CCO Report for the CCB AGM on the 2020 – 2021 year

The last year has probably been the most challenging in our time as a consequence of the pandemic. The pandemic challenged the ECB in reacting and understanding to what the government were allowing or not. This guidance was digested and passed down to the Board, Leagues and clubs to understand and communicate out to volunteer club officials and players, who did everything in their power to implement what was being asked of them. Of course there have been grey areas and confusion at times, there has been bewilderment at some of the rules and regulations aligned to the guidance, but it has been a measure of what cricket did throughout the year to get cricket on that has again placed cricket in the prominent position of being a safe game to play.

All people associated with making cricket safe to return and maintaining such should be congratulated. It was no mean feat to understand the guidance and implement covid safe environments. Fundamentally this has helped people feel comfortable to return to playing weather this be in the national programmes of at the weekends.

Cornwall Cricket had developed it’s County Partnership plan, which had been signed off by the ECB prior to the pandemic. It was agreed that the plan remained relevant and as such we continue to work towards its success. We had confirmation from the ECB that ECB finance to Boards would continue for the immediate future. This showed that the ECB respected the importance of us as a Board and gave us the confidence to continue with key appointments, namely Kellie Williams, Women and Girls Development Officer and Chris Anderson, School and Club Development Officer Lead. For the first time the Cornwall Cricket Board has a workforce that can make a real positive impact on strategic areas of the game.

The volunteers within Cornwall Cricket Board and it’s Member Organisations need to congratulated for keeping going and developing the game through this period of time.

This return to play has had its positive impact, the Cornwall Cricket League in 2020 reacted to set up a league structure that was enjoyed by players and clubs alike, for some clubs it was a financial life-line, for others it was a relief that cricket could be played. Congratulations must go to the Cornwall Cricket League and Cornwall Cricket Women for their adaptability during the 2020 season. Most clubs have seen an enthusiasm to play, some clubs have seen enough players to set up additional teams, and we welcome back Foxhole CC, which is a great story.

There was less enthusiasm for youth cricket with fewer teams playing. Some clubs decided that cricket for 2020 was not for them due to an increased risk or the people who were involved were vulnerable. This was accepted and respected. Those that did play, played friendly fixtures which often lead to more cricket games being played which was excellent. Again, these fixtures went through the summer holidays and into September.

Club finances were a concern at the outset with the ECB terming it, ‘keeping the lights on’. Over the course of the summer of 2020 some, £500,000 was provided to clubs from Government funding, Sport England or the ECB. By the end of March Cornwall Cricket had received over £800,000 in financial support for ‘keeping the lights on’. It has been pleasing to see that this funding has gone to develop clubs, such as scoreboxes, clubhouses and the purchase of ancillary equipment. All of which will provide a better experience for the players and families taking part in cricket.

Clubs and their volunteers need a special mention for making sure their clubs were in a safe financial position to enter into 2021.

There have been some sad stories, we have lost Delabole CC and Troon CC due to lack of senior players just before the start of the 2021 season. A number of volunteers who were actively involved have found it hard to return, especially around the national programmes. In a number of areas clubs have had to start the recruitment of the National programmes again due to them not operating in 2020. Where numbers of participants were on the increase year on year, and so far in 2021 we have had over 1200 All Stars and Dynamos registrations.

There was limited School’s coaching in 2020 and so far in 2021 with schools going into lockdown or preventing visitors into their facilities. Cornwall Cricket remains committed to delivering in schools linked to the National Programmes, supporting the migration of players into the clubs. We are extremely grateful to Chance to Shine for their continued financial support. It remains our aim to deliver nearly 1400 hours of coaching in schools over the calendar year.

Women and Girls cricket is a key strategic aim for Cornwall Cricket. With the appointment of Kellie Williams, we have someone who is an excellent role model and advocate for this area of the game. Appointed on the 1st April 2020, Kellie entered in the beginning of the National Lockdown, tasked with raising the profile for the game, Kellie immediately set about a virtual cricket league which saw the social media likes increase by over 500 people. This bought communities together in an interesting and harmless way which at a time of no cricket brought cricket back to be the topic of conversation. We have seen youth cricket for girls increase, we now have four U11 girl’s teams and seven U13 girl’s teams, an increase in women softball too 20 clubs and a new Women’s Premier League and Development League to 9 clubs. The challenge is to keep building the opportunities for women and girls to play. For those clubs that have taken women and girl’s cricket on, have seen the benefits, on and off the field and this need to be replicated through many more clubs.

Cornwall Cricket is continually evolving, we have seen the start of the podcasts, where we have had over 1500 downloads over 10 episodes. We are currently in development of a new website. Clubs are taking on live streaming so people who can’t access by getting to the ground can. There is the paly cricket scoring app, where on week one of the 2021 season there were 40 matches that were scored live. This is only going to increase and we need clubs to embrace it to enable people who are not in the environment to be able to access their cricket.

There is of course more we can do and we aim to tackle these. We can all have some ownership of some, for example getting our players to sign up and register for Play-Cricket to enable live scoring for both junior and senior matches. We can get greater representation of our memberships on our committees and talk more to our memberships to understand what we are doing is right or needs changing. We need to build more opportunities for people to play, women and girls, people with disabilities. We need to get more coaches, officials and scorers qualified so we can facilitate more games. We need to give more confidence to people that they can play, coach, umpire and score especially the younger generation.

We need to makes sure our venues are covid safe and safe for people to take part in. Safeguarding continues to be vitally important and is everyone’s responsibility. The Board and Clubs need to make sure that their facilities and workforce are aware of and adhere to safeguarding practices so minors and adults feel safe in the cricket environment.

We need to keep building environments that encourage people to take up cricket and make it a game for them.

ENDS