extended to cover subcontracted or third party agents involved in deals
- clubs, club's officials and club employees cannot have an interest in a licensed agent's business
- this restriction is subject to transitional arrangements whereby the relevant club cannot use the services of the agent / agents business until the interest is disposed of
- tighten up the use of unlicensed agents by players and clubs, and reinforce rules on approaches to players set out under Premier League, Football League and FIFA rules
- prevent agents from approaching or entering into agreements with player(s) under 16 years of age
- licensed agents obliged to act in line with the FA Child Protection Policy
- licensing process to include additional requirements for applicants
- list of agents and their clients to be published on the FA's website, theFA.com.

So, the issue of dual representation was omitted. Quite rightly, the FA decided that rather than let this single issue hold up everything, they should go ahead and announce the latest rule changes and hope to resolve the problem at a later date. In the meantime, the Football League had been moving strongly on this subject. They were consistently keen to ban dual representation and put a stop to it in their own update of rules and regulations that apply to their 72 clubs. The IFC in its 2005 Annual Report itself highlights dual representation as an issue which needed urgent attention.

The Premier League was taking their time over what they should do. They were keen to make sure that if changes were made, they had been fully thought through. Key figures within the league disagreed with various alterations to the regulations, although in the autumn of 2006, there was a change of opinion by two members. This was sufficient to allow the log jam to clear. The FA could now go ahead and announce new rules and regulations regarding agents. So, some additional new rules were announced on 21st November 2006. They were:

- preventing dual representation (agents acting for a club and a player in the same transfer)
- requiring clubs to deal with the player's agent (ensures clubs do not insert their own agent into a deal)
- requiring overseas agents operating in England to register with the FA to bring them under its jurisdiction
- also bringing exempt persons (lawyers, immediate family members) under the FA's jurisdiction
- prohibiting sub-contracting agency activities to unlicensed agents
- preventing agents from acting for a club in a transaction if they have acted for the player in any capacity in the preceding three years (prevents agents switching to get paid by a club)
- preventing an agent from acting for more than one club with respect to transactions involving the same player (prevents agents from 'shadow representing' a player)
- prohibiting agents owning interests in players
- specifying that payments to agents may be made by club but only as deduction from salary and only in line with player/agent contract
- requiring players to nominate an agent and inform the FA accordingly, ensuring that clubs know who is acting for the player.

The FA also intended to set up a database of agents and / or their companies that would be made available to all clubs and leagues. They also confirmed an intention to strengthen their compliance department so that transfer dealings could be closely monitored and that any sanctions could be quickly and effectively administered. Without diminishing the importance of the other new rules, the two key changes were banning dual representation and insisting that if a player used an agent, then the player and not the club must pay the agent.

In amongst all of this, the Premier League launched its inquiry into alleged irregular payments<sup>[1]</sup> although it should be emphasised that this inquiry was not looking into agents. It was looking into whether there had been anything untoward in terms of transfer dealings when clubs buy or sell players. Obviously the role of the agent is integral to this inquiry but they were not the sole body of people who were, and still are, under investigation. This investigation became widely known as the Stevens Report, although it was actually carried out by the Quest company of which Lord Stevens is chairman and front man on this occasion.

[1] The Quest Inquiry, initiated by the Premier League and fronted by .A report looking into alleged irregular payments. Published December 2006.

THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE PREMIER LEAGUE LOOK AGAIN AT THE POINT RAISED IN THE STEVENS REPORT THAT THE PFA SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM GETTING INVOLVED IN ORGANISING TRANSFERS.

Lord Stevens began his research in February 2006 and was due to announce his findings in the autumn. The deadline was extended to December as he and his Quest team seemed to be closing the net. Stevens gave an update of his inquiry to club chairmen on 2nd October 2006 when he revealed his preliminary findings of 362 transfers between 1st January 2004 and 31st January 2006. He found that 39 deals had to be investigated further and that they involved eight of the 29 clubs that had been part of the top-flight during the span of his inquiries. Lord Stevens eventually announced his findings on 20th December 2006 although he also confirmed that a small number of issues (17 transfer deals and a lack of co-operation from a small group of agents) were still to be resolved and that work on these would continue. As part of his research he studied the reports and recommendations produced by the Independent Football Commission from 2003-05. The response to the Stevens Report was mixed. Some saw it as a groundbreaking move to change the way football is administered; others saw it as a whitewash without any real substance and an opportunity missed.

The main recommendations in the Stevens Report were:

- the Professional Footballers Association (PFA) should not act as an agent
- players, not the clubs, should pay agents
- clubs should file an annual return outlining the amounts paid to agents
- players should file an annual return outlining amounts paid to agents
- agents should submit a quarterly return outlining all payments or agreements
- a manager's agent shouldn't act for players at the same club
- relatives of any club official should not be involved in transfer dealings
- the FA Compliance Unit needs to become semi-autonomous and be reviewed by an independent body.
- better education of players and club officials re FA rules covering agents and transfer obligations
- greater levels of transparency
- stop agents working for both the club and the player (dual representation)
- ensure, in the event of an international transfer, that both the buying and selling clubs inform the relevant national FAs of the transfer details
- try to introduce electronic forms that should make it easier to spot irregularities.

Many of these points are already being implemented. The Football Association has confirmed that the vast majority of the recommendations relevant to them were either in place or being prepared before the Stevens Report was published. The IFC does have a concern however with the remark regarding the PFA. In the majority of the discussions the IFC had with clubs and officials at all levels, the general consensus of opinion was that the PFA should be more heavily involved in transfers rather than have their influence reduced. A senior player even felt that the PFA should control all transfer dealings.

Many clubs felt that the PFA should become a clearing house for all transfers and that every deal should go through their offices. The PFA has the advantage of knowing what the going-rate is for all players at all levels. They aren't too close to the player or the club so can approach matters in an unbiased fashion. However, unlike a lot of agents, the PFA has also realised its responsibilities towards football as a whole and if a club was struggling financially, the PFA wouldn't risk the future of that club. It wouldn't be in the interests of the other players if they all lost their jobs, so when it comes to transfer dealings, commonsense should prevail.



The PFA, to a large extent, is aware of what a club can afford. Agents, on the other hand, are working largely for themselves; it is their living. This is also the reason why agents would generally prefer a player to move to a new club rather than re-negotiate with his present club; there will be more in it for them.

It should be remembered that the PFA is the players' union. They have a duty to their members and, as their members are all involved in football, they also have a duty to the game. The IFC recommends that the Premier League look again at the point raised in the Stevens Report that the PFA should be removed from getting involved in organising transfers. One very senior member of a successful Premiership club said that he wished the PFA had more influence: *"because they know how the game operates, they know what a player should be getting paid, what a player at a small club should get and what a player at large club should get, even though they play in the same position or have the same amount of responsibility. Agents don't operate like that. They tout players around clubs and try to get the most possible for their players and themselves"*.

In response to the Stevens Report, the IFC contacted the Chief Executive of the Professional Football Association, Gordon Taylor, and asked him for his comments. He concurred with the IFC that the general response they had from clubs, players, parents or young players, etc, was that the PFA should be heavily involved. He also confirms that the PFA, along with the League Managers Association, had offered to be a monitoring body, together with the FA, for the activities of agents but that this was refused by the FA. Mr. Taylor adds:

*'All of this made it particularly bizarre to hear the comments from the Lord Stevens report as they had not taken the time or trouble to discuss the activities of agents with us in spite of the fact that we have been heavily involved with FIFA, UEFA and the FA on producing new rules to help clarify the rules and regulations with regard to agents. Indeed, I went so far as to say that if in fact all transfers were handled by the PFA then there would have been no need for the Quest report!'*

Whether the Stevens Report is eventually seen as a turning point in football, only time will tell. However, the IFC feels that it would be wrong to dismiss anything that either alerts people to potential problems, raises concerns about the internal aspects of the authorities or makes anyone linked with football think twice about doing anything underhand. The latter point in particular is of huge benefit because it can be safely assumed that both the authorities and those people with a vested interest in the game, will now recognise everything is under much higher levels of scrutiny and that new safeguards are being put in place to assure all transactions regarding the transfer of footballers is being closely monitored. It will also encourage clubs to be more vigilant and adhere to the rules. Players are likely to be made much more aware of exactly what is involved in their transfer deal and how much they are paying for the services of an agent. The IFC welcomes this because it would be wrong to expect players to enter often complicated financial discussions without some sort of expert advice. Players are perfectly entitled to have appropriate representation to ensure their interests are being protected and, under the new regulations, this is likely to become much more professional. This also adds weight to the argument for greater utilisation of the Professional Footballers Association. It is their job, as the players' Union, to provide impartial, fair advice that should be in the best interests of the players, the clubs and football as a whole.

Lastly, to add a further twist to the investigation into transfer dealings and agents, on 19th September 2006, a BBC Panorama programme came up with all manner of stories that seemed to point the finger at various individuals. The Football Association was rightly concerned by inferences made by the programme and asked for the BBC to assist in further investigations. This is still ongoing.

Consequently, with all of this activity surrounding agents, transfers, bungs etc, the IFC decided to put a hold on its own investigations. There seemed little point in asking for senior people to give comment before the Stevens Report was

announced or before the FA had made any announcements following both the Stevens Report and the BBC Panorama programme. There was also the added complication that the Premier League, after giving the IFC investigation the go-ahead, effectively blocked any negotiations with any of their 20 clubs by informing all of them to ignore any IFC requests for information. Presumably this was done in the knowledge that their own investigations via Lord Stevens were about to get underway. While the IFC would have preferred the Premier League to let them know about this before beginning their work, it is understandable bearing in mind what seems to be a continual flow of requests to clubs for information from an ever-increasing number of organisations wishing to scrutinise the game.

Things however, have now started to move again and the IFC has picked up where it left off. Meetings have taken place with the authorities, clubs, chairmen and the agents themselves. The road to try and resolve the issue of agents and how they operate is however proving to be rather tricky. The FA was intending to have the new regulations regarding agents in place for when the January 2007 transfer window opened. As mentioned earlier, the Premier League had wanted to delay things because of uncertainty from within a couple of their clubs and to consider things further so that even though the rule changes were revealed in November 2006 the FA Council felt that all of the parties involved needed extra time to absorb everything. Consequently, the rule changes have been put on hold. It is now anticipated they will come into place during the summer of 2007. The new rulings have been under discussion for many months and will not come as a surprise to anyone. However, despite increasing the delay it is perhaps wiser to put a hold on implementation until all parties are familiar with the new regulations and particularly the new documentation that goes with them.

To their credit, the Football League continues to be completely open about the amount of money each club spends on agents. Details are revealed in their Football League Agents Report document. It isn't an exact amount because some of the payments will be by instalment and therefore could fall outside of the reporting period, but in general this document gives an excellent rundown of the amounts being paid. The 2005-06 season saw a 2% decrease in the total amount paid to agents when compared to the previous season (£7.66m 05-06 to £7.82m 04-05). The number of clubs not paying for the services of an agent rose to 16 as compared to 13 the previous season, although none of these were in the Championship. The number of clubs paying out less than £10,000 has also risen to 26 (25 in the previous season). These figures are in contrast to the number of transfer deals completed across the Football League's three divisions, rising from 2860 in season 04-05, to 3,284 last season. The Football League is encouraged by these figures.



However, the latest set of figures from the Football League covering the period from 1st July to 31st December 2006 show an upturn in the amount of money being spent on agents fees. The number of clubs using an agent across the League's three divisions remains the same, but the amount of money spent on those agents has risen quite sharply. In the Championship, when compared to the same July – December period in 2005, the amount spent on agents' fees in 2006 was up from almost £3.75m to nearly £5.50m. League One showed a slight reduction in fees, but this was mirrored by a slight increase in League Two. Taking all three of the Football League's divisions together the amount of fees paid to agents went up from £4.40m to £6.20m. However, a senior representative of the League said this wasn't a problem and frequently reflected the size of clubs that had been either relegated / promoted from the divisions (including the Premier League), and the size of the clubs who were doing business in terms of trying to sign or offload players. He expected this figure to fluctuate from season to season. To explain the rise in amount spent, it is important to look at the clubs that caused an increase. Part of the reason was the arrival of Sunderland, Birmingham City and West Bromwich Albion in the Championship who, as well as buying players were also selling them. Stoke City spent an extra £0.5m on agents as did Southampton and Leeds Utd, Cardiff City, Crystal Palace, Hull City, Derby County and Southend Utd also saw considerable percentage rises when compared to the previous year.

Perhaps the most interesting figure of all, when compared to the same period in 2005, was the number of transactions using an agent. It more than doubled from 237 to 497. However, 21 clubs didn't commit any money to agents (same as last year) while the number of clubs that committed to pay £5000 or less to agent, rose from 27 to 30.

The Independent Football Commission met with several of England's football agencies, the Association of Football Agents and with individual agents. The general impression from these meetings was that while the authorities were busy looking at agents, the one group of people who seemed to be omitted from these discussions was the agents themselves. One very senior representative from a leading agency added that he had sent letters and suggestions to the FA and received nothing in reply; not even an acknowledgement.

## THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

In the meetings between the IFC and the FA, it should be pointed out that the IFC felt the FA was aware of many of the problems regarding agents and that they were trying to sort things out. However, it was proving tricky to get all of the various parties to agree, hence the introduction of some rulings in December 2005, and the others almost a year later. The FA was keen to emphasise that they felt there is a place for agents within football; many agents had a good reputation and worked hard for their clients, whether it was a club or a player. The FA also wanted to point out that looking into agents isn't something that has recently cropped up. There have been regular meetings about this topic with the Premier League, Football League, League Managers Association, PFA, etc. However, they appreciated that there was a perceived problem and that something needed to be done.

One of the key problems faced by the FA is that agents operate worldwide and football, particularly in England, is becoming more and more influenced by what goes on elsewhere. Players from dozens of countries are now being brought to England. FIFA appear to make a token gesture. They seem to have a policy of looking at something for a limited period and then delegating it to the individual national associations. However, everyone must abide by FIFA regulations, although this can be tricky because legal requirements vary from country to country according to that nation's laws. Some of the FIFA rulings are not precise - rather wordy - this is no good for British law which tends to be very definite.

This results in the FA drawing-up its own regulations in consultation with FIFA. Obviously, there is always some fine tuning to be done no matter what happens. Frequently, it tends to be best to just issue a regulation and see what happens. To try and short-circuit things, the FA frequently speaks to other national FAs; Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Italy, France and Holland have been the most recent. The general impression is that England is far ahead of everyone else and is doing a good job.

The issue with agents themselves also varies from country to country. While it is seen as being a major stumbling block in England, the perception is less so in many other countries. This is partly due to their own club organisations and local rules but largely because transfer fees and clubs are much bigger in England. Consequently, FIFA and UEFA appear keen for the various nations to sort out their own problems. There is certainly a potential for everything to get bogged-down if FIFA / UEFA controlled all transfer dealings.

It should also be pointed out that all of the various rules and regulations currently in place, plus those that are being spoken about, do not seem to have affected the English transfer market at all. There is no evidence that players are NOT coming to England because of concerns regarding agents and a potential clampdown. But, if we restrict agents even further, will that lead to a problem with potential transfers? The general consensus within the FA is that we won't know until we try.

The consultation process regarding agents started in earnest in spring 2004. It was hoped that 2005 would be the year when serious progress was made, but the 'political' wrangle over dual representation in particular, delayed things. The FA was aware that the Football League would prefer to remove agents altogether, although in many respects agents have now become part and parcel of English football dealings. However, the Football League was always very strong on the issue of dual representation and will no doubt be delighted with the rulings that will shortly come into force. Although this issue has now been resolved, it has meant that everything has been delayed until the summer of 2007.

The FA admits that in certain areas, dual representation does work. For example, when a player has become unsettled and wants to leave a club and the club is in full agreement. In short, it would be in everyone's interests if the player could be transferred. In this instance, the agent could work for both parties because they have similar aims. The new ruling will not permit this however.

The FA admits that there is also the potential for further activity surrounding transfers in respect of tax implications. Currently, the tax problem revolves around who pays the agent. If the player pays the agent for his services, then there is no VAT payable. If the club pays the agent then VAT is payable. Newcastle Utd fell foul of this when trying to recoup a VAT bill of £475,000 in 2006. The new ruling about clubs being banned from paying agents will resolve this issue once it comes into force.

FIFA have a further view on transfers. They see the transfer of a player from one club to another as being one complete transfer deal. The general feeling within English clubs is that this should actually be seen as two transfers, from one club and to another.

Many transfers, especially within the Premier League, are of an international nature. This was giving cause for concern within the FA regarding agents. If an agent is registered with the FA, they must give full details regarding transfers. However, if a foreign agent who is not registered with the FA is representing a player coming to this country, then that agent does not need to divulge any information. The FA cannot force the agent to give any details. The influence of the FA is diluted; their hands are tied. The latest rulings will go some way to rectifying this problem, with the FA now insisting that all agents who deal with an English club must be registered with them. This would allow them to monitor all deals.

To try and close the loop even further, the FA continuously passes on information to FIFA. This is fraught with problems though because, as mentioned earlier, laws and regulations vary from country to country. There is no hard and fast set of rules. The FA will continue to lobby FIFA. In certain respects this appears to be working. FIFA has told the FA that they will look into the issues of rules and regulations regarding agents. They recognise that it is an international market for footballers and therefore an international problem which comes under their remit. The general opinion within the FA though is that FIFA will do what they have done so far, and bounce everything back to them. They will sanction national FAs to set up their own rules and regulations and let them monitor their own dealings.



To the Football Association's credit, FIFA spoke highly of them during a meeting between themselves and the IFC in early 2007. The FIFA President, Sepp Blatter was in praise of the way the FA was dealing with agents and felt that Europe, and football in general, should take note of what was going on in England. However, as with most people, FIFA feel that the main difficulty in the regulation of agents will be enforcement. They also admit that, when it comes to sweeping multi-national legislation, FIFA has a problem. They would need to come up with, in effect, over 200 different sets of legislation to cover one topic at every one of their member nations. Plainly, this would not be possible, so they normally come up with some minimum standards.

Theoretically, all players coming to English clubs will have an agent that is registered with the FA. Whether this affects the transfer market or prevents players coming to England remains to be seen. The early signs are that it is having no effect on transfers.

## THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

The Football League sees the regulation of agents as being of high importance but they accept that making the regulations effective will be difficult. However, quite rightly, there's no harm in trying. They should be given credit that many of the latest rulings from the FA that will come into force in the summer of 2007, have been requested for several years by the Football League. The League has even circulated a small leaflet to everyone within their divisions with information regarding agents. It features important do's and don'ts. The Football League should be applauded for this.

The Football League has taken a hard line with agents. They feel that the simple fact we are all talking about agents, seems to have given agents credibility. They have had lengthy discussions with the FA regarding the original set of regulations and were largely happy with them but were unhappy that, at the last minute, the FA decided to change the wording regarding dual representation. This created the lengthy delay that will finally be resolved later in 2007 in time for the opening of the summer transfer window. It was interesting to detect that there was a general feeling within the Football League that, if the FA had been strong, they would have been able to get this particular ruling relating to dual representation through, but they felt the Premier League didn't want the ruling changed so that, in the current light of the way things work between the three bodies, the FA would struggle to get things altered.

The Football League feels that the core principle behind all negotiations between a club and a player is to maintain stability of contract. In other words, if a player agrees to sign a 3-year contract, the club will guarantee to pay him for 3 years and in return should expect loyalty from the player for 3 years. It would be good to get back to a situation where clubs respected one another and didn't try to unsettle other clubs' players. It is 'illegal' for one club to try to induce a player at another club, but it would be very short sighted of anyone not to assume that this doesn't go on. There have even been instances of managers being quoted as saying that 'We as a club certainly wouldn't tap-up players. That's the job of the agent.' In effect, the club is using an agent to do its dirty work. The Football League believes there is a general acceptance that the chief job of an agent nowadays is to approach and tap-up / unsettle players at other clubs, although there is nothing to prove this. It would also be wrong to assume that licensed agents are 'clean'. How many have ever been prosecuted? The whole situation is very difficult to police.

The Football League also felt there was a worrying trend that agents are now setting the transfer fee. For example, if a club decides that it wants £2m for one of its players, the agent then adds an extra amount for himself. This means that when the buying club finally clinches a deal, the fee may have risen to £3m. This leads to a general overpricing of players. Not surprisingly the Football League would prefer to have zero involvement with agents, although it appreciates that there are instances where a 'middleman' is handy. They were also concerned about the issue of using agents as consultants or offering them a retainer. They felt it was, in effect, using an agent by a different name.

Until the latest decision was announced by the FA regarding the new rulings, it was obvious that something had to be sorted out because the FA and Premier League were effectively supporting one system, while the Football League was supporting another. This is a hopeless situation because clubs move from the Football League to the Premier League at the end of every season. There needed to be some common ground. The IFC would like to think that some lessons have been learned from all of this. The differences between the authorities, although now largely resolved, have led to a delay of approximately 30 months. **OVERALL, THE IFC FEELS THAT THE ISSUE OF DUAL REPRESENTATION WAS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANGES MADE. WITH THIS IN MIND, THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT THE DUAL REPRESENTATION REGULATION IS STRICTLY ENFORCED.**

## THE PREMIER LEAGUE

When the IFC first intimated that it wanted to study the issue of agents, the authorities agreed, although without any great deal of enthusiasm. Perhaps it could be assumed that the authorities recognised there is a problem within football and that the problem is never going to go away completely, but that any involvement of the IFC would be of little value to resolve this issue. However, the meetings with the FA and Football League were constructive and fruitful. They showed that something is being done and that, although the 'wheels' turn slowly, there was a general recognition that this was a problem that needed to be resolved or controlled. Equally, it was recognised that it was a problem that had many facets and could not be solved overnight.

Discussions with the Premier League were not so straight forward because it was only a matter of days after the IFC announced its intention to look into the issue of agents and transfer deals, that they revealed their own investigations. From the IFC's point of view it was disappointing and embarrassing that the Premier League contacted its clubs and instructed them to ignore any contact from the IFC regarding agents when they originally said it wouldn't be a problem. The IFC had sent a letter to all of the clubs asking for any relevant information and the chance to meet with some of them, and



it was only when one of the Premier League clubs responded to this saying they would like to help but that the Premier League had told them not to, that the IFC discovered what was happening. The IFC was not investigating clubs, players, managers or agents, it was merely undertaking a fact-finding mission in order to help with an understanding of the issue. Perhaps the Premier League originally gave the IFC the go-ahead before they had decided to officially launch their own investigation.

The IFC would also have been happy to pass on any of its findings to Lord Stevens. His inquiry used material from previous IFC Annual Reports, but there was no request for a personal hearing. Following the publication of his report, Lord Stevens did personally suggest to the IFC that a meeting to clarify anything and to receive an update for this Annual Report would be acceptable, but in the end, this invitation was withdrawn on the premise that research was still ongoing into a handful of transfer dealings.

During the course of its investigations, the IFC met with several other organisations and individuals. The Association of Football Agents (AFA), it would be fair to say, is not happy with the situation that could unfold in May 2007. It has even got to the stage where, if the FA goes ahead with these changes, then the AFA could consider litigation. There was a feeling that, under the Office of Fair Trading guidelines, the new rules would amount to a restriction of trade. The general comment from the AFA was that there was a 'witch-hunt' against agents and that, given a chance, the authorities would dispose of agents totally. It was felt that if the FA rules did go ahead, then the current total of around 400 agents operating in England would halve. The big agencies would continue to survive but the smaller, one-man operations would struggle.

The AFA's main concern was that they were never consulted. They claim there was never an occasion when the authorities included the agents in their discussions. A comment from a senior person within the AFA organisation was that the Stevens Report didn't get close to the heart of the problem. One recommendation given was that Lord Stevens should have enlisted the services of some agents who knew what was going on and who could spot any sharp practice. The agents would have provided some inside knowledge.

The AFA said they were open to discussions and would be happy to consider the possibility of having a 'rate card' which clearly displayed what an agent would receive in return for services provided. This would help with transparency. They also felt that before any player began negotiations for a transfer or a renewed contract, they should consult an independent lawyer who could give unbiased advice. The players need to be encouraged to do more for themselves and that the PFA should play a major part in this.



The League Managers Association (LMA) felt that the FA needed to be stronger and that their compliance unit had been largely ineffective. This is now being addressed by the FA as a result of both the Burns Review and the Stevens Inquiry. A general feeling was that no club or player had been prosecuted during the previous five years of the compliance unit and that the FA spent most of their time chasing managers and players for minor indiscretions. The LMA also felt that too much money was leaving football and going to agents. They feel that foreign payments were a major problem and that the actual number of agents was far too many; how can they all expect to earn a living? However, the LMA did feel that when it came to agents, it was a classic case of everyone getting tarred with the same brush. One questionable deal makes everyone assume that all agents are crooks and that every manager is being offered bungs.

The IFC met with senior representatives from many football clubs. Only one admitted that he'd been offered anything (£50,000), but confirmed that he had refused it. All of the other clubs said that, although they might not enjoy dealing with agents and that they begrudged paying over the cash, whether directly or via the player, they had not been involved in or were aware of any crooked deals. Most clubs described agents as being a 'necessary evil' and, in many cases, felt that once the deal had been done and that the money had been paid over, they never heard from them again. Some clubs were very upfront about the way in which agents unsettle players, pointing out that the only way in which an agent can make a large amount of money is to secure a transfer. Some clubs felt that agents often did the unscrupulous work of other clubs by approaching players secretly on their behalf. There did appear to be a handful of agents who had deservedly earned a good reputation of not only being realistic when it came to players transfers or re-negotiating terms, but also looked after the player's welfare and performed a helpful service to the club and player.

Some clubs operated on a strict percentage in terms of payments to agents. A few said they refused to deal with agents at all. There was agreement that making the deal stick to a set fee was particularly handy, but those who refused to deal with agents admitted that they had suffered the consequences of this and had missed out on attracting some players to the club. However, the clubs felt that it was better in terms of appropriate business practice and that they had no intention of changing. Some clubs operated a policy of limiting the number of players that can be with one agent. This is to avoid the club being 'held to ransom' by a single agent who could then be in a position of influence within the boardroom.

One club in the Football League was derogatory towards the League itself. The club's representative said that the Football League needed to 'live in the real world', pointing out that if a deal to sign a player rested on the agent receiving some cash, then the cash would be found one way or another. It didn't matter whether it was paid over by the player or the club, it was always the club that had to pay in the end. He added that the League had great principles but there was no way that the ideas could work. A player can, in effect, force the club to pay the agent. There seemed to be a way around everything.

Most of the clubs felt that the PFA should take a bigger role in the transferring of players. It became a common theme amongst the clubs that the PFA knew the going-rate for players in relation to their age, experience, ability etc, and that they should therefore be in an ideal position to ensure that everyone got a fair deal. A senior delegate from a club with Premiership experience was far from happy with the Football Association. He felt that they'd lost their way in the respect of agents and that although new faces kept appearing at Soho Square who promised everything, they would soon get wrapped up in meetings and committees, and rapidly disappear. He reckoned that everything from the FA, and to a certain extent the Football League was *'all smoke and mirrors, and they hid behind the jargon'*. He also felt that many clubs weren't too worried about the cloudy nature of the authorities because it allowed them to quietly get on with their own business without having to stick rigidly to rules and regulations.

One club was particularly worried about the situation with agents and young players. The club in question was hoping to take a player from another club on loan. The player was keen to move; he'd made that perfectly clear during negotiations. The two clubs agreed on the deal which centred round his new club picking up his wage bill, something that was general practice. Then, out of the blue, an agent appeared. Both clubs said that the agent wouldn't get anything because he hadn't done anything. The agent insisted that he must get something or that the deal would be called off. The 'buying' club got

back in touch with the player who confirmed that he was still keen. This was then reported back to the agent who said that perhaps his fee could be taken out of the player's wages each month because the player had no real idea of how much he was getting in any case. The agent felt that the player didn't need to know. There was also an inference that before anything went ahead, the agent needed to be sorted out first in terms of what he'd be getting.

Several clubs also supported the idea that was floated by the Association of Football Agents during discussions with the IFC, that agents should be rather like solicitors or estate agents and have a set fee for certain duties. Arranging a loan deal would cost £X. A re-negotiation would be worth £X+Y, and a full transfer would be charged at £X+Y+Z. This meant that everyone knew what the fees would be before the deal commenced and allow the club to quickly judge whether it could afford the entire package let alone afford the player. It was a good example of commonsense business practice. One club official said that there should be a flat fee per division. In other words the Premier League clubs pay one fee for signing a player; the Championship pay less, League One pay even less etc. He said this would stop agents touting players around every club in a division, trying to get a better deal for himself.

There was general consensus amongst the clubs regarding UEFA. They did not want to see another tier of bureaucracy and certainly did not want UEFA involved in anything to do with the English transfer market. As one club delegate commented:

*'Whenever Europe gets involved in anything, it always becomes more complicated, less effective and usually anti English.'*

Overall, the general reaction from the clubs to agents was one of grudging acceptance and that although new rules and regulations would be in place, there were still ways and means of getting around everything. The next 18 months or so will be a testing time for clubs, authorities and agents. If the new rules and regulations manage to bite, then the landscape of football player wheeling and dealing will change. There is certain to be a slight nervousness within some clubs, at the offices of some agents and amongst a few players and managers, because the way they have previously done business, is now under close scrutiny. It will be up to the FA's newly strengthened Compliance Unit to ensure that the rules and regulations really do have teeth and therefore act as a deterrent. Is this the ultimate solution for ridding football of all crooked transfer deals? Time will tell. However, the authorities should be given credit for at least doing something. There was no point in just sitting back and hoping for the best. The IFC will continue to monitor the situation and report on the 'state of play' in future Annual Reports. ●

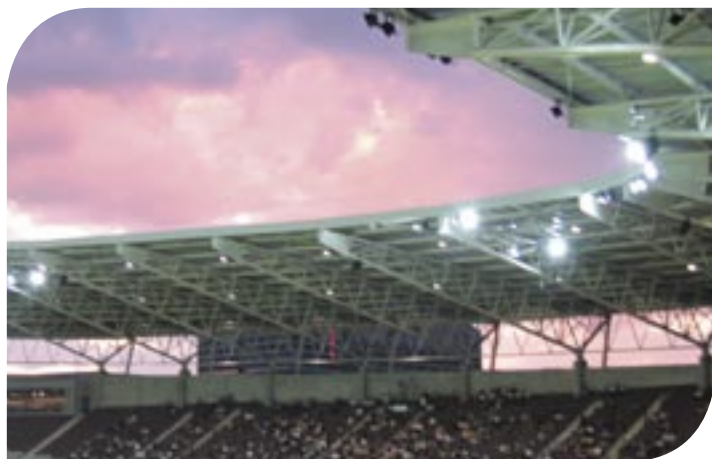
# THE **EXPERIENCE** OF **ENGLISH SUPPORTERS** IN **EUROPEAN** CLUB COMPETITIONS **2005-06**

In December 2006, the Independent Football Commission published its in-depth report into the experience of English football fans who travelled abroad to watch their teams involved in European games. This did not take into account matches played by the England national team and therefore did not include the World Cup in Germany, although obviously lessons had been learnt from that tournament and mention was therefore given within the report wherever it was felt pertinent.



**T**he report, entitled 'The Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions' concentrated on the club sides that were taking part in the European Champions League, UEFA Cup and Intertoto Cup. The IFC's investigations didn't fully get underway until the turn of the year and by then two clubs, Newcastle Utd and Everton had already been knocked out of their respective competitions. However, it still meant that Arsenal; Chelsea, Bolton Wanderers, Liverpool, Manchester Utd and Middlesbrough could be included.

IFC personnel attended 11 games on the continent, travelling to France, Germany, Switzerland, Romania, Portugal, Spain and Italy. They tried, as best as possible, to experience everything that the normal football fan would experience, utilising official club transportation, independent companies and travelling to venues by making their own arrangements. They attended pre-match meetings that took place up to a fortnight before the game; they were present at meetings on the eve of the game and also at the meeting chaired by the UEFA delegate on the



morning of the match. The IFC also spoke to every club both in the build-up and aftermath of their European campaign. The gathering of information took in consultation meetings with the Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, various Police forces, the Football Association, Premier League, Football League, UEFA and senior safety officers working both for the clubs and the authorities. The IFC also sought comment from the fans.

The IFC report made seventeen recommendations aimed at UEFA, the clubs, the British Government and the authorities. These recommendations can be found in Annexe E of this Report.

As the IFC report into the experience of English fans travelling to watch their team in Europe went to print, two new documents regarding safety were received.<sup>[1]</sup> These reports were updates to the UEFA Licensing Manual Version Two<sup>[2]</sup>

which had been altered from the original version because so many clubs found the plethora of safety material overwhelming. The new set of guidelines was aimed at streamlining these requirements. Previously, all issues regarding safety were put into four sections. The new set of guidelines reduced these four criteria to three. Wording was reduced and the first two criteria were more or less merged. However, whereas the original UEFA Club Licensing Manual, although rather wordy and complicated, at least left clubs in no doubt as to what was required; that cannot be said about the latest guidelines. The IFC feels that UEFA has moved from giving precise requirements to replacing them with vague requirements. If clubs were confused previously, they are likely to be even more confused now.

Thankfully, the guidelines don't really apply to stadia in England because the grounds of those clubs that are likely to be involved in European competitions now easily meet UEFA requirements. However, it could still affect the levels of safety that will be experienced by English fans travelling to support their team on the continent. UEFA make a great play of their regulations being all-important, but they hide behind local licensing. In other words, the UEFA regulations say that all grounds should have seating for every fan, but when the European draws are made and a club is included that plainly does NOT have full, proper seating, UEFA avoids the issue by saying the authorities which control the stadium have given it a safety license and that, in effect, is good enough for UEFA. The IFC disagrees. Either UEFA stands by its own rules and regulations or it doesn't. There seems little point in a dilapidated stadium being allowed to stage matches purely on the fact that the local authority has given it a safety certificate. It seems unlikely that authorities in developing countries or a country that's strapped for cash is going to tell UEFA that it cannot stage a prestigious game.

The English authorities need to stand firm here. If they feel that an English club is heading off to a stadium that plainly wouldn't get a safety certificate in this country and also doesn't meet the UEFA guidelines, then they should ensure that fans should be given full details of any dangers and, if possible, try to ensure English fans are not positioned in the worst areas. They should also ensure that if something does go wrong, UEFA is willing to take full responsibility. Obviously a large amount of emphasis here is placed on the shoulders of the English clubs themselves and the representatives who take part in the pre-match recce. The IFC is not trying to deny European countries the right to stage Champions League, UEFA or Intertoto cup games. On the contrary, the IFC welcomes as much variety as possible in football competitions, but with English football having being at the centre of two of football's worst tragedies (Heysel and Hillsborough) the IFC feels that it is only right that the FA, Premier League or Football League, can approach UEFA with a great degree of experience under their belts. English football has had to learn some lessons the hard way.

[1] Binding Safety and Security Instructions (Edition 2004): UEFA

[2] UEFA Club Licensing Manual, version 2

In terms of safety and security within European football stadia, it was interesting to note at a meeting between the IFC and the English Football Safety Officers Association, that England is one of the few countries within Europe that sees safety and security within football grounds as being different matters. On the continent, the two are merged together under the single banner of safety. Thankfully, UEFA has realised this and



recently launched a series of workshops to help educate officers within national FAs across Europe. The workshops are held as part of a *'Stadia and Security Education Programme'*, the first of which was staged in Nyon in November 2006. In their monthly magazine, UEFA Direct,<sup>[3]</sup> the workshops are described as being *'designed to create a knowledge platform and share best practice among national associations in the key areas of safety and security at matches; to explore the latest developments and trends in stadium infrastructure and to investigate how best to build effective partnerships between stadium management, match organisers, police and authorities, all with the aim of providing a safe and secure and service-orientated environment for those involved in the game'*. Good. This is at least a start by UEFA to address the problem highlighted by the IFC in their investigations, that communication within the various bodies involved in organising / staging football matches in Europe, is at best patchy and at worst non-existent.

Sadly, shortly before this IFC Annual Report went to print, there were two incidents that proved how quickly things can unravel. A policeman died during clashes in Sicily and a section of Manchester Utd fans were involved in a frightening crush at their European Champions League game in France against Lille. Both incidents quickly led to cries for the strengthening of safety and security legislation within football stadia across Europe and a removal of all perimeter fences.

