

BRISTOL DOWNS LEAGUE

Downs Committee Meeting, Monday 27th January 2020, 2.00 p.m.

City Hall, College Green, BRISTOL BS1 5TR

Following on my Report dated 28th January 2019

1. Issues currently affecting the League
 - a. Reduction in number of Clubs
 - i. The current number of teams participating in the League this Season is 43 and although we welcomed 3 new Clubs to the League this season this represented a net reduction of 4 from last season
 - ii. The ideal number would be 48 or 56 which would provide an even number of teams in each of the 4 divisions
 - iii. The number of pitches available has also decreased although it would still be possible to cater for the higher number of teams if need arose.
 - iv. In bad weather we liaise with the Ranger and the ground staff to rotate the use of certain pitches
 - b. Number of Players wishing to commit to playing 11x11 football on a weekly basis
 - i. In common with many other adult sports, football is competing with many other aspects of life which are attracting people's time at the weekend, not least work, family commitments, spectator sport and weekend trips away
 - ii. Saturday is no longer etched in people's diaries for one particular activity and therefore each team require at least 25 players to enable it to turn out with 11-14 players for each match
 - iii. The League have a very healthy player base, currently 1,343, which equates to over 30 players per team
 - iv. The problem isn't obtaining players it is trying to persuade players to commit to turning out every Saturday. As advised, this is not an issue just associated with football
 - c. Facilities available
 - i. As you are aware The Downs League is unique in that all League matches and League cup matches are played at the same venue and most of the teams change together in the facilities provided
 - ii. Neither the pitches nor the changing rooms are in the best of condition, but this is outweighed by the history of the League and the convenience of knowing where you are playing each week
 - d. Small sided football
 - i. This has grown considerably over the last couple of decades and enables players to participate in 5/6/8 aside matches without a great deal of organisation and commitment.
 - ii. Matches are a lot shorter in time and are played in the main in the evenings, many of our own clubs/teams use small sided football venues for midweek training – the all-weather pitches are of course a bonus
 - iii. Although many players will play both 11x11 and small sided football there are number who will play just the small sided version and leave their Saturdays free

- e. Costs of operating a club
 - i. Sponsorship for Grass Roots football is minimal and usually restricted to shirt sponsorship and perhaps sausages and chips in the pub after the match
 - ii. Although the costs associated with football at this level are not huge the recent increases in operating a Club have certainly had an affect on many Clubs
- f. Volunteers willing to assist in the running of the League and Clubs
 - i. Volunteers are essential and although many established clubs have a good number of Officers assisting with its operation many smaller/newer clubs often struggle to attract volunteers to fill the roles required
 - ii. The League have welcomed 2 new Officers this season both of whom have brought down the average age of the committee, we continue to look for enthusiastic volunteers to assist with the running of the League – there are currently in excess of 12 members on our Management Committee which enables the League to operate smoothly.
 - iii. 2 of the New Clubs are run by their current players which is a very positive situation

2. The future of 11x11 football (updated from last year): -

- a. I am confident that given the right facilities adult football will continue to prove a popular activity on the Downs on a Saturday
- b. The purpose of the Downs League is to provide an appropriate framework for participation in amateur football – over 1,300 players are registered with the League and almost a half of those are involved each weekend
- c. The Downs League is well administered; the monthly meetings which involve all the participating clubs and the fact they all play at the same venue makes communication extremely good
- d. We have about 30 Referees associated with the League and have the highest allocation of Referees per match of all Saturday Leagues in Bristol
- e. Durdham Downs is a wonderful facility for Bristol and it is good to see it being used for so many different events throughout the year and the League is privileged to be a party to this
- f. The League's Management Committee continue to look at ways to enhance the League and adapt to the many changes, which involves regular dialogue with the Gloucestershire Football Association.

I would personally like to thank the Committee for their interest in the League and for maintaining dialogue with us

Owen Dow

Hon Gen Sec (Bristol Downs League)

GFA Councillor