

Fan-Led Review of Football Governance – final report and recommendations

Football clubs are at the heart of our local communities. They have a unique social value and many possess great history and legacy. Fans are at the centre of our national game, which is why the government committed to a fan led review of football governance in our manifesto.

In April this year, the government launched that Review, led by the Chair, the Honourable Member for Chatham and Aylesford.

As the [Terms of Reference](#) set out to this House, the Review was a comprehensive examination of the English football system with the aim to explore ways of improving the governance, ownership and financial sustainability of clubs in the football pyramid, building on the strengths and benefits of the game.

Today the government has published [the final Report setting out the recommendations of the Review](#). This Report is founded on the basis of over 100 hours of engagement with Supporters' Trusts, fan groups, women's football representatives, football authorities, club owners, players representatives, and underrepresented interest groups, alongside over 20,000 fans responding to an online survey. The report is extensive, so we will now be considering the detailed recommendations ahead of a full government response.

All football stakeholders have had the chance to contribute to the Review and I am very grateful to all those who have given evidence. Most importantly, fan voices were at the heart of the Review and will remain at the heart of the government's thinking in responding to the recommendations.

I would like to place on record my thanks and appreciation to the Honourable Member for Chatham and Aylesford for her tireless work and for delivering her recommendations so swiftly. She has done a superb job in bringing together such a range of views from across football with such credibility and consideration.

The final report is a thorough and detailed examination of the challenges faced by English football. It is a demonstration of the financial problems being caused by incentives within the game and reckless decision making by some clubs and owners, both of which are unsustainable and threaten the future of the game. It is clear that current oversight of the game is not up to the challenge of solving the structural challenges and action must be taken.

To address this systemic challenge, the Review presents the following ten Strategic Recommendations, which are accompanied in the Report by detailed sub-recommendations:

- to ensure the long-term sustainability of football, the government

- should create a new Independent Regulator for English Football
- to ensure financial sustainability of the professional game, the Independent Regulator for English Football should oversee financial regulation in football
 - new owners' and directors' tests for clubs should be established by the Independent Regulator for English football replacing the three existing tests and ensuring that only good custodians and qualified directors can run these vital assets
 - football needs a new approach to corporate governance to support a long-term sustainable future of the game
 - football needs to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in clubs with committed Equality, Diversity and inclusion Action Plans regularly assessed by the Independent Regulator for English Football
 - as a uniquely important stakeholder, supporters should be properly consulted by their clubs in taking key decisions by means of a shadow board
 - football clubs are a vital part of their local communities. In recognition of this there should be additional protection for key items of club heritage
 - fair distributions are vital to the long term health of football. The Premier League should guarantee its support to the pyramid and make additional, proportionate contributions to further support football
 - women's football should be treated with parity and given its own dedicated review
 - as an urgent matter, the welfare of players exiting the game needs to be better protected – particularly at a young age

The government welcomes the work of the Review and will now consider the detailed recommendations ahead of providing a full government response in Spring 2022.

The Review demonstrates that there are fundamental issues with our national sport, and that this merits radical reform. Fans across the country want and deserve that reform. We have seen in the past how football has been unable to reform itself and to deliver changes that stop the likes of Bury FC or Macclesfield Town FC going out of business, or which stop clubs breaking away to set up the closed shop of a European Super League.

We are at a turning point for football in this country. The Review is a detailed and worthy piece of work that will require a substantive response and plan of action from across government. But the primary recommendation of the review is clear, and one the government chooses to endorse in principle today: that football requires a strong, independent regulator to secure the future of our national game. The government will now work at pace to determine the most effective way to deliver an independent regulator, and any powers that might be needed.

This is an important Review that we hope will lead to change for good in football. The government will now work at pace on how to make that happen.

I have today deposited a copy of the Report in the Libraries of both Houses.