The death of the Sicilian police officer led to the Italian football authorities cancelling their fixture list for a short period. It also caused doubts over the staging of European games on Italian soil as the Champions League and UEFA Cup competitions resumed following the winter break. One such game was Celtic's clash against AC Milan at the San Siro. This stadium has

hosted some prestigious games over the years, but suddenly it was deemed unsafe and was closed. At one stage it looked as though the Celtic game would need to be switched to a neutral venue. However, following remedial work, the game was given the go-ahead. This begs an obvious question. Why was the San Siro deemed perfectly safe before 2nd February 2007 when the Sicilian policeman died, but not safe afterwards? What had changed? Why does it need a serious incident to force the authorities into action?

Investigations are still underway regarding the incident during the game between Lille and Manchester Utd on 20th February 2007. Although nothing had been confirmed before this Report went to print, it seems that the visitors' end where Manchester Utd fans were held, became overcrowded and a crush developed with several fans being trapped behind perimeter fencing. Fortunately, a gate was opened onto the pitch allowing fans to spill out otherwise the consequences could have been dreadful. Questions will need to be answered as to why this section of the stadium (the match was played in Lens at the Stade Felix-Bollaert rather than at Lille's much smaller ground) became too crowded; whether reports that Manchester Utd fans who had bought tickets in the home section were moved into the already full visitors section; whether the policing and stewarding had been adequate and correct, and whether there had been adequate ticket inspections carried out to both monitor the number of people going into that section of the ground and to also check for possible forgeries.

Behind both of these incidents lies an uncomfortable suspicion that the grounds in France and Sicily were not up to scratch and that security was less than perfect. As the IFC pointed out in its report, there seemed to be a huge amount of luck behind many incident-free European games. All it would need is for a combination of events to come together, and there could be another football disaster. The unfortunate fact is that UEFA has guidelines but doesn't stick to them. It would appear that we will continue to learn from our mistakes rather than rectify or anticipate problems before something serious happens again.

In England, it is now very rare for there to be any sort of disturbance before, during or after football matches. The policing, stewarding and general organising of our games is arguably the best in the world. For this reason, UEFA's Education Programme is drawing heavily upon the English experience. Members of the English Football Safety Officers Association made presentations at these workshops. Indeed, the first workshop was heavily centred round emotional video footage from the Bradford City fire at Valley Parade, the Heysel disaster, both in 1985, and the Hillsborough disaster in 1989. UEFA say these three football stadium disasters helped to shape the legacy of change in today's safety environment. Obviously, as English football was involved in all three incidents, the wind of change blew strongest within the English game.

[3] Issue no 57, published January 2007

It is also good to report that on the final day of the opening UEFA workshop, one of the keynote speakers came from the UK Football Policing Unit, and another was from the UK Home Office. Both speakers outlined the importance of making sure that legislation is in place to allow both the police and the authorities to do their job in terms of safety and security, and ensure an uninterrupted flow of collaboration, coordination and communication.

With all of this in mind, **THE IFC RECOMMENDS THAT UEFA HOLDS MEETINGS ON A YEARLY BASIS TO UPDATE ALL OF THE SENIOR PEOPLE WITHIN NATIONAL FAS OF CURRENT TRENDS AND NEW IDEAS RE: SAFETY AND SECURITY.**

In the European report published by the IFC in December 2006, it was recommended to the English football authorities that they have a similar meeting at the start of every European campaign to update those clubs involved in the Champions League, UEFA Cup, Intertoto Cup and various friendlies, to ensure that everyone is fully aware of new legislation. It is to be hoped that UEFA will also attend these meetings to both outline new European-wide initiatives and to answer any relevant questions from the English clubs and / or authorities.

The Premier League clubs are the main ones to be affected by UEFA competitions, although clubs from within the Football League do sometimes qualify for European matches. Both the Premier League and Football League have responded to the IFC saying they have taken note of the recommendations. The IFC thanks the Premier League and Football League as well as all of their clubs for the assistance provided in the research for 'The Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions' report.

The IFC would also like to register its disappointment with UEFA. Leading up to the publication of the 'Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions' and afterwards, despite several appeals for information and assistance to clarify issues, there was no communication from UEFA. This was despite the IFC going to the extreme of enlisting the services of the Football Association to try to encourage some sort of response. The IFC even delayed the publication of its report in the hope of having some sort of response from UEFA. It is also disappointing to report that when we mentioned this lack of response to several senior officers within the English football authorities, they were not surprised. In fact, it is what they expected. The IFC had a meeting with UK Sports Minister, Richard Caborn MP and he expressed his surprise that nothing had happened.

He recommended that we sent another wave of material to UEFA. This finally produced a response. Sadly, it does not shed much light on the topic and merely suggests that the IFC refers to a reply that was received from the UK government's Home Office. This is detailed below. UEFA admit that the anecdotal evidence provided by the IFC is worthwhile but it is irritating that it would appear UEFA could not be bothered to respond to the various recommendations.

Hence, the IFC would like to thank the Home Office<sup>[4]</sup> for giving a reply to its request for a response to the recommendations given in the 'Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions' report. Their letter gives a detailed reply and also states:

*'...the report as a significant contribution to the work underway on a range of important and complex issues, including those highlighted in the recommendations...and the anecdotal references (are) highly relevant given the importance of perception in the football arena'.*

They also highlight the extent to which, in terms of overall standards of stadia, England has moved on while the vast majority of other European countries have been left behind: *'...if UEFA was to insist on all European clubs and national football associations implementing English safety and security standards, then European international and club competition would effectively cease overnight'.*

The Home Office conclude by saying that although things are getting better, there is still plenty of work to be done: *'There can be little doubt that the experience of most English fans when abroad has generally improved in recent years and we expect that trend to continue in tandem with growing recognition of the improved behaviour and reputation of English fans. However, we also know that the experience varies widely across Europe and that much more needs to be done to minimise the risks posed to visiting English fans and those of other countries. That is why Home Office, along with the police and football authorities, place such a high priority on maximising our influence on the international stage'.*

The Football Association<sup>[5]</sup> has also responded in detail, although only two of the recommendations (numbers 1 and 9) were specifically relevant to them. However, the FA was critical of many aspects of the report and fear that an opportunity to improve standards at stadia across Europe may have been lost.

[4] David Bohannon, Head of Football Disorder & Civil Emergencies, UK Home Office

[5] Phil Smith, Head of Public Affairs at the FA

*'As we would have expected, the document highlights the inferior facilities of some stadia in other European countries. It could have been useful for The FA to have used the report to back-up our own discussions with UEFA to encourage them to promote higher standards of stadium facilities in its competitions. If we are to improve stadium facilities and the way English fans are managed in foreign stadia, then the only way we can realistically achieve this is through working with UEFA. Regrettably, UEFA have reacted very negatively to the IFC's report, as it is undoubtedly very critical. As a result we would doubt whether UEFA would then act on any of the recommendations it contains. This reaction may have been avoided if UEFA had been approached in a different way, perhaps via The FA's offices. As you have stated, The FA did send a 'reminder' to UEFA about the IFC's work and the need to respond but earlier and deeper engagement with UEFA may have helped to avoid the hostile reception that the report has received'.*

The following is the Home Office (and, by default, the UEFA) response to the various IFC recommendations, with the FA responses included in 1 and 9:

### 1. Meetings with Clubs in European Competition

Some work is already being done on this front – the FA host pre-season meetings with clubs newly qualified for European competition whilst the UK Football Policing Unit convene annual and ad hoc meetings of key local police liaison / intelligence officers and club security officers associated with clubs before European competitions get underway.

We will explore if the current arrangements can be formalised and participation widened. Club commitments pre-season will no doubt raise a number of logistical issues but we will pursue this recommendation in tandem with UKFPU, ACPO, FA and other stakeholders.

The Football Association said in their response to this recommendation:

*'Before the start of each season, the FA's Head of Safety and Security Chris Whalley does meet with any clubs who are new to European competitions and go through all of the key issues with them. Prior to this current season he visited West Ham United and Tottenham Hotspur, for example, and last season Middlesbrough and Everton accordingly. It is disappointing that this is not reflected in the report'.*

On page 32 the report says that most English clubs enter and leave UEFA competitions without any real contact from the FA. This could not be further from the truth. In respect of the IFC recommendation, it always proves very difficult to get clubs together for one meeting a season. We appreciate the suggestion that the FA is "perfectly placed to facilitate and manage" such meetings, but logistically we think it would be very tough.

The FA would be happy to discuss the content of the IFC's report with the clubs involved at the next such meeting, before the start of next season.

### 2. Attendance at UEFA Pre-Meetings

On behalf of the participating English club, the Football Association provide UEFA with an FA / club perspective on what transpires in respect of each planning meeting and in connection with the subsequent match.

In reality, appropriate club representation at planning meetings should always be achievable but this may not be the case in respect of senior host police commanders. Demands on time and the short notice involved, particularly as the pace of matches 'hott up' after the winter break, inevitably means that it will not always be possible to ensure that the designated senior police commander(s) will be able to attend. However, the key to a productive meeting should not centre on individual participation at meetings but the accuracy of the information relayed and shared by those in attendance.

### 3. Information to Travelling Fans & 4. Sharing of Fan Experiences

These recommendations are wholly consistent with the commitment to transparency and working in partnership with supporters enshrined in the football disorder strategy. There has already been progress in this area and we, along with Consular Services and the UK Football Policing Unit, are committed to further liaison with the Football Supporters Federation and other supporter groups about establishing a consultative and information exchange mechanism for supporters of clubs participating in European competition.

### 5. Use of Visiting Stewards

As the report implies, the deployment of visiting stewards is attractive but not without difficulty. The issue and associated benefits and concerns were identified at the UK (EU) Presidency hosted (football experts) conference in London in December 2005 and were subsequently referred to the Council of Europe Standing Committee on Spectator Violence for detailed consideration. Those discussions are underway and UK stakeholders, including supporter groups, will be consulted and kept abreast of the Standing Committee's deliberations.



In terms of defining the functions of visiting stewards, the key aim is to establish effective liaison between host stewards and visiting supporters. To avoid confusion and uncertainty, it is crucial that all host and visiting authorities are fully aware of the agreed role and practice of any visiting fan liaison stewards and for operational arrangements to take account of the role concerned. Ultimately, decisions on the deployment of visiting fan liaison stewards must remain the preserve of the host authority / agency that is responsible for in-stadia safety and security.

## 6. Visiting Police Identification

The revised EU handbook on police co-operation in respect of football matches with an international dimension now includes a standard police tabard for use by visiting police delegations (another outcome of the UK Presidency football conference). A decision on whether or not to use the tabards must be a matter for the host and visiting police commanders to determine in the light of prevailing circumstances.

## 7. UEFA Licensing & Safety Standards

UEFA already set safety and security obligations for national associations to assist the association determine which grounds should be licensed to host international club matches. As you may know, many club grounds around Europe are precluded from hosting Champions League and UEFA cup matches because they are deemed to fall short of UEFA safety standards.

UEFA is generally supportive of the UK approach to minimising safety and security risks connected with international football. Indeed, UEFA has focused on the UK experience and our multi-agency response to a number of tragic incidents involving English supporters at a recent series of high level safety and security seminars featured as part of their Safety and Security Education Programme. UEFA will now monitor the extent to which each country has responded to the advice and good practice highlighted during the seminars.

## 8. Delays & Crushing at Stadium Entrances

This phenomenon is largely related to matches involving English teams. The issues involved are complex and it would be unrealistic and unacceptable to expect ground safety and security arrangements to be aborted, simply because (English) fans arrive very late for matches. There will often be important safety and security reasons for host checking and searching arrangements on entry (e.g. to avoid over-crowding in designated visiting fan areas, to prevent small numbers of ticketless fans from gaining unauthorised access, counter-terrorism measures or to confiscate pyrotechnic devices being smuggled into a ground). On the last point, these devices may not be common in the UK but they pose significant safety problems for many matches in mainland Europe and pose a threat to the safety of visiting players and supporters.

Clearly, it would be desirable for entry arrangements to be harmonised, and we will encourage such developments, but ultimately, the onus is on English fans to accept that they need to arrive earlier than usual for matches overseas and to be compliant with host safety and security checks.

## 9. Meeting with Fan Groups

The concept is desirable and linked with other recommendations on supporter information and liaison. We will continue to work with other government agencies, football authorities, supporter groups and the police about co-ordinating and hosting such meetings. One difficulty centres on the independent character and travel patterns of English fans. Identifying key supporter representatives will pose a challenge but one that should not prove insurmountable.

The Football Association's response was:

*'The FA would disagree with this recommendation. In our experience, meetings like this would result in a 'shopping list' of fans' complaints, which would be detrimental to our aim of influencing UEFA to encourage better facilities across Europe. Our view is that the best method of distributing information to fans is through the clubs themselves'.*

## 10. Role of Consular Officials

Government (including consular officials), police and football authorities already place a high priority prior to tournaments and one-off matches on explaining to host authorities English crowd dynamics and the reduced level of risk posed by travelling English fans. There is always room for more to be done and Consular Services will no doubt respond positively to the recommendation.

English police delegations attend all European club and international matches involving English & Welsh teams and are best placed to share information regarding numbers of travelling fans and any associated risks. In accordance with EU regulations, such information should be shared through designated (police) national football information points.

The behaviour of English fans has improved dramatically in recent years and many host governments, police and other authorities recognise the reduced level of risk and the effectiveness of the UK approach to safety and security. However, we acknowledge that the response of host agencies remains variable around Europe (an issue that is continually under review within the relevant EU police co-operation committees). Ultimately, the onus is on English fans to repeatedly reassure host authorities by maintaining the recent trend of good behaviour.



## 11. Ticketing Arrangements & 12. Segregation

A good deal of effort is already invested in identifying the source of unauthorised tickets. UEFA and FIFA are aware that effective and appropriate ticket distribution is important in terms of minimising the number of tickets that become available through unauthorised (and, in some countries, illegal) channels. Whilst there may not be any direct correlation between disorder and ticket touting in connection with international matches, any failure in segregation arrangements inevitably increases potential risk levels, particularly at club matches. I suspect that increased explanation of what UEFA is doing and aims to do in respect of reducing the supply of unauthorised tickets would be widely welcomed.

## 13. UEFA Checks on Policing Operations

It is not for UEFA to determine policing tactics or monitor policing operations. Clearly that is the preserve of governments and other police authorities, and for the EU to encourage European-wide harmonisation of policing strategies and dynamic risk assessments etc. That is why we give a high priority to all matters associated with preventing and tackling football disorder in European fora.

However, in circumstances where in-stadia safety and security arrangements are partially or wholly delegated to the police, UEFA does have a clear interest in monitoring what transpires. That is one reason, why UEFA security delegates are experienced police commanders, including a number from the UK. The role of the UEFA security delegate should not be confused with the over-arching role of the “UEFA Match Delegate”.

The perception in the UK may be that only English fans and English football are penalised by UEFA, but that is far from the case (hence the recent expulsion of Feyenoord from the UEFA Cup). As indicated above, UEFA appoint security advisers / delegates to monitor safety and security arrangements and events at all risk matches. Their reports form the basis of decisions made by UEFA’s security committee.

## 14. Disabled Supporters

We fully recognise the importance of host clubs making provision to accommodate supporters with a disability. The extent to which a host club can deliver on this front is likely to be determined (at least to some extent) on the design and age of the stadium and associated safety arrangements.

## 15. Catering for Ticketless Fans

The concept of welcoming and making provision for all visiting fans, irrespective of whether they are in possession of a match ticket, is attractive and reasonable. However, such provision may not always be achievable or necessary, given that the size of an English club’s travelling support will vary considerably from match to match. Moreover, the circumstances at European club matches are not comparable with those pertaining to international tournament finals where planning occurs over a period of years and where attendance

of large numbers of England fans is guaranteed. It is not feasible to expect all cities to be able to cater for large numbers of ticketless fans at short notice and it is not for UEFA to insist upon such provision. Ultimately, the provision of safe and secure fan parks and open air screenings of matches must be for host authorities to determine in the light of police advice and local circumstances.

## 16. Final Match Venues

I am sure that UEFA take account of a wide range of factors when deciding upon the venue for a Champions League or UEFA Cup Final. We cannot expect UEFA to assume that an English team will qualify and to reject any ground without a suitably large capacity. Ultimately, we all have to accept that the onus is on English fans travelling to a venue city to behave in an appropriate manner, irrespective of whether they are in possession of an authorised ticket, an unauthorised ticket or no ticket.

## 17. UEFA Role in Harmonising Policing Arrangements

Of course, European-wide harmonisation of policing tactics and wider football disorder preventative strategies is desirable. But it is not for UEFA to dictate to Governments and police forces about policing strategies and tactics. Indeed, one failing of the report is the extent to which it over-emphasises the role and influence of UEFA on host policing arrangements – an area where the EU does not have competence let alone international and national football authorities. I do not think English supporters would welcome UEFA dictating policing tactics in respect of matches hosted in the UK.

A key principle of the successful UK strategy centres on there being clear understanding of who is responsible for the various aspects of safety and security arrangements. In our view, crowd management and safety issues inside stadia must be the lead responsibility of match organisers. However, our strategy also recognises that football violence and disorder is criminality, and that it must be for governments and the police to lead on dealing with related phenomenon (albeit in partnership with stakeholders, including supporter groups). These principles feature in our approach to promoting harmonisation and improvements in policing etc within specialist European Union and Council of Europe fora.

A great deal has been achieved in recent years and more work is underway aimed at providing all European football supporters with a safe and secure environment at football matches. Certainly, we will ensure that football policing and associated legal and organisational arrangements remain a high profile item on the EU agenda. ●

*The IFC is looking forward to further dialogue with the Home Office and is greatly encouraged by the response given above. Any developments will be covered in the 2007 Annual Report.*



One of the key functions of the Independent Football Commission is to deal with issues and complaints from supporters. In this case, although the phrase never seems to quite correct, the supporter is to be seen as a customer, because they have invariably bought a ticket and then had a problem.

# THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS



Because of this role, the IFC has regular contact with the authorities and the football clubs. In the light of this, the IFC decided to mount a series of forums around the country, allowing anyone linked with football to come and talk to the organisation. It would also enable the IFC to speak frankly to the clubs.

We shall look at these forums shortly, and then move on to the various issues and complaints received at the IFC offices. The difference between these two categories often becomes blurred but, in general, an issue is when someone contacts the IFC with a query or grumble about something. They often don't wish to take things any further but merely want to hear what the 'independent' view is on something. Frequently, this can be regarding something that is outside of the IFC's remit, such as on-field matters or views on a particular campaign. If someone wants to take the matter further because they have not been satisfied with customer service, ticketing arrangements, stewarding etc, then this is registered as a complaint. On occasions, once someone has contacted the IFC and discovered precisely what we can do, an issue may evolve into a complaint. We shall look at Issues and Complaints later in this chapter.

### The IFC Forums

In September 2006, the IFC mounted a series of forums around England. They took place at football stadia scattered across the country in convenient locations, therefore allowing staff from as many clubs as possible to attend. The venues and dates were:

- 5th September - Fulham FC, Craven Cottage
- 7th September - Walsall FC, Bescott Stadium
- 8th September - Manchester Utd FC, Old Trafford

The idea of the forums was to allow the IFC to meet people who work within football. The IFC was established in 2002 and has steadily evolved. Although its main role is to monitor football's three governing bodies it also has regular contact with the clubs. In addition, the IFC has frequent meetings with groups who work on the fringes of football looking after the interests of disabled supporters, people from ethnic and minority backgrounds, fans' groups etc.

It is the contact with clubs in particular that the IFC felt needed to be addressed. It was recognised that some of the 92 English clubs knew little or nothing about the work of the IFC, while others had regular contact. Consequently, it was decided to stage a series of forums around the country that would allow personnel from all clubs plus representatives from fans' groups and appropriate organisations to come along and speak to IFC Commissioners and staff. The forums were planned to be in a relaxed atmosphere with the IFC Chairman starting off proceedings by giving a brief overview of the IFC, followed by any questions that the guests may have about the Commission. After that, it was an open floor with everyone encouraged to speak freely and air any views, whatever they may be, about football in general.

Many wide and varied topics were discussed. Some of these were peculiar to a handful of clubs, while others seemed to affect just about everyone. The IFC will carefully look at these topics and consider whether it can help in any way. It should be remembered that the IFC is a small organisation with limited resources and must fulfil its duties monitoring the football authorities, but it is also mindful that football clubs can become frustrated by issues and often feel that they cannot resolve them. The same applies to the organisations that are involved in activities related to football.

It was interesting to note that the clubs seemed to enjoy gathering together and discussing various topics without someone from their governing authority looking over their shoulders. The IFC delegates were seen as a sympathetic pair of ears who were there to help and had their best interests at heart. There was a steady flow of conversation between the clubs and the various organisations that attended. This occurred in particular at the opening two forums in London and the Midlands. The atmosphere at the Manchester forum was totally different. Whether this was down to the presence of representatives from the Premier League and Football League, it is impossible to clarify, however there was a certain amount of sparring between the clubs and a sense of the organisations being determined to have their say. However, all three forums, although very different in the topics discussed, seemed to have been well received.

The main concerns aired during the three IFC forums, in no particular order of importance, were:

#### • Cost of policing games

There seemed to be no relation between the category of games and the level of policing. Some clubs felt that the level and cost of policing increased purely if the local police force fancied it.

#### • Parachute payments

Clubs felt this penalised those clubs that hadn't gained promotion to the Premier League. The clubs that had been relegated had an unfair advantage and, as many pointed out, this advantage was likely to increase in future years and therefore make the discrepancy between the haves and have-nots even greater. One suggestion was to have a general Premier League fund that could be divided equally amongst clubs in the Championship.

#### • Communication

Many clubs would like to share Best Practice and Customer Service ideas. Several proposed a password controlled website that all clubs could contribute to thereby giving them a contact name at each club. It was felt that the football authorities didn't really share much material so the clubs could do it by themselves.





#### • Child Protection

There are concerns about clubs operating U7-U11 schemes whereby children go free if accompanied by an adult. This encouraged young children to enter stadia without parents / guardians. However, without proper regulations the clubs are likely to find themselves responsible for these children if anything happens. Concerns were also raised about unaccompanied children on supporters' coaches.

#### • No smoking policies

Policies varied throughout the clubs although many have now introduced 'smoke free' stands. Some clubs have already introduced total smoking bans. A number of clubs have asked supporters to vote on the matter and the results seem to be massively in favour of a total ban. Many clubs would welcome guidance from the football authorities on this topic although many felt that if the authorities dragged their feet long enough then, as seemed likely, the Government would make the decision for them as part of a national exercise. This would then allow the authorities to lay the blame elsewhere for an unpopular piece of legislation.

#### • Charters

Some clubs remain confused as to what Charters are and why they need them. Some felt Charter Reports were only produced because the IFC wanted them. The IFC delegates advised them that this was not the case and the purpose of a Charter is beneficial in two ways; informing and protecting the customer (the fan) and also protecting the club.

#### • Internet Forums

A few clubs were concerned about internet forums; others supported them and frequently posted their own official messages. Clubs felt that they hadn't had any sort of direction from the authorities regarding anything to do with the Internet. Who is responsible for regulating these sites seemed to be a particularly vague area?

#### • Re-introduce Drinking to the Stands

There was a general feeling that alcohol could be allowed 'inside' the ground. Clubs felt it was crazy and posed double standards that people could go to certain multi-use stadia to watch rugby matches or music events on a Friday night and freely drink alcohol whilst in the seating areas, yet if they went along the following day to watch a game of football, they could not. It was generally felt that football should be given a second chance. Many felt they were missing out on a potentially lucrative revenue stream.

#### • Fixtures

There was a feeling that fixtures could be allocated more sensibly. Some clubs had their two longest journeys during the Christmas - New Year period. Others had to face a midweek long haul. Many would welcome a 'window' for requests. There was also a feeling that Sky TV had too much influence.

#### • Complaints and Issues

At the moment, if a club receives a complaint, they try to resolve it themselves and, if not, pass it on to the FA, Premier League or the Football League. If that fails, it is then diverted to the IFC. A large number of clubs felt that if the club couldn't resolve the matter, then it should go directly to the IFC, avoiding the intervention of the authorities. Clubs said they find that when it goes to the authorities, it takes ages and / or disappears without trace, leaving the club and the complainant frustrated. Also supporters might feel that the governing body would 'side' with the club instead of looking at the matter objectively.

#### • Standing

There seemed to be a full range of feelings about this. Some clubs do not want it; others do. Some feel that their new stadia would not be fit for standing. Fans seem to be split, although there appears to be a quickening pace for a return to some standing areas.

### • Ticket Prices

Many clubs felt they had 'squeezed' every last penny out of ticket prices and that the steady rise could not be sustained. Many felt that they would have to freeze prices for next season. Interestingly, this appears to be happening with several high-profile clubs already confirming that prices will be held at current levels for the 2007-08 season.

The IFC used all of these responses, and more, in their questioning of the three authorities in the build-up to the writing of this 2006 Annual Report. The IFC also intends to hold another series of forums at roughly the same time in 2007. The clubs and organisations that attended last year will be given an update on the comments they made and what sort of progress the IFC has made, or failed to make, regarding any requests and queries. They will be informed of the response from the appropriate authorities too. The invitation however, will not be purely to those people who attended in September 2006; there will be another general invitation issued to all clubs and organisations. The results of those forums, the comments made and topics discussed, will appear in the IFC's Annual Report 2007. It is anticipated that the IFC forums will become a regular event, indeed many clubs and organisations requested it, therefore ensuring it becomes a standard chapter in the Annual Report.

The IFC would like to thank all of the clubs, organisations and authority delegates who attended. The IFC found it a hugely rewarding exercise and is in no doubt that it will help the Commission provide a better service to football in the future. The IFC looks forward to renewing discussions in the autumn of 2007.

### Issues

2006 saw 20 issues raised. Three of these became complaints. The majority of issues raised were regarding ticketing. This has been a familiar theme over previous years, therefore suggesting that it is a problem for clubs. However, bearing in mind that it is the one area where every single football supporter who attends games has some sort of interaction with the football club, it is not surprising. If you consider the many hundreds of thousands of fans who buy a ticket and remain content, this level of complaints is tiny by comparison.

**All of the issues can be found in a chart in Annexe C.**

### Complaints

As mentioned earlier, from the 20 issues received by the IFC, three evolved into complaints. Two of these spilled over into 2007, so they will not feature fully in this year's Annual Report. One complaint is from a supporter who was unhappy about his alleged restricted view, and the other is regarding an alleged incident between a supporter and a leading club official at a football ground.

The one remaining complaint surrounded an incident at Hartlepool Utd's Victoria Park ground when they played Blackpool. The son of a Blackpool supporter was ejected from Victoria Park due to alleged persistent standing. His father contacted the IFC after he was dissatisfied with the response from both Hartlepool Utd and the Football League. This complaint required a lengthy period of investigation by the IFC, mainly due to the lack of evidence. Meetings were organised between all of the parties concerned and lengthy periods of CCTV footage were observed.

**The full details of this complaint are to be found in Annex D at the rear of this Annual Report. ●**



# COMING UP IN 2007



2007 will be another busy year for the Independent Football Commission. As well as following our now traditional topics such as Finance and Governance, Charters, Diversity and Equal Opportunity, Community, and Child Protection, we will also keep a close eye on developments within European safety and security with a view as to how English fans travelling abroad could be affected. This latter point will be a regular update following the IFC's 2006 special report looking into this subject. The IFC will also report on developments relating to Agents within football.

In addition to these topics, the IFC shall mount three other investigations, looking into:

- Standing at football grounds
- Ticket prices and match scheduling
- The growth of organisations and pressure groups involved in football.

These separate investigations will either form part of next year's IFC Annual Report or, if there is sufficient new information to be disclosed, the IFC will publish a stand-alone report.

As part of the IFC's day to day duties, it performs a role of investigating complaints and issues raised by supporters. This is part of football's self-regulatory complaints procedure and places the IFC as the final port of call if a fan is not satisfied with the results of his / her enquiries to the football club initially and to the relevant football authority secondly. This role will continue throughout the next twelve months.

Lastly, before looking at the three special investigations, the IFC would like to confirm that the Child Protection chapter in the 2007 Annual Report will not only report on what has taken place over the previous year within the professional ranks of football and the National Game, it will also look back over the 30 months since the IFC published its report that looked into Child Protection. The IFC will revisit the recommendations made in its Report on Child Protection in Football and will consider the level of progress, or lack of it, made during the two and a half years that will have passed since it was published.



## Standing

This issue seems to be gathering pace amongst football supporters. It is also something that causes a headache for the authorities within many football stadia around England. Police and stewards have to decide whether to ignore standing supporters or try to get them to sit down and possibly risk some sort of disorder if fans refuse and / or argue.

Is there any sort of evidence to suggest that fans standing in seating areas have been injured? Is it unsafe if supporters prefer to stand rather than sit? Would it be possible to mix the areas where supporters go, therefore allowing some fans to stand and others to sit? This latter point is important for some people who, having bought a ticket for a seat would prefer to sit in it without having their view obstructed. Some people of course find it extremely uncomfortable to stand for a full 90 minutes. Children might not be able to see anything at all. Would it be possible for English stadia to be dual purpose like some stadia on the continent where parts of the ground can be converted in a short space of time from seats to terraces? Should we go back to designing stadia with sections of open terracing? Is it practical for some of our current new stadia to have sections converted or would the latest designs, which of course have been for seating, make this unlikely or even impossible? Would the authorities and the clubs like to see a return to standing, bearing in mind that this would more than likely see ground capacity rise at those affected stadia and therefore possibly raise extra revenue? Would safety and security organisations see standing as something that could be allowed, or is it something that should never be seen again at the top clubs in England? And what does the Government think?

There also seems to be a 'rebel' tendency creeping into the section of a stadium that houses the visiting fans. Purely from recent IFC observations, it seems that more and more away fans are refusing to sit and see this as some sort of stance against the home authorities. Is this causing a problem for those clubs; have there been any injuries amongst those fans and do the football authorities and police see this as a problem?

All of these questions will be covered by the Independent Football Commission's investigations.

## Ticketing and match scheduling

In the 2005-06 season, if you were a Middlesbrough FC supporter with a season ticket, the first occasion when you could use your seat for a Saturday 3pm kick off, was on New Years Eve 2005. Half the season had gone. Some of the Saturday games were moved due to Middlesbrough's involvement in the UEFA Cup; others were moved because of TV commitments. However, this was small consolation for any Boro fan who couldn't get to the Riverside Stadium on Saturday evenings or Sunday afternoons and didn't have access to satellite or cable television.



Granted, any fan, especially those following a Premiership club, who bought a season ticket assuming that all of his / her games would be on the traditional Saturday afternoon, is not being realistic. Those days are long gone. But can more thought be given to when and why the games are moved? How are the games chosen? Should a season ticket holder who is unable to switch from 3pm on a Saturday to 4pm on a Sunday, be compensated. If a fan has bought a cheap railway ticket many weeks in advance, but suddenly finds that the game has switched and cannot get a refund from the train company, should they be able to claim compensation from the club or authority?

Football fans are a long-suffering band of people, but even their patience is tested at least once a season when the fixture list throws up what always seems to be the longest journey of the entire season, on a midweek evening with an 8pm kick off in the middle of January when the weather forecast is for heavy snow and fog. Alternatively, they are expected to travel to the other end of the country on Boxing Day when there is no public transport or get to a distant ground for an early kick off on New Year's Day when most fans will probably have had a late night celebrating. Would there by any way of sorting out this anomaly or do the clubs and the authorities do it deliberately for various reasons? Do fans really care or are they prepared to accept that, on occasions, they will be inconvenienced?

The above reasons will explain why some fans do not attend football matches. Another reason will be recognised by every supporter: the price of a ticket. For many fans, it has become far too expensive to go to a game. They are forced to either abandon the idea of a season ticket and then try to buy a ticket on a match-by-match basis, or give up attending matches altogether. Some will use the saved money to purchase a subscription to watch games on television with the rest of their family. Others will head off to the local pub. Some will become totally disillusioned and be lost to football forever. Is there anything that can be done to prevent this happening and reverse the trend?



Already, some clubs are using additional TV finance or the potential for higher capacity attendances in the event of promotion, to either freeze prices or reduce them. Would it be possible to give fans greater value for money? What about attracting new fans? The Leeds Utd Supporters' Trust held a survey that resulted in a recommendation for child prices to be reduced to around £8 from £10. Whether as a result of this research or following their own marketing, the club did indeed reduce child prices by £2.

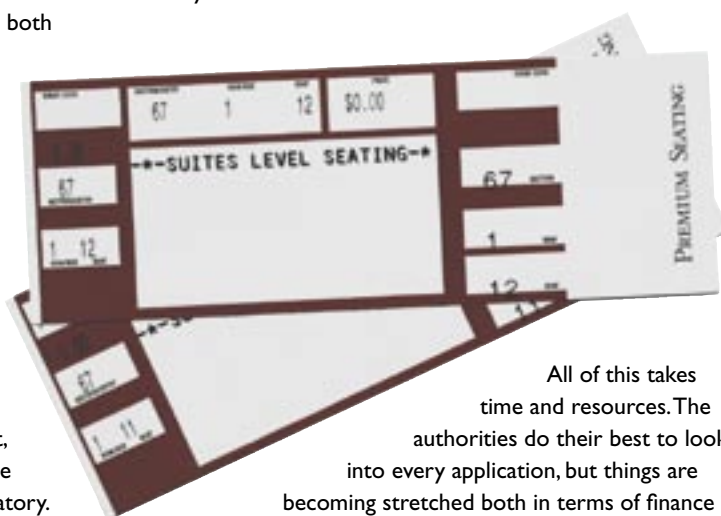
### Investigating the growth of organisations and pressure groups

The last few years has seen a steady increase in the number of people who want to have some sort of say in football. They feel that they can make a difference to one aspect within the game and want to be heard. These organisations range from disabled supporters groups; fans who want to involve a section of their community; racial and ethnic minority groups; political groups; fans who want special areas within stadia for either standing or singing etc.

Many of these groups have excellent aims and are without doubt providing a really good service for fans or are promoting something that football should be more heavily involved in. Many of them are worthy of backing from the authorities both in terms of official and financial support. Many should be actively promoted and, in the fullness of time, could even be integrated into the structure of football. Without doubt many of them, whether a tiny group of individuals or a well run organisation, can do a terrific job for football as a whole and should be warmly welcomed.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Some groups have developed the knack of appearing extremely important and acquiring a loud voice while actually representing very few people and not really providing anything of any serious benefit. There sometimes tends to be a veiled threat that if they don't get what they want, they will immediately race off to the media and accuse the authorities of being ignorant, short-sighted and discriminatory. They sometimes 'cherry-pick' the authorities whereby they contact one of the game's official bodies and, if they're unsuccessful with an appeal for recognition or funding, then move on to another.

All of the football authorities (Football Association, Premier League and the Football League) will be more than happy to deal with people and / or organisations that either have a good idea, valid point or something of value to add to the game and the influence it has. The IFC has witnessed this at first hand, observing how the authorities speak to each other and discuss the merits, or lack of them, of getting involved with a community group, or an organisation that is encouraging underprivileged children, or an ethnic group that is aiming to get more folk from their community to play football etc. Sometimes there is just a short letter to be discussed; other times it is an email. On occasions, the authorities invite people to come along and provide a full presentation. All of this ends with a decision to support via official recognition, financial backing, provision of some sort of material or equipment etc, or of course a rejection of the proposal either in part or totally.



All of this takes time and resources. The authorities do their best to look into every application, but things are becoming stretched both in terms of finance and staffing. The number of appeals and, yes, veiled threats, is increasing. This cannot continue. There is a danger that excellent projects that are already up and running, may be ignored. There is no point in having too many projects that risk being under-funded and therefore possibly fail. Invariably, the job of looking into these requests for support falls onto the shoulders of the Customer Relations departments. These are extremely busy departments, as shown in 2006 when the FA received 190,000 pieces of correspondence from customers. All of these contacts had to be dealt with and many needed research before a reply could be given.

Consequently the IFC will investigate how a protocol can be established whereby there is, in effect, a working party that monitors these requests and prevents the authorities being picked-off individually. ●

# ANNEXES

ANNEXE A

Implementation of Recommendations from the IFC 2005 Report

As well as making recommendations in this Annual Report that the IFC hopes will be recognised and acted upon in 2007, it seems pertinent to look back to last year’s Report and consider what has happened to the recommendations made in that publication.

Many recommendations are made in the assumption that the authorities will consider them and, if deemed relevant or possible, act upon them. In some cases this is not possible, mainly because it does not fit in with their immediate plans or perhaps they are looking at some other solutions. In this case, the authorities note what has been said and treat the recommendation as a steer or hint rather than an instruction. Other recommendations are acted upon fully and implemented. In the following paragraphs, the recommendations from last year are outlined, plus a resumé of the reaction from the three authorities.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE CHAPTER

Recommendation

**Decisions made by the FA in relation to the Burns Review should be made as soon as possible and that the changes to be implemented are processed within as short a time-table as possible.**

**Early attention is given to the Terms of Reference of the Commission, particularly in relation to the potential role of the semi-autonomous Regulation and Compliance Unit recommended by Lord Burns.**

**The football authorities publicise examples of governance improvements made as a result of the advice given in the FA Governance Guide.**

Action

*Obviously this recommendation was aimed at the Football Association and changes, as this Annual Report has shown, are being made. The FA confirmed to the IFC that shareholders will be asked to vote on proposed changes to the structure of The FA, emanating from the report of Lord Burns, at the FA Annual General Meeting on 29 May 2007. If the vote is in favour, requiring 75% of those present to agree, the FA’s rules and regulations will be changed immediately and the process of implementing those changes will commence.*

*The authorities noted this recommendation. The FA agreed that following the adoption of any changes by the structural review, the IFC terms of reference should be re-examined. The expected timetable for this, in conjunction with the other football authorities, will be the summer of 2007.*

*Again, the authorities noted this recommendation. The FA added that the difficulty of achieving publicity for ‘good news’, particularly in the area of governance where ‘bad news’ is easier to understand and cover, was well documented. However they said that IFC’s point was taken and the FA would continue to highlight good practice where appropriate to act as encouragement for other clubs to follow suit.*





## RACISM CHAPTER

### Recommendation

**Within the developing Race Equality Action Plans, the authorities encourage clubs to make more positive attempts to augment ethnic minority attendance at matches.**

### Action

The response to this recommendation was both an agreement that work was, and still is, being done. The Premier League welcomed the recommendation saying that it continues to encourage clubs to find new and creative ways to encourage more diverse audiences. The Premier League added that crowds are becoming more diverse as a result of a wide range of club initiatives. The Football League gave figures to exemplify how the various initiatives were being successful. They confirmed that in a recent survey of supporters, it was established that 5% of fans are from ethnic minority backgrounds. This is an improvement from the 2% in a similar survey five years earlier, thus displaying a positive trend that Football League crowds are becoming increasingly diverse. The improvement has been the result of marketing to the while community through Football in the Community schemes, as well as anti-racism programmes run by the clubs and supported by The Football League. The League adds that it aims to continue this trend to ensure that matches are open to everyone, confirming that as such is laid out in The Football League's Customer Charter. The FA agreed with the recommendation and said they would continue to look for new and innovative ways to diversify the attendance at football, including both club and international matches. Under the FA's direct control, targets had been set for England international matches and membership.

## COMMUNITY CHAPTER

### Recommendation

**There should be greater collaboration between the three football authorities in addressing common themes and common purposes in their community programmes.**

### Action

This is a familiar theme within IFC Reports. However, the situation is definitely improving. The Premier League said it is keen to share good practice and promote initiatives for the good of the game as a whole. They said that the Kickz initiative was a good example of this working in practice. The Football League went further, explaining how the three football authorities currently work together on anti-racism and child protection issues. They added that Football in the Community is a body which is owned by the three authorities and The PFA. However, in general terms, The Football League confirmed that it was seeking to use 'community' as its unique selling point in the market place and this it was the key difference that demarcates The Football League from the other authorities. The Football League will continue to work together with the other authorities on mutually beneficial projects but reserves the right to work independently on community projects that benefit our member clubs. The FA welcomed the suggestion of greater collaboration although they added that it should be emphasised that significant partnership work was already taking place, the most recent successful example of this being, as mentioned earlier, the 'Kickz' project.

**More publicity should be given by the football authorities to their Community Programmes and Initiatives.**

The Premier League confirmed that it was working hard to increase awareness of community initiatives and that it had new proposals for that would become apparent for the 2007/08 season. The Football League said they had noted this recommendation and that they had recently begun to publish a Community and Youth Development Bulletin. In addition, their website allows clubs to centrally release stories of a community nature. The Football League said they accepted the recommendation as part of The League's overall communication strategy adding that The League's Management Team had agreed to expand the number of Community Services Seminars to two per year, meaning that best practice could be more easily shared between clubs. The FA thanked the IFC for its recognition of football's efforts in this area, but pointed out that it can be difficult to achieve wide coverage for this type of work, compared to some of the more negative media coverage, but they would continue to make efforts. They acknowledged that positive coverage of innovative and inspiring football development work is not just beneficial to recognise the efforts of those involved, but is also important for the external audience to recognise that it takes place and is worth further support in the future.

CHARTERS CHAPTER

Recommendation	Action
<b>Immediate steps should be taken to simplify the reporting process by both Premier League and Football League clubs.</b>	<i>The Premier League confirmed that they had simplified their reporting process. The Football League was similarly encouraged by this recommendation and gave it its full support.</i>
<b>The governing bodies should ensure that their charter reports suitably reflect the work carried out during the appropriate season and that only the clubs in their leagues during that season are included.</b>	<i>This recommendation followed on from the previous one, suggesting that Charters should be restricted to those topics that are only relevant to Charters. This was to avoid Charters becoming a vast tome that included everything going on within a football club. This also met with general approval. The Premier League said they only intended to report on their own clubs, while the Football League said that topics such as community work would be redirected elsewhere.</i>
<b>Charters themselves should be reflective of individual clubs' needs. However, all should contain reference to tickets and the clubs' complaints procedures.</b>	<i>Again, this recommendation follows on from the previous two. The Premier League confirmed that all Charters included references to ticket sales and complaints procedures.</i>

## ANNEXE B

### Meetings, Visits, Consultations and Matches 2006

#### MEETINGS ATTENDED BY THE IFC

All Agency Review Team  
 All Party Parliamentary Football Group (APFG)  
 Birkbeck College  
 Birkbeck College - State of the Game report launch  
 Blackburn Rovers Football Club  
 Blackpool Football Club  
 Burnley Football Club  
 Commission for Racial Equality  
 Department of Culture, Media & Sport  
 European Parliament  
 Football Association  
 Football Association - Child Protection Workshop  
 Football Association Disabled Supporters Group  
 Football Foundation  
 Football in the Community  
 Football League  
 Football League - Customer Services Seminars  
 Football League - Community Officers Seminar  
 Football Licensing Authority  
 Football Supporters' Federation  
 Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
 Independent European Sports Review  
 Independent Regulators Conference  
 Ipswich Town Football Club  
 Kick It Out  
 League Managers Association  
 Leicester City Football Club  
 Leyton Orient Football Club  
 National Association of Disabled Supporters  
 Newcastle United Football Club - Supporters Panel Meetings  
 Norwich City Football Club  
 Nottingham Forest Football Club  
 Oldham Athletic Football Club  
 Premier League  
 Proactive Agency  
 Professional Footballers Association  
 Professional Footballers Association - Black Players Forum  
 Reading Football Club  
 Sheffield Wednesday Football Club  
 Southend United Football Club  
 Supporters Direct  
 Supporters Direct Annual Conference  
 UEFA  
 Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club

#### FOR THE "EXPERIENCE OF ENGLISH SUPPORTERS IN EUROPEAN CLUB COMPETITIONS"

Arsenal Football Club  
 Bolton Wanderers Football Club  
 Chelsea Football Club  
 Cleveland Police  
 FA Advisors on Crowd Control  
 FA Head of Stadia Safety and Security  
 FC Barcelona  
 Football Association  
 Football Supporters' Federation  
 Greater Manchester Police  
 Liverpool Football Club  
 Manchester United Football Club  
 Metropolitan Police  
 Middlesbrough Football Club  
 Newcastle United Football Club  
 Olympique de Marseille Football Club  
 Premier League  
 Real Madrid Football Club  
 UEFA  
 VfB Stuttgart Football Club



## FOOTBALL MATCHES ATTENDED BY THE IFC DURING 2006

AFC Bournemouth v Brentford (League 1)  
 Arsenal v Barcelona (Champions League Final)  
 Arsenal v Leeds United (Women's FA Cup Final)  
 AS Roma v Middlesbrough (UEFA Cup)  
 Aston Villa v Sunderland (FA Premier League)  
 Barnet v Stockport County (League 2)  
 England v Greece (Friendly)  
 England v Hungary (Friendly)  
 England v Jamaica (Friendly)  
 FC Basel v Middlesbrough (UEFA Cup)  
 FC Barcelona v Chelsea (Champions League)  
 Fulham v Newcastle United (FA Premier League)  
 Juventus v Arsenal (Champions League)  
 Manchester United v Wigan Athletic (Carling Cup Final)  
 Middlesbrough v Nuneaton Borough (FA Cup)  
 Middlesbrough v Sevilla Futbol (UEFA Cup Final)  
 Olympique de Marseille v Bolton Wanderers (UEFA Cup)  
 VfB Stuttgart v Middlesbrough (UEFA Cup)  
 Real Madrid v Arsenal (UEFA Cup)  
 Scunthorpe United v Doncaster Rovers (League 1)  
 Sheffield United v Chelsea (FA Premier League)  
 Sheffield Wednesday v Birmingham City (Championship)  
 Southampton v Birmingham City (Championship)  
 Steaua Bucharest v Middlesbrough (UEFA Cup)

## CLUBS AND ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED AT THE IFC FORUMS HELD IN SEPTEMBER 2006

Accrington Stanley Football Club  
 Aston Villa Football Club  
 Birmingham City Football Club  
 Blackpool Football Club  
 Bolton Wanderers Football Club  
 Bradford City Football Club  
 Burnley Football Club  
 Cheltenham Town Football Club  
 Coventry City Football Club  
 Everton Football Club  
 Football League  
 Football Supporters' Federation  
 Fulham Football Club  
 Ipswich Town Football Club  
 Leeds United Football Club  
 Leicester City Football Club  
 Manchester United Football Club  
 National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS)  
 Newcastle United Football Club  
 Norwich City Football Club  
 Oldham Athletic Football Club  
 Plymouth Argyle Football Club  
 Port Vale Football Club  
 Premier League  
 Professional Footballers Association  
 Reading Football Club  
 Rochdale Football Club  
 Rotherham United Football Club  
 Supporters Direct  
 West Bromwich Albion Football Club  
 Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club  
 Wycombe Wanderers Football Club  
 Yeovil Town Football Club

## ANNEXE C

### Issues Raised with the IFC

One of the key functions of the Independent Football Commission is to deal with issues and complaints from supporters. The below chart gives a resumé of the 20 issues raised. The single issue that became a complaint and was resolved in 2006 can be found detailed in Annexe D. Two other issues became complaints but they were not resolved until 2007 and will therefore appear in next year's IFC Annual Report. As can be seen from the chart, the bulk of the issues raised were regarding ticketing.

CATEGORY	SUBJECT	GOVERNING BODY
Customer relations	Response by governing body to issue relating to England's performance in the World Cup 2006 (1)	The Football Association
Ticketing	Number of tickets allocated to away fans for a League 1 game (1)	The Football League
	Error by new member of staff in the ticket office (1).	The Football League
	Allocation of tickets for World Cup 2006 tournament (3)	The Football Association
	FA Cup Final tickets stolen in post and not re-issued (1)	The Football Association
	Allocation of tickets for the FA Cup Final (1)	The Football Association
	Cost of tickets for away fans (1)	The Football League
	Introduction of ticket exchange agency at two Premier League clubs (1)	The Premier League
	Tickets with obstructed viewing (1)	The Football League
	Allocation of tickets to a supporter of a Championship club (1)	The Football League
	Ticketing practices of a Championship club (1)	The Football League
Other	Treatment of fans at the home leg of a European game (1)	The Premier League
	Incident involving ejection of a fan from a League 2 game (1)	The Football League
	Banning order issued by a League 1 Club (1)	The Football League
	Incident at a League 1 club (1)	The Football League

Of the 20 issues received, one referred to an "on-field" matter, which cannot be dealt with by the IFC; one concerned a County Football Association, which is outside the IFC's remit, and one concerned a campaign, which the IFC cannot become involved in.

## ANNEXE D

### Complaints Adjudicated by the IFC

As mentioned earlier, from the 20 issues received by the IFC, three evolved into complaints. Two of these spilled over into 2007, so they will not feature in this year's IFC Annual Report.

The one remaining complaint required a lengthy period of investigation by the IFC, mainly due to the lack of evidence. Meetings were organised between all of the parties concerned and lengthy periods of CCTV footage were observed. The complainant, on behalf of his son, claimed that his son had been wrongly ejected from Hartlepool Utd's ground when his team, Blackpool, had played at Victoria Park on 28 January 2006, and that his subsequent complaints had not been dealt with satisfactorily.

The main events surrounded the action of Hartlepool Utd's stewards. The complainant said that he and his three sons had attended the match in a party of 17 and that at times they were forced to stand so as to see the game. Their view had been obstructed by a pillar in front of them and it had been difficult to see looking into the bright setting sun. There are conflicting stories as to what happened next, but the result was that the complainant's son was, because of persistent standing, ejected at half-time when he had gone to buy a pie. The complainant felt there was no reason for this to have happened. There was also the added complication that the complainant had no idea where his son has gone which, needless to say, had been a matter of concern. Consequently, he believed that Hartlepool Utd should return their match fees as they had paid £18 each for what had turned out to be a restricted view; he and his three sons had seen only half the match, and what had been a great day had been spoiled by the unjustified actions of a steward.

On 7 February, the Football League wrote to the complainant saying that they were sorry to learn of the events, and would ask Hartlepool Utd for a copy of their response to his complaint. There was then a regular flow of correspondence between the club, the Football League and the complainant that ended on 14 March 2006 with the Football League telling the complainant that after referring the matter to their Security and Operations Adviser, they were of the view that it was for resolution by Hartlepool Utd. As the complainant was dissatisfied with Hartlepool Utd's response, he could take it up with the IFC, which he did. Two IFC Commissioners interviewed the complainant and his son. They reviewed the club's CCTV footage, but the quality was poor and there were periods when Blackpool fans were not shown. The pictures showed the complainant in the area he had described, but it was not possible to identify any of the individuals in the party.

The pictures showed what appeared to be the incident at the front of the stand where two stewards got involved before the match started; none of the complainant's party appeared to have been involved.

The IFC Commissioners visited Hartlepool Utd and met with their Safety Officer and two stewards. There was no official record of any incidents during the game. The Commissioners asked why no incidents had been recorded? The Safety Officer said that it was impracticable to record every little happening.

The findings of the IFC centered around stadium safety and that there is a requirement that spectators in seated areas should not stand persistently while play is in progress. That cannot be a matter of dispute, and should be common knowledge from the publicity the subject has received. It is clear from the CCTV evidence that a significant proportion of the Blackpool supporters stood frequently while play was in progress. Hartlepool Utd would therefore have been entitled to eject all those involved. The IFC accepts that to try to eject large numbers of offenders has the potential to cause a serious public order incident. What is really in contention is why the complainant's son was selected for ejection, and whether he was treated even-handedly. In other words, was he justifiably treated differently from those around him, whom the complainant's family maintains were in broadly similar circumstances, but were not ejected?

Unfortunately, there was no contemporary record, or concrete evidence, of the events in question and the accounts given to the IFC by the respective parties were at such complete variance that it was quite impossible for the IFC to determine precisely what took place. The IFC Commissioners were surprised, given that the events happened over a period of time and that the steward had decided to eject the complainant's son at an appropriate moment, that there was no zoomed-in CCTV footage. The Commissioners were also surprised that Hartlepool Utd had no contemporaneous record of incidents during the match, or of any discussion of the proposed ejection before it took place. In addition, the Commissioners had concerns over the conflicting statements made about the number of warnings said to have been given and the way in which they were said to have been administered. The complainant was also dissatisfied about the way in which Hartlepool Utd handled his complaints.

Despite misgivings over inconsistencies in the accounts and the lack of appropriate records, it was simply not possible, even on the balance of probabilities, for the IFC to determine precisely what took place, and whether it was wrong for the Blackpool fan to have been ejected. The IFC recommended that Hartlepool Utd wrote to the complainant apologising for the poor handling of his complaints and for any offence caused by the inference that he was not telling the truth with regard to his son's disappearance. The IFC also recommended that Hartlepool Utd ensured that contemporary records are kept of incidents which merit ejection.

At this point, letters of the IFC findings were sent to the complainant, Hartlepool United FC and to the Football League. The matter was closed.



## ANNEXE E

### The Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions (Recommendations)

In December 2006, the Independent Football Commission published its in-depth report into the experience of English football fans who travelled abroad to watch their teams involved in European games. The report, entitled 'The Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions' made seventeen recommendations aimed at UEFA, the English clubs, the British Government and the English football authorities (Football Association, Premier League and Football League). An update plus responses from the authorities can be found in Chapter 7. The recommendations were:-

- 1 There needs to be an annual meeting before European competitions get underway to ensure that English clubs are fully informed about local and national rules, regulations and traditions, changes to UEFA guidelines and latest security issues. All clubs who have qualified for Europe should be invited along with UEFA, Home Office, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, security advisors, Football Association, FA Premier League, Football League, and clubs previously involved in European matches. A second meeting should take place as the competitions unfold. The FA to organise / facilitate these meetings.
- 2 UEFA should enforce protocol before matches. Too often English clubs meet with the wrong people at crucial planning stages. If English clubs request pre-match meetings on the premise of ensuring safety for their fans, then UEFA should insist that the host clubs oblige and that top personnel should attend and, crucially, that they are the people who 'matter' on the day of the game. There is no point in having a meeting two weeks before a game, only to find that the people who make the real decisions only appear at the official meeting on the morning of the game.
- 3 Better and more information need to be provided to English fans by their clubs. This information should be sent out as soon as possible. Too often the IFC found information being distributed to fans on the aeroplane out to the game.
- 4 Experiences of fans from other clubs should be included in the information provided to supporters. Fans are more likely to take notice of what other fans have to say rather than follow the instructions and advice of their club.
- 5 English stewards should be used as widely as possible. UEFA should look at trying to implement an agreement whereby stewards from the visiting clubs do have some sort of official role. The IFC appreciates that this could be awkward due to local laws, insurance and police formalities, but it should be investigated to see whether something could be done.
- 6 Police to be clearly identifiable, whether in a cap, arm band, waistcoat etc. This would help fans to find them and local police to identify them. English fans are likely to show restraint if they are present. Ticket-less fans would be more wary. Some fans may feel more reassured if an English police officer arrives on the scene if there is trouble. Under normal circumstances the English police officers would remain anonymous but, on occasion, it would be useful if they could be instantly recognisable as being someone in authority. It should be a criminal offence for anyone who is not a police officer, found wearing one of these identification articles.
- 7 UEFA licensing needs to be much clearer. UEFA need to set their own safety standards rather than rely on local legislation which in certain cases can be used as an excuse for sub-standard conditions. If UEFA feel that a stadium does not meet their standards, then the host club should be restricted from staging games.
- 8 UEFA states that trying to avoid crushing at the entrance to a stadium is an example of Best Practice. The IFC disagrees and feels that this should be mandatory. There should be no question that if safety is being compromised that either something is done about it or the game does not go ahead. UEFA do not insist that crushing must not be allowed. Commonsense would surely suggest that such an incident must be avoided at all costs.
- 9 The Football Association should organise regular meetings between the authorities and fans groups. This would help the FA pass on information to the fans while gleaning information from the people who actually go to the games. It is all very well passing on information to the clubs, but this is done with the assumption that the clubs will then hand on that information to their supporters. If clubs are given the opportunity to speak to police, government officials and the football authorities, then the fans should also be allowed to have their input. After all, the vast majority of the planning visits and meetings conducted by the English clubs are done purely with regard to the supporters.
- 10 British Consular officials should do more to quell the fears of European authorities and to make them fully aware of the improving behaviour of English fans. European clubs and police authorities still view English fans as a bunch of riotous hooligans. Euro 2004 and the 2006 World Cup have shown that the situation is vastly improved and that the security officials who lie in wait of visiting English fans can use a lesser degree of force and aggression. The British Consular staff are on hand in European cities to provide this education process. They can also help furnish the local authorities with up-to-date predication regarding ticket-less fans and the nature of those fans.



- 11 There needs to be research into how tickets can be prevented from falling into the wrong hands. Ticket-less fans can cause a massive headache for both the English and host clubs. Even more worrying though is when English fans acquire tickets in wrong areas of the stadium. UEFA should also investigate whether the allocation and sale of tickets can be speeded up.
  - 12 The authorities must ensure adequate segregation before tickets go on sale. Some clubs appear to organise their segregation measures at the last minute depending on how ticket sales are going. This can mean inadequate segregation between rival fans.
  - 13 UEFA should mount its own series of spot-checks at stadia to make sure that when the local police claim everything is in order, that it really is in order. At pre-match meetings, the UEFA delegate appears to take the word of the local authorities regarding safety, security, segregation, seating and ticketing arrangements etc. A single UEFA delegate on his / her own can't hope to check all of this.
  - 14 UEFA must give greater priority to disabled supporters and make their access to the stadium a priority and not merely Best Practice. From the experience of the IFC, too many European clubs make up these arrangements on the night; there is no preparation. This leads to distressing and sometimes threatening situations for English fans with disabilities.
  - 15 UEFA should encourage the major cities where English teams are likely to play in various European competitions, to consider welcoming ticket-less English fans. These fans are going to arrive in any case so, as happened in the 2006 World Cup with the 'fans' parks' it can be hugely beneficial to everyone if plans are in place to occupy and assist these supporters rather than simply cope with them.
  - 16 UEFA should recognise that a higher proportion of fans will wish to follow their club to the final of any competition and therefore a stadium should be chosen that is large enough to cope with demand. The PSV Eindhoven Stadium for the 2006 UEFA Cup final was too small. English clubs traditionally attract a huge travelling support and, if the supply of official tickets is low, then it encourages ticket-less fans to travel in the hope of finding a ticket from other sources at a late date. A large stadium would help accommodate more loyal fans and reduce the problems of touting.
  - 17 UEFA needs to encourage the implementation of consistent policing arrangements. The onus needs to be put onto the clubs that something must be done so that all of the security officials, whether from England or the host town / city, know what each other is doing.
- The response to these recommendations and the background to them can be found in the main body of this IFC Annual Report under the chapter heading, The Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions update.*



## ANNEXE F

### IFC Publications

**IFC Annual Report 2002:** *pushing the pace of reform* (January 2003)

**Annual Report 2002 - Executive Summary** (January 2003)

**IFC Annual Report 2003:** *a call for unity of purpose* (February 2004)

**Annual Report 2003 - Executive Summary** (February 2004) (pdf version only available)

**Self-Regulation** - *an examination of how football is regulated, with recommendations for the future* (May 2004)

**Report on Euro 2004** - *a report on the FA's role in off-field initiatives and services provided for supporters* (September 2004)

**The Governance of Football Clubs** - *an Independent Football Commission seminar* (October 2004)

**IFC Annual Report 2004:** *going forward*

**Report on Child Protection in Football** (August 2005)

**Supporters Guide to the eyes and ears of football** (April 2006)

**Supporters Guide to the eyes and ears of football** (April 2006), large print version

**IFC Annual Report 2005** (April 2006)

**I'm Still Not Satisfied** - *guide to complaint procedures* (2006)

**I'm Still Not Satisfied** - *guide to complaint procedures* (2006), large print version

**I'm Still Not Satisfied** - *guide to complaint procedures* (2006), Audio CD

**The Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions 2005-06** (December 2006)

To order a free copy of any of these publications, please complete the on-line order form on the publications page of the IFC website: [www.theifc.co.uk](http://www.theifc.co.uk) or contact the IFC office at the address given on the back page of this report.

## NOTES

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# Annual Report 2006



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