LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A STRONGER FUTURE
2019/2020 IN NUMBERS...

£72,000 WORTH OF GRANTS THAT NATIONAL ATHLETES BENEFITTED FROM

459 REGISTERED REFEREES

504 REGISTERED COACHES

8.4 HOW DELEGATES RATED OUR INAUGURAL CLUB CONFERENCE

134 NVL TEAMS

3,400 PLAYERS WHO TOOK PART IN VOLLEYBALL ENGLAND COMPETITIONS

700 THE NUMBER OF TEAMS PLAYING IN ENGLAND

3 FIVB BEACH WORLD TOUR MEDALS WON BY ENGLISH TEAMS

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OUR VISION: TO BE A SUSTAINABLE, SELF-SUFFICIENT ORGANISATION; MORE RELEVANT AND BETTER CONNECTED TO THE VOLLEYBALL COMMUNITY
CHAIR’S REPORT

Adam Walker provides an overview of Volleyball England’s achievements and evolving approach

Over the last two years my key messages have transitioned from repair and rebuild to stability and sustainability. Despite the very real challenges associated with ongoing reductions in Sport England funding we have, to a great extent, achieved this agenda.

Overwhelmingly, much of this success must be attributed to the Volleyball England Board and the Hub staff who have been relentless in their endeavours, never losing focus of the work that needs to be done. Particular thanks for this success must go to Janet Inman and Stewart Dunne, Volleyball England’s former CEO and COO who have now left to enjoy new challenges, as well as Sam Jamieson, now the Deputy CEO. Without their fantastic leadership the sport would not be in such a favourable position.

CHANGE
Looking to the future, our approach will change again. Working with our new CEO Sue Storey, our new focus will concentrate on the iterative development of the sport, ensuring that we have the relevant building blocks in place to bring in new participants, keep the ones we have and grow the opportunities for all those that want to play the sport, so that they enjoy their involvement and fulfil their aspirations.

To deliver the meaningful change we all desire will require a balance of patience, pragmatism and ambition. With very limited discretionary funds, we will continually have to innovate, finding new and creative ways to deliver. In addition, our future focus will have prioritisation at the heart of everything we do. Whilst some of our decisions will inevitably not be popular with everyone, we sincerely hope that our overall approach will be viewed as a positive one by the majority.

To aid this process we will continue to build the sport’s insight. The ongoing development and enhancement of VolleyZone, the online community portal that we launched last summer, has become one of Volleyball England’s cornerstones and as the platform develops further, the service we provide to our customers can be enhanced.

Controlling our own financial destiny will also be given even greater emphasis. Despite an incredibly cluttered and competitive market, we will continually work hard to diversify our funding and secure new income streams. Any success in this area allows us to develop more quickly and effectively. From an internal perspective we will continue to appraise the things we do, ensuring all our programmes, initiatives and competitions have long-term sustainability at the core of their design and delivery. Again, this may frustrate some, however, we hope it will be appreciated by most of the volleyball family.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS
Our Annual Report is the perfect vehicle for bringing together a year’s worth of work to help us to take stock, see the bigger picture and reflect on some of volleyball’s successes.

For example, after much hard work, in August, beach volleyball was confirmed for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. In October, England Girls made history by winning a silver medal at the NEVZA U17 Championships – a record finish for an England team in a NEVZA competition – while later that month, IBB Polonia London brought Champions League volleyball to England for the first time. And then, more recently, the Volleyball England Foundation marked its relaunch with a fresh new website in February.

For many of these achievements and much more, we owe our thanks to the army of volunteers – our grassroot heroes – that have made it possible.

As this report is being compiled, the country is dealing with unprecedented societal change triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. Time will tell what the overall impact will be on Volleyball England and the volleyball community, but rest assured we are rising to meet these challenges. When we emerge from this period of uncertainty, we will make sure we are ready to work with you all to achieve our collective ambition.

“OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS MY KEY MESSAGES HAVE TRANSITIONED FROM REPAIR AND REBUILD TO STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY.”

