

NATIONAL CLUB  
STRATEGY



# FOREWORD

Cricket clubs lie at the heart of our sport. Much of the success enjoyed on the international stage begins within the network of clubs across England and Wales. However, while our clubs continue to be the lifeblood of the national game, they offer far more than just competitive action and are often at the heart of their communities.

In countless communities, cricket clubs are vital to the social and economic fabric of the surrounding cities, towns and villages. For many lovers of the game, the aim is not to aspire to cricket's greatest stage, but to bring the sport's unique values and benefits to bear in their own communities.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) believes that a healthy network of cricket clubs is essential to the future of the game. It has therefore conducted a thorough review of the current state of club cricket in England and Wales, and recognised the need to produce a sustainable plan of action.

Despite the tough and uncertain economic climate in which clubs are operating, the review has found much to celebrate. In particular, there is a healthy and growing network in place to support the next generation of cricket club personnel. However, we want to use this strategy to offer solutions to the remaining challenges.

Our goal at the ECB is "to inspire the nation to choose cricket". In order to achieve this we must all commit to investing our time, energy and resources into club cricket. The strategy will be successful if clubs primarily focus on improving the experiences of everyone involved in cricket. The ECB would like clubs to choose to invest in grass pitches and outfielders, buildings, synthetic net systems and volunteers, over and above the payment of players, which we discourage in all but the very highest levels of club cricket. In addition, we would like these high-level cricket clubs to question whether paying players is the best investment for the future of their club.

I strongly encourage all bodies and individuals who have an interest in the future of cricket to support this strategy.

We need your help, to turn this strategy into effective action.



**Mike Gatting OBE**  
ECB Managing Director Cricket Partnerships

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite record numbers of juniors coming into the game, club cricket is facing a series of social, economic and environmental challenges.

### A comprehensive review of the club game has highlighted the following issues:

- Inability of many clubs to make long-term plans for a sustainable future
- Difficulty of recruiting and retaining adult players, members and volunteers
- Lack of growth due to poor access to, and quality of, club facilities
- Growing risk to many clubs' security of tenure
- Static or falling club income streams
- Ineffective use of volunteers' time due to unnecessary bureaucracy
- Increasing cost and time spent travelling to and from fixtures
- Damaging effects of rising temperatures and increased rainfall due to climate change.

In response, and following widespread consultation, the ECB has developed the National Club Strategy. This strategy provides a framework from which all ECB-affiliated clubs can plan for a sustainable future. It will remain central to all areas of club cricket for at least the next five years.

If the ECB is to be successful in “inspiring the nation to choose cricket” then clubs must have the will to invest time, energy and resource in order to turn this strategy into action.

The ECB's Cricket Partnerships team is responsible for implementing this strategy. They will liaise closely with clubs, providing support where it is most needed, in the four key areas of People, Places, Playing and Policy.

**The ECB People team** will support, develop and reward those who encourage participation and provide accessible, affordable, high-quality training and membership services.

**The ECB Places team** will concentrate on the facilities that clubs and communities need. It will encourage community partnerships and self-funded projects, while advising on issues such as security of tenure, saving money, generating income and managing resources.

**The ECB Playing Team** will encourage the development of appropriate, innovative competitions. It will also focus on recruiting lapsed players, as well as retaining current players by increasing the levels of satisfaction felt by all.

**The ECB Policy Team** will help clubs and County Boards to organise and govern themselves better and as a result, enable clubs to gain Clubmark accreditation. It will also reduce the level of bureaucracy clubs face.

All four teams will keep in close contact with the 39 County Cricket Boards (CCBs) and try to ensure

that there is no duplication of effort. Associated leagues, partners and other stakeholders will also be involved.

### With committed club support, we believe that this strategy can provide the following:

- Access to more and better facilities, both indoors and outdoors
- Support to increase recruitment and retention of players, members and volunteers and a reduction in bureaucracy to make better use of their time
- Better fixture management that reduces unnecessary travel
- Support to improve security of tenure
- Guidance on how to improve financial management, including effective fundraising, how to save money and how to reduce operating costs
- Advice to enable clubs to plan how they will address future environmental issues.

A list of benefits are shown on Page 33.



# INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL CLUB STRATEGY



The ECB is the National Governing Body (NGB) for cricket in England and Wales and was established on 1st January 1997. The ECB's role is to set policy, create plans of action, and develop products and services that enhance the game.

The National Club Strategy is based on thorough research and builds upon the ECB's current national strategy; Grounds to Play (2010 - 2013).

## Accessibility

The ECB is committed to widening the game's appeal by creating a fun and safe environment, ensuring opportunities within the game are open and accessible to all, regardless of background. This strategy has been produced in line with that commitment and the ECB, in all its activities, is fully committed to the principles of equality of opportunity in cricket in England and Wales. This strategy also demonstrates our passion to welcome as many people as possible into the game.

## Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to support cricket clubs to take action to meet the changing demands and challenges of club cricket in England and Wales. It is intended that clubs will translate the strategy into effective action, relevant to the specific issues facing their own

clubs. The ECB expects that through sharing knowledge, spreading best practice and providing accessible resources, clubs will succeed in building a sustainable future.

## Target Audience

**The target audience for the strategy is wide but can broadly be divided into the following categories:**

- All affiliated cricket clubs in England and Wales
- Cricket's internal networks including CCBs, Leagues and the ECB
- Cricket's external stakeholders, including Sport England, Sport Wales and associated networks.

# 01 THE CURRENT STATE OF CLUB CRICKET



## THE CURRENT STATE OF CLUB CRICKET

Cricket's appeal places it at the heart of many local communities, large and small. Cricket clubs act as invaluable places for people to play competitive cricket, enjoy their leisure time and congregate with friends and family.

### A cricket club is defined as a body which:

- Is formed by its own members, governed by an agreed constitution and/or rules, and is initially funded by its members (this refers to both a limited company and an unincorporated association)
- Has a dedicated bank account
- Includes at least one junior or senior team, which plays fixtures within the "Spirit of Cricket", in accordance with the Laws of the Game
- Is set up to encourage all members of the local community to play cricket and interact socially with each other.

The network of cricket clubs across England and Wales covers a range of categories including: single-team clubs, senior clubs and clubs with a junior section and/or those clubs working with specific groups in the community. The ECB recognises the importance of each of these clubs and the role they play in cricket.

Clubs become affiliated to the ECB through their respective County Cricket Boards (CCBs). Each club is either directly affiliated to its relevant CCB or to its relevant league, which in turn will be affiliated to the local CCB.

Affiliation acts as the entry point into the cricket family. It is the process that pulls much of the fabric of the club game together. Therefore, it is the ECB's aim that all cricket clubs across England and Wales become a part of this cricket family and are appropriately equipped to ensure the game can be sustained and continue to grow.





# THE CURRENT STATE OF CLUB CRICKET

continued...

## Purpose

The majority of cricket clubs in England and Wales participate in league cricket. Leagues form the backbone of club cricket; they contain an invaluable wealth of knowledge, talent and experience. Working collaboratively with CCBs will strengthen league cricket and help sustain and develop club cricket moving forward.

but the most notable recent success has been the increase in the number of young players. Playing facilities, especially the quality of pitches, have also improved recently.

As of November 2011, there were 26 Premier Leagues operating in England and Wales. Further leagues may receive Premier League accreditation in due course.

In 1997 the ECB introduced Premier Leagues, as part of its Raising the Standard strategy. The intention was to help bridge the gap between club cricket and the First Class game. The standard of play quickly improved





# 02 THE CHALLENGES FACING CLUB CRICKET



## THE CHALLENGES FACING CLUB CRICKET

Since its inception, the ECB has been committed to “inspiring the nation to choose cricket”. The success in developing junior club cricket reflects this firm commitment.

There are currently more junior club sections and more junior club players than have ever been recorded before. There has also been rapid and encouraging recent expansion in other areas of club cricket. However, it cannot be denied that cricket clubs are facing a series of challenges.

ECB research shows that without direct intervention, adult participation in club cricket is in decline. There are specific concerns regarding the 16-22 and 25-35 year-old age groups. Club cricket is facing an aging stock of facilities, people and playing formats.

Following a comprehensive review of the club game, the ECB has identified a series of challenges. These can be split into three categories:

**Social** – referring to club players, members and volunteers,  
**Economic** – referring to club finances,  
**Environment** – referring to club facilities.

### Social

#### Club players, members and volunteers:

- Inability of many clubs to make long-term plans for a sustainable future
- Difficulty of recruiting and retaining adult players, members and volunteers
- Ineffective use of volunteers’ time due to unnecessary bureaucracy
- Increasing cost and time spent travelling to and from fixtures.

### Economic

#### Club finances:

- Growing risk to many clubs’ security of tenure
- Club income streams are static making it hard for clubs to proactively plan for the future
- Club operating costs are rising, while income from fundraising is decreasing.

### Environment

#### Club facilities:

- Lack of overall growth due to poor access to and quality of club facilities
- Damaging effects of rising temperatures and increased rainfall due to climate change.

The challenges above illustrate the need for the ECB to set out a clear agenda for the future of club cricket. This strategy is the ECB’s response to this need.

The overall aim of the strategy is to ensure that the ECB and its partners work in tandem to support clubs. The strategy intends to service the needs of the club game in the short, medium and long-term, given available resources.



# 03 USING THE STRATEGY TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR CLUB CRICKET



# 03

## USING THE STRATEGY TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR CLUB CRICKET

The ECB's aim is that all cricket clubs in England and Wales become affiliated and have access to this strategy and the services it promotes. It is through working in line with this strategy that the ECB believes cricket clubs can grow in the modern environment.

**How to grow in a sustainable manner**

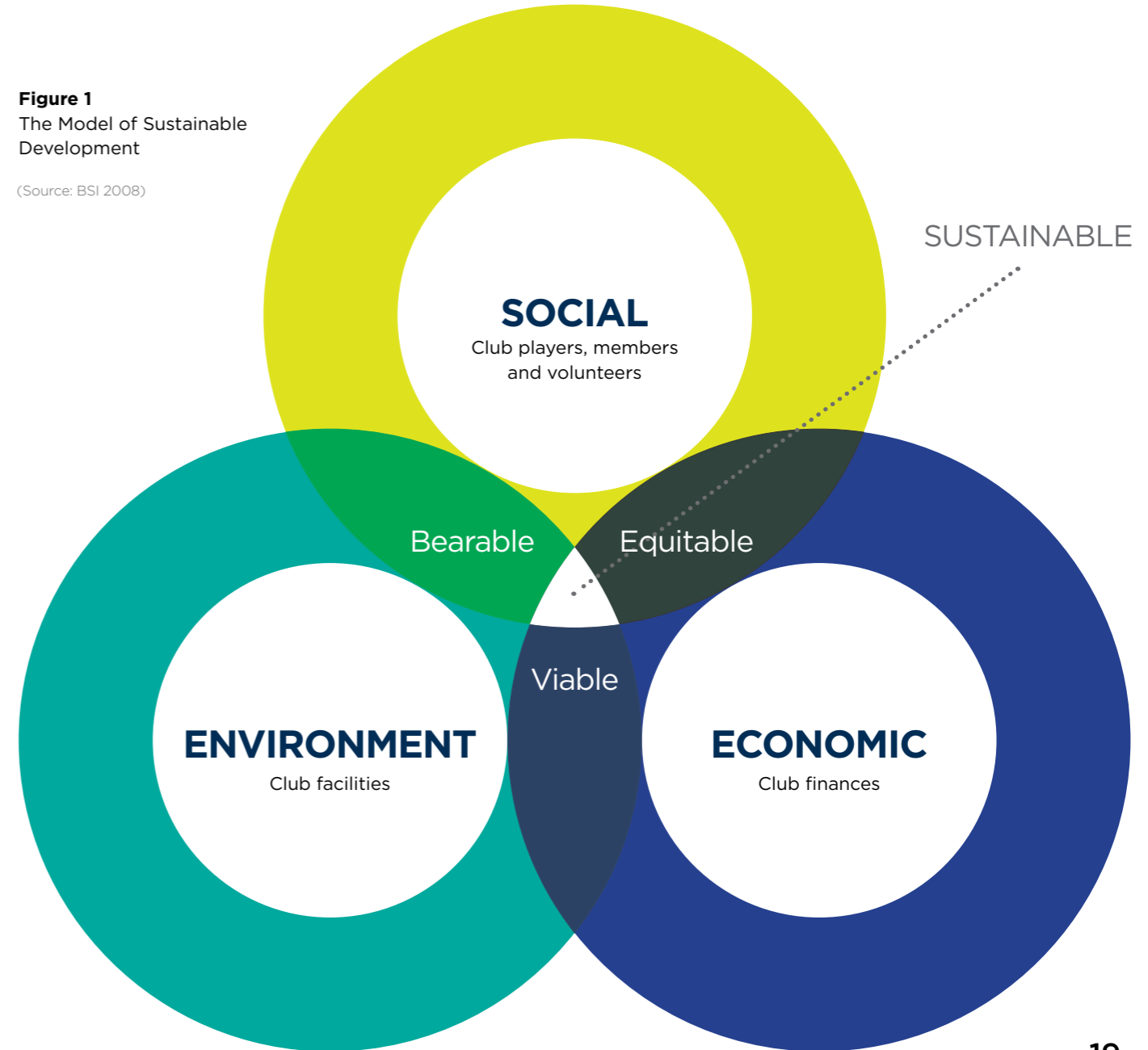
Sustainability can be defined as the "capacity to endure". In order to achieve sustainability, an equal balance of activity, projects and resources must be put into the social, economic and environmental elements of any cricket club.

The diagrams opposite depict the relationship between the Environment (relating to external conditions or surroundings), Economics (affecting the material resources or welfare) and Society (the totality of social relationships).

The ECB intends to use this model to challenge clubs to identify key gaps in planning and resource, so that they can create a balanced development programme.

**Figure 1**  
The Model of Sustainable Development

(Source: BSI 2008)





## USING THE STRATEGY TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR CLUB CRICKET

continued...

### How clubs can use the strategy to encourage sustainability

It is expected that cricket clubs, including non-playing members and spectators, will play their role in delivering the strategy by striving to create a culture that embraces change, advocates best practice and understands that people are the most important asset of a cricket club.

The ECB wants clubs to use the strategy to solve problems that are relevant to you. By utilising this strategy at your club, we believe you will inspire your community to “choose club cricket”.

#### Cricket clubs that achieve sustainability will have:

- Improved facilities on and off the field
- Recruited, retained and rewarded volunteers
- Recruited and retained players
- Increased playing, social and family membership numbers
- Made best use of their members' skills, knowledge and attributes
- Generated more income
- Accessed greater resources from within their local community (e.g. people skills, time, advice, expertise, materials, products, funding)

- Created a “can do” philosophy
- Adapted to current issues that affect the club
- Planned effectively to mitigate any future risks.

### How County Cricket Board chairmen can use the strategy to encourage sustainability

In order to maximise the effectiveness of the strategy and to help clubs secure their own future, we encourage CCB chairmen and CCB leadership to:

- Make the strategy a regular agenda item
- Request progress reports on the strategy from CCB executives.

### How County Cricket Board executives can use the strategy to encourage sustainability

Given that the ECB now makes resources available to clubs based on specific outcomes – such as involving more women in club cricket – CCBs are encouraged to agree priority lists. As a result, the ECB strongly recommends that CCB executives encourage non-executive CCB leaders to prioritise this strategy.

The ECB understands that the pressures placed upon CCB executives are considerable and that CCB leadership groups, clubs and other stakeholders often demand more time from you than you have available. We hope that the rewards of being part of this great game continue to make it an experience you value.



# 04 SUPPORT YOU CAN ACCESS TO HELP YOUR CLUB TURN THE STRATEGY INTO ACTION

## 04

# THE SUPPORT YOU CAN ACCESS TO HELP YOUR CLUB TURN THE STRATEGY INTO ACTION

## National Support

The ECB's 'Cricket Partnerships' team is responsible for delivering the strategy. The team is divided into four units: People, Places, Playing and Policy. Each unit is charged with developing future strategy and policy, responding to current priorities and trends, and protecting and nurturing the core values of club cricket.

## ECB People Team

### Guiding principles

Support, develop and reward the skills required to grow and sustain participation. Provide easy access to affordable, high-quality training and support. Ensure people are at the heart of maintaining the spirit of cricket and providing a fun, open, fair and accessible game.

### In practice the team will:

- Support, educate, develop and reward the skills of coaches, officials and volunteers, all of whom are vital in inspiring, sustaining and growing participation

- Support the Association of Cricket Officials (ACO) and the Coaches Association (CA) to grow their membership, while ensuring that member benefits meet member needs
- Provide easy access to high-quality training, services and support, maximising the use of technology in order to make things easier, better and cheaper
- Meet the needs of club cricket by providing appropriate training courses for relevant people at convenient times and locations
- Ensure that all training and investment meets the needs of club members and volunteers, providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to promote an inclusive and welcoming club environment.

## ECB Places Team

### Guiding principles

Develop accessible, high quality and innovative facilities, which inspire the nation to choose cricket. Create a culture of sustainable development, which will leave a legacy for generations to come.

### In practice the team will:

- Design and promote a sustainable cricket environment
- Support and resource the development of high-quality facilities
- Design and develop investment programmes that respond to the needs of club cricket
- Design and resource a toolkit to enhance the support offered to independent projects
- Provide support and guidance to the cricket network on how to save money
- Improve access to opportunities that encourage income generation

- Give guidance on how to generate additional income
- Invest in new playing facilities to drive the growth of the game
- Ensure all advice is “people focused” and delivers improvements for all
- Ensure that all actions positively support accessibility and create a welcoming environment for all.





# THE SUPPORT YOU CAN ACCESS TO HELP YOUR CLUB TURN THE STRATEGY INTO ACTION

continued...

## ECB Playing Team

### Guiding principles

Develop appropriate, innovative competitions. Develop a clear player pathway. Improve the experience for existing players in order to help recruit new and lapsed players, as well as to help retain players between the critical ages of 16-22 and 25-35 years old.

### In practice the team will:

- Develop, establish and support a consistent approach to identifying and developing talented young players, which will link directly to the England Development Programme
- Ensure that a seamless player pathway exists, which lays out opportunities from an introduction to cricket right through to lifelong participation
- Help sustain and grow participation by offering more opportunities for more people to play meaningful cricket
- Work with technology providers to enhance the experience of cricket for all
- Improve player behaviour
- Ensure that cricket, at every level, represents the wider community in England and Wales
- Target community groups that are under represented.

# THE SUPPORT YOU CAN ACCESS TO HELP YOUR CLUB TURN THE STRATEGY INTO ACTION

continued...

## ECB Policy Team

### Guiding principles

Modernise the game through accountable and transparent corporate governance and compliance with core policies and legislation.

### In practice the team will:

- Ensure the game remains safe, fun and child-friendly
- Ensure the game is proactively taking steps to encourage all members of the community to get involved in club cricket
- Establish a coherent approach to club cricket
- Establish local partnerships that can support the delivery of the strategy
- Encourage good governance, best practice and legal compliance.



## How you can access key information from the ECB

The ECB supports the promotion of club cricket through its extensive contact database of print, broadcast and online media. We regularly issue updates and press releases on the club game to the media.

The ECB website ([www.ecb.co.uk](http://www.ecb.co.uk)) provides coverage of club cricket. In addition, key ECB publications, such as the ECB Annual Report, England and Wales Cricket Trust Report, and the ECB International Match Programmes, provide a further opportunity to highlight positive developments within the club game.

Investment into a new cricket portal ([www.play-cricket.com](http://www.play-cricket.com)) has also been approved. It will provide a range of functions, which will assist in the reduction of bureaucracy:

- It will act as the home for non First Class cricket
- It will log club and recreational fixtures, results and statistics.

## County support

The ECB invests time and resources into providing CCBs with regular updates on national strategic plans and current programmes. The majority of discussions are focused on enhancing the performance of, and resource allocation, within CCBs.

It is at this local level that cricket clubs will engage face-to-face with the support services and products the ECB offers.

On occasion, when dealing with specialist areas (e.g. data protection, facilities planning) ECB staff may have a direct relationship with cricket clubs and other customers, below the CCB level.

The make-up of each CCB is unique but the support networks available to cricket clubs may include:

- ECB Head Office and central services
- League and competition structures
- The Club Cricket Conference, League Cricket Conference and Midlands Club Cricket Conference
- District Development Groups
- County Groundsmanship Association
- Coaches Association

- Association of Cricket Officials
- Women's and Girls' Associations, Committees or networks
- Disability Groups or networks
- County and local bespoke workshops
- Reward and recognition events
- One-to-one meetings with CCB Officers/Officials
- Volunteer coordinators.



# 05 BENEFITS OF UTILISING THE STRATEGY





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## BENEFITS OF USING THE STRATEGY

### Benefits for clubs

Clubs that successfully use the strategy will ensure their long-term sustainability. The strategy will help clubs inspire more people in their communities to choose cricket and create a vibrant, socially inclusive club, which may act as a reward for all the hard work and dedication.

Clubs should see the following benefits:

#### Social benefits

##### Club players, members and volunteers

- Increased retention of players
- Increased ability to attract new players
- Increased retention of volunteers
- Increased ability to attract new volunteers
- Reduction in bureaucracy and administration for volunteers

#### Economic benefits

##### Club finances

- Improved security of tenure
- Quality financial management advice (bank accounts, cash flow, budgeting, VAT, tax)
- Advice on how to generate and increase income, including:
  - Fundraising
  - Saving money
  - Independent schemes
  - Grant aid
  - Interest-free loans
  - Sponsorship

- Reduction in travel costs
- Informed advice on how to ensure clubs are getting the best deals on utility bills, insurance costs and fuel bills
- Support for clubs to produce annual action plans

#### Environmental benefits

##### Club facilities

- Access to more and better indoor and outdoor facilities
- Support for clubs to produce their own environmental policies
- Informed advice on how to manage energy and water use and consumption
- Informed advice on how to prepare for changing climate patterns

### Benefits for CCB Chairmen

Successful delivery of the strategy will:

- Ensure more clubs within your boundaries become vibrant and sustainable
- Ensure that those clubs have a closer relationship with their CCB.

### Benefits for CCB Executives

Successful delivery of the strategy will:

- Motivate clubs to deliver outstanding results on behalf of the CCB
- Encourage clubs to adopt other initiatives proposed by the CCB.

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# 06 IN CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE SHAPE OF CLUB CRICKET

## IN CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE SHAPE OF CLUB CRICKET

### The strategy sets out to:

- Ensure that all ECB affiliated clubs have the opportunity to access a high-quality, consistent package of support and services
- Recognise that clubs are vital as part of the social, economic and environmental fabric of their surrounding cities, towns and villages.

Cricket clubs are often at the very centre of local communities. Clubs are not only invaluable places for people to play competitive cricket, but serve as community hubs for people to enjoy their leisure time and congregate with friends and family. Through implementing this strategy, the ECB expects these clubs to secure their own sustainable future.



### CRICKET CLUBS

Cricket clubs that are truly sustainable are likely to have:

- Improved facilities on and off the field
- Successfully recruited and retained volunteers and players
- Increased and sustained playing, social and family membership numbers
- Made best use of members' skills, knowledge and attributes
- Generated more income
- Accessed greater resources from within their local community
- Adopted a "can do" philosophy
- Adapted to current issues that affect the club
- Planned effectively to mitigate future risk.

The current financial climate is challenging, therefore, cricket club committees must have a mixture of people with key skills in order to proactively plan for the future. These valuable individuals should communicate regularly with, and utilise the available advice and support from, the ECB, CCBS, Leagues, communities and other important stakeholders.



### LEAGUES

It is an ECB aim that all cricket leagues will embrace this strategy. They will be proactive in helping create and promote action plans formulated with their respective CCBs.



### COUNTY CRICKET BOARDS

Each CCB, in consultation with their local leagues, will be responsible for formulating their own plan. It will be based on agreed outcomes, which will enable a successful delivery of the strategy at a local level. Good communication and a solid agreement with the local leagues will be an important factor in successfully delivering these outcomes.



### ECB

The ECB will continue to offer dedicated support to all CCBs in order to help clubs fulfil their potential. The ECB will provide CCBs, clubs and leagues with innovative solutions, resources and opportunities to respond to the challenges they face. Regular face-to-face communication and the use of modern technology will be important components in achieving success. The use of modern technology will be important components to embrace to enable success to be achieved.

#### Caveat

The delivery across England and Wales of the action plans outlined in the strategy is reliant on available resources and capacity. All information presented in the strategy is correct as at May 2012. ECB 2012 ©

# APPENDIX

## Appendix 1

Research

## Appendix 2

Key Partners

## Appendix 3

ECB - History of Club Development

## Appendix 4

Club Statistics



## APPENDIX 1

### Research

To underpin this strategy and to understand the current club cricket landscape, the ECB conducted comprehensive research into the club game between 2009 and 2011. The research included consultation with over 2,500 club members and volunteers as well as more than 30 individual interviews.

The headline findings from the research clearly acknowledge the varied and diverse communities and circumstances in which cricket clubs function on a day-to-day basis. Each highlights a challenge that the club game must acknowledge and address.

## APPENDIX 2

### Key Partners

The ECB recognises the invaluable contribution made by its sports network and commercial partners to ensure the delivery of the strategy at a local level through capital and revenue investment.

The key external partners for the strategy are:

#### Sports network partners

- Local Authorities
- Sport England
- County Sports Partnerships
- Youth Sport Trust
- Skills Active
- Sport Wales
- Sport & Recreation Alliance
- Chance to Shine
- The Lord Taverners

#### Current commercial partners

- ASDA
- NatWest
- Sky Sports
- Kingfisher Beer

## APPENDIX 3

### ECB - History of Club Development

The National Club Strategy is part of the ECB's overall strategic planning process and its intention is to build upon the ECB's current national strategy; Grounds to Play (2010 - 2013).

ECB has produced three previous strategies:

- A Cricketing Future for all (2001-2004)
- Building Partnerships (2005-2009)
- Grounds to Play (2010-2013).

Each of these has recognised the need for an holistic approach with an emphasis on uniting the game. This included a greater concentration on areas such as women and girls, disability cricket and child protection. The ECB also recognised that it could not deliver these strategies alone but needed to build partnerships with a number of investors to continue the development of the game.

## APPENDIX 4

In summary, since 1997 the ECB has:

- United cricket's stakeholders under one banner strengthening their power and influence
- Created partnerships supported by a strong brand.

### Club Statistics

Club Status	Total Number
Affiliated Club	5484
Affiliated Club with Junior Section	3612