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Andres Hernandez
Independent Director

Brendan Fogarty
Non-Executive Director

Clare Francis
Vice-Chair

Freda Bussey MBE
Non-Executive Director

Ian Wall
Independent Director

Jefferson Williams
Non-Executive Director

Richard Harrison
Non-Executive Director

Seyram Atubra
Non-Executive Director

Simon Griffiths
Non-Executive Director

Credit: CEV
Credit: IBB Polonia London
Credit: Baltic Sports
Credit: Volleyball England
CEO REPORT

Together, the Hub team and community can achieve so much, says Sue Storey

I am honoured to contribute to my first Annual Report as Chief Executive of Volleyball England. When I joined in November, it was clear that Janet Inman and the team had put in a lot of hard work to get the sport to the position it is in now. During my first few months, some key themes have really stood out.

Support

I have been overwhelmed by the incredible support that has been given to me. The Hub team prove daily what a hardworking and committed group they are – it is great to be a part of a team that is driven to achieve the best for volleyball. The Board, and in particular our chairman Adam Walker, are a strong, professional and dedicated group who support but are not afraid to challenge what is being done. They too have big ambitions for the future. Finally, I have been able to meet many amazing volunteers, who are truly the backbone of this sport. Thank you for the great work you do. I will do everything I can to help you carry on doing what you do.

Enthusiasm

One of my favourite parts of this role has been seeing the passion that people have for volleyball. We know it is a sleeping giant in this country and it is great to see everyone’s hunger and desire to take on challenges, to make a difference and to share volleyball with as many people as possible.

Relationships

I strongly believe that growth will come about because of strong, sustainable relationships with people across the sport sector, and we are committed to creating these strong bonds through our values of being open, innovative, respectful, connected, and inclusive.

“It is great to be a part of a team that is driven to achieve the best for volleyball.”

Sue Storey pictured with Sue Sowden, Secretary of Newcastle Panthers VC.

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Sue Storey
Kevin Fletcher gives an update on Volleyball England’s finances

Volleyball England’s financial situation is changing for the better as we strive to become more sustainable. During the previous two years, our austerity measures and good financial management have made Volleyball England financially secure and have allowed us to build up some reserves. These can then be used to cover any unexpected financial situations. At the end of 2018/19, we reported an error in the way we had accounted for VAT to HMRC. During 2019/20, we have worked with HMRC to identify the problem and have since agreed the levels of under declaration for the previous three years. This has now been fully paid and no penalties have been imposed.

Our auditors instructed us to post these costs in the years they relate to and to change our opening reserves for 2019. For the financial year 2019/20 we generated a £114,062 surplus. Although a reduction in central funding had a significant impact, we have managed to cover this by re-profiling some Sport England underspend, together with new income streams and stringent cost controls.

Sport England agreed to our request to reprofile underspends from our grant income in years one and two (2017/18 and 2018/19) to support years three and four (2019/20 and 2020/21). These underspends have minimised the negative impact of the VAT under declaration on reserves carried forward into the 2020-21 financial year. A policy on Volleyball England’s reserves is currently being developed to ensure we can cover our liabilities should the worst happen.

NEW PEOPLE AND WAYS OF WORKING

The 2019/20 financial year has also seen a change of personnel in Volleyball England’s finance department. In November I joined Volleyball England on a part-time basis as the new Financial Consultant while Adam Freundlich started in March as our full-time Financial Assistant.

At the end of December, we moved onto a new financial system: Xero, which is much better suited to the requirements of Volleyball England. As well as being substantially cheaper to operate, Xero is a cloud-based system which is much simpler to use with improved security and disaster recovery. Another change to our processes has seen the creation of a Finance Sub Committee to speed up financial decisions. This committee has the authority to make specific finance decisions without waiting for Board approval.

Finally, the coronavirus has significantly disrupted the activity of Volleyball England and, while we continue to adapt our approach, it will be some time before we can measure its full impact. One measure we took to save costs was to furlough some members of staff during the period of downtime. As we strive to become more sustainable, we will meet whatever challenges lie ahead.

“OUR AUSTERITY MEASURES AND GOOD FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT HAVE MADE VOLLEYBALL ENGLAND FINANCIALLY SECURE”

The HEVO Conference, which was previously free to attend, is now a paid-for event.

MANAGING THE MONEY

A breakdown of how Volleyball England has managed its finances in the last 12 months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where did the money come from?</th>
<th>Where did the money go?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where did the money come from?</td>
<td>Operating Costs £224,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover 2018-2020</td>
<td>Salaries £462,757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport England Grants 19/20</td>
<td>Commercial Costs £1,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Income £22,005</td>
<td>Talent £258,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent £171,588</td>
<td>Technical Courses £25,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children &amp; Young People £8,598</td>
<td>Children &amp; Young People £46,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership £25,873</td>
<td>Competition &amp; Events £54,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma in Sporting Excellence £94,979</td>
<td>Diploma in Sporting Excellence £30,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition &amp; Events £152,948</td>
<td>Total £1,217,527</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The categorisation of income and expenses cannot directly be compared to previous years because of a change in the way figures are reported.

* This figure includes reprofiled underspends from 2017/18 and 2018/19
CORE MARKET REPORT

Rob Payne provides an overview of member products and services

Volleyball England’s core market encompasses the people who play, coach, officiate and volunteer in the sport. As an organisation, we aim to serve this dedicated cohort of people by continually evolving our products, methods, and services to meet their needs and the ever-changing landscape. Understanding our core market is more vital than ever, not only to ensure that the sport is built sustainably but also to develop our position as a valuable organisation to all.

TECHNOLOGY
One of the key changes for the core market this year has been the introduction of VolleyZone. The new membership portal operates on a more individualised basis and allows each person to take ownership of their account, the clubs they are part of, the teams they play in; and the events they enter. VolleyZone also aims to reduce the administrative burden on the volunteers that run the sport, from regional chairs to team secretaries. The system is designed to host all the data in a way that is easy to manage and quick to view.

“ONE OF THE KEY CHANGES FOR THE CORE MARKET THIS YEAR HAS BEEN THE INTRODUCTION OF VOLLEYZONE.”

Clearly over the last 12 months the launch of VolleyZone has not been smooth. There have been many issues facing members using the portal and we thank you for your patience and constructive feedback. All the feedback has been reviewed and we are in daily dialogue with the developers to improve the user experience. For the next season, two significant new elements will be added to VolleyZone: national squad events and education courses. Furthermore, there will be new ways to process bulk transactions such as multiple player, coach and referee registrations as well as event entries.

Moving forward we envisage integrating VolleyZone with regional and local leagues to reduce the administrative burden for the league providers, clubs, teams, and players too. This will provide us with a more in-depth understanding of the people that play our sport, thus providing a more tailored and fit for purpose service to those individuals.

Technology has also allowed us to enhance the service we provide to members through the introduction of live webinars. During the coronavirus pandemic, we utilised the Microsoft Teams platform to deliver a live webinar to share guidance on how to navigate through uncertain times. This proved a success with over 120 attendees. Hundreds of people also took the opportunity to re-watch the session by playing back a recording on YouTube. This method of communication will certainly become more prominent going forward.

2019 CLUB CONFERENCE
This year we focussed on applying feedback from the Annual Club Survey to launch a new event: the Club Conference. One of the key questions from the survey was: “how could Volleyball England support you as a club?” and five core themes were extracted from the responses: marketing, funding, facilities, juniors and websites. These themes then became five core themes were extracted from the responses: marketing, funding, facilities, juniors and websites. These themes then became prominent going forward.

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VOLLEY ZONE will provide us with a more in-depth understanding of the people that play our sport

MEMBERSHIP
In 2019/20, there were 343 clubs that chose to affiliate to Volleyball England, a reduction of 39 from the previous year. Research will be conducted into why those clubs chose not to affiliate this year to understand trends and identify ways of adding more value to the membership offer. On a positive note, there were 27 new clubs that affiliated to Volleyball England – highlighting a new cohort of clubs that want to benefit from club development support and entry into national level competitions. Our focus for 2020/21 is to continue to support clubs to become more sustainable and reduce the number that fold. Hub research has also identified that there are almost 700 teams playing volleyball in 39 leagues in England. Looking at individual memberships, there was also a drop in coach registrations from 697 in 2017/18 to 504 this year. We know some of this is down to the reduction in free coach registrations from last year, when the ‘Level 1 Introduction to Coaching’ course was re-launched. Referee registrations also dropped from 630 in 2017/18 to 459. We appreciate that reductions in the number of registered clubs, coaches and referees paint quite a negative picture. We share your desire to see these numbers rise and know that we need to continually adapt to meet the needs of members so that we demonstrate value for money.

ANNUAL CLUB SURVEY
In 2019, we once again conducted a Club Survey, which was sent to all the secretaries of affiliated clubs. The survey aimed to research their perceptions of Volleyball England, identify member benefits they valued the most and areas in which more support was required.

We were pleased to see the response rate was higher than the previous year (up to 39% from 25%) and that members felt the service they received from Volleyball England was improving (from 5.59 to 6.47 out of 10). The data told us that respondents were most satisfied with our advice on: safeguarding; communications with clubs and leagues; and competitions, which received the highest levels of satisfaction. On the other hand, linking your club to partners, grassroots development and developing volunteers gained the lowest. This insight will help to shape the development of a new strategy, which will very much centre around developing clubs and reaching out to the grassroots level of the sport.

SAFEGUARDING
Safeguarding continues to be an area in which the membership feels it receives good support from Volleyball England.

This year has again seen Volleyball England awarded a green rating for safeguarding by the Child Protection in Sport Unit of the NSPCC, highlighting us as a model of best practice. Clubs also completed 130 new DBS checks, which are provided free of charge by Volleyball England and save clubs over £10 per check. Five clubs also benefitted from specialised safeguarding support from trained Hub staff when a formal investigation was required.

Despite this, the number of applications did not drop, demonstrating the value for money that the programme offers. Nine new universities also joined which means new institutions and cohorts of students were engaged in volleyball.

Furthermore, new equipment was installed in six universities to offer 4v4 volleyball and accommodate larger student audiences.

The training for the 70 new volunteers in the sport once again proved to be a massive success. Participants scored an overall rating of 8.53 out of 10 with 100% of the HEVOs saying they would recommend the conference to others.

Once sustainability is achieved within the programme, the next steps are to build the relationship between the HEVO programme and the club network. Whilst there are already strong links in pockets across the country, the more than 4,000 students and 70 HEVOs each year could provide a significant boost to the volleyball community in the future.

COURSES
Volleyball England has facilitated 32 courses this year. These have seen; 202 learners engage in refereeing courses, 49 teachers trained in delivering volleyball, and 221 learners take on coaching qualifications. These figures would have been higher had we not been forced to cancel some courses as a result of the coronavirus.
We continue to adapt the national team programmes to ensure we provide the opportunity for talented athletes to progress and develop through the England Talent Pathway. We know that successful pathways require expert coaching, leadership, and support staff all working towards a shared vision.

While the training base at the National Volleyball Centre means we can provide regular camps for the best athletes to train together, the Head Coaches were keen to expand the volleyball and beach volleyball competition programmes and to increase the number of training hours. Consequently, the volleyball “High Peaks” camp made a much-requested return. The U17 Girls accepted an invitation to Sardinia, Italy, in June to compete in the Sardegna Volleyball Challenge and came face-to-face with the Russian team that went on to win bronze at the U16 European Championship weeks later. To gain valuable match practice, the U17 boys entered the 2019 NEVZA U17 competition weeks later. To gain competition experience, the U17 boys entered the NEVZA U17 competition weeks later.

**INDOOR COMPETITIONS**

The North European Volleyball Zonal Association (NEVZA) was the main competitive focus for the England youth squads. The Girls made history as they won a silver medal at the U17 Championships - a record finish for an England team in a NEVZA competition. In a closely contested pool with Sweden and Denmark, England progressed to the semi-final where a fantastic performance saw the England Girls overcome the Faroe Islands two sets to one. The final did not go the way England wanted against hosts Denmark. The Danes took the 1st set, but it is fair to say it didn’t do them justice. In the pool stages, they were faced with a tough test against Denmark and came out on the wrong end of a five-setter. They also met eventual champions Finland that England failed to notch a set and now know they can win more matches at this level. This is the challenge for Head Coach Keith Trenam and his new coaching team. England Senior Teams made a welcome return on the international stage by entering the Novotel Cup to face Iceland, Scotland, and hosts Luxembourg. Apart from captain Meg Viggars, every one of Head Coach Maria Bertelli’s team gained their first international cap and such a young side did well to win silver. It was a silver medal too for Simon Loftus’ team – a blend of home-based youth players and experienced overseas professionals.

**BEACH VOLLEYBALL**

It was a special summer for English beach volleyball as England teams won three FIVB World Tour medals. After Ellie Austin and Ayesha Evans ended England’s 20-year wait for a World Tour medal in June, England’s beach stars added two more World Tour medals in Rwanda in July. These medals...
IT was a special summer for Joaquin Bello. FIVB World Tour medals.

England teams won three English beach volleyball as Great Britain Women’s Team played at the 2019 European Championships in Budapest. Although, on the surface, the results were disappointing, it was a necessary step for the long-term development in re-establishing Great Britain’s sitting volleyball programmes at European and world level. The team’s preparation from January 2019 included 36 training sessions and playing at: the Stavanger Sit Cup (March 2019), the Sitting Volleyball Cup (April 2019) and the Dutch Cup (June 2019). The competitions allowed Head Coach Ian Legrand to identify the gaps between GB’s performance level and what is required to compete with the top teams at the European and World Championships.

The Great Britain Men restarted training in September after a two-year break with the aim of competing at the European “B” Championship. Between September and February, the programme established momentum and saw training take place 11 times before the lockdown. The team are currently working on their individual conditioning in preparation for the restarting of training and the European “B” Championship, which is due to be rescheduled in late 2020.

Volleyball Futures is the ideal stepping stone for those looking to join the England Talent Pathway. England U16’s heading to Italy for the Acqua Pradis Winter Cup.

England Men’s team was pipped by Scotland in the golden set to finish with a silver. Coaches Luis Bello and Matt Rhymey have worked tirelessly to build the junior programme with 75 young athletes committed to beach volleyball.

SITTING VOLLEYBALL

After a five-year absence, Great Britain Women’s Team played at the 2019 European Championships in Tylösand, Sweden. As English beach volleyball continues its rise, Ellie Austin and Katie Keefe were crowned champions in the Women’s U19 competition. rise, Ellie Austin and Katie Keefe were crowned champions in the Women’s U19 competition. In August, England Women’s teams dominated the Home Nations U18 Beach Volleyball Championships in Tyvöönsaari, Finland. As English beach volleyball continues its rise, Ellie Austin and Katie Keefe were crowned champions in the Women’s U19 competition. rise, Ellie Austin and Katie Keefe were crowned champions in the Women’s U19 competition.

England put in a superb performance to come home with a gold and a bronze from the NEVZA Beach Volleyball Championships in Tylösand, Sweden. As English beach volleyball continues its rise, Ellie Austin and Katie Keefe were crowned champions in the Women’s U19 competition, while Isabelle Tucker and Lisa Cameviari landed a brilliant bronze in the U17 tournament. In August, England Women’s teams dominated the Home Nations U18 Beach Volleyball Championships in Cardiff, taking all three podium places. A young England Men’s team was pipped by Scotland in the golden set to finish with a silver. Coaches Luis Bello and Matt Rhymey have worked tirelessly to build the junior programme with 75 young athletes committed to beach volleyball.

Volleyball Futures

Volleyball Futures aims to develop sound volleyball fundamentals in young players while also ensuring coaches and teachers understand the importance of those fundamentals and feel confident teaching the sport’s fundamentals. Volleyball Futures sets the groundwork for the England Talent Pathway. At the Volleyball Futures camp in October, 55 athletes and 15 coaches from eight regions responded to challenges set by guest expert Steve McKewen from Leeds Beckett University to improve their balance, coordination, ball tracking and movement skills. The coaches gained insight as to why these skills are fundamental for successful volleyball performance and took away lots of ideas and practices to try out in their clubs’ sessions.

VOLEY2S

VOLEY2S was created in response to requests from the Children and Young People Network to have appropriate volleyball competition for primary aged children. VOLLEY2S takes players from an easy to play catch and throw game through four developmental stages (red, amber, green, and gold) to play 2v2 volleyball. At each stage new movement and volleyball skills, tactical and problem-solving skills, and social skills are introduced. VOLLEY2S can be played on small courts, regardless of surface. VOLLEY2S can be played on small courts, regardless of surface. It can be played inside or outside between same sex or mixed teams. It is versatile, accessible, emphasising fun, and has low equipment and space requirements making VOLLEY2S an ideal stepping stone for introducing youngsters to volleyball.

Our VOLLEY2S programme consists of a 105-page guide to teaching and coaching; a ‘Festival Pack’ that includes guidance on how to organise a competition; and the Primary Volleyball Award which is a face to face training course for teachers and coaches. The brand new VOLLEY2S Guide to Teaching and Coaching is one of the most comprehensive coaching resources ever produced by Volleyball England. An innovative approach to session planning means coaches and teachers have an endless supply of session plans to carry them through each season. Selecting from over 30 warmups, cool downs, and 60 volleyball development activities each with suggestions on how to adapt them, teachers and coaches are shown how to create unique sessions that meet the needs of their players. Included in the resource is a series of technical cards which illustrate the core volleyball skills and concepts alongside the main coaching points.

The handy VOLLEY2S Festival Pack contains everything needed to organise a successful VOLLEY2S competition.

VOLLEY2S has been put together by Nick Shaffer, Bertrand Olie and Gillian Harrison with the help of dozens of contributors from the Children and Young People Network, the PremierLeague4Sport activators who coach volleyball in schools across England, and volleyball coaches and teachers who took part in the Primary Volleyball Launch at the National Volleyball Centre in October.

SCHOOL GAMES

Over 17,500 schools take part in The School Games organised by the Youth Sport Trust (YST). Volleyball is a popular sport featuring in 30 out of 47 school games partnerships. Last summer, Volleyball England jumped at the chance to work with the YST to update the volleyball resources which are available to every school to help them prepare the children and young people to take part in the Games.


“IT WAS A SPECIAL SUMMER FOR ENGLISH BEACH VOLLEYBALL AS ENGLAND TEAMS WON THREE FIVB WORLD TOUR MEDALS.”

Volley2s is one of the most comprehensive coaching resources ever produced by Volleyball England.
CORONAVIRUS
The coronavirus pandemic quickly began to impact Volleyball England competitions from the second week of March. Within days of receiving emails from teams concerned about the virus, Volleyball England had issued a statement that allowed NVL teams to postpone matches where they felt it necessary, which was an unprecedented step. Just four days after that, we cancelled all Volleyball England activity until 30th May. Extensions to the cancellation followed.

These decisions were made in consultation with the Board, Senior Management Team, James Murphy, who is the lead for the Competitions Working Group, and Volleyball England’s Coordinators. Each decision was taken considering all the information we had at our disposal and, without doubt, it is a decision we would all make again – an extraordinary decision for extraordinary times. Personally, the decision to cancel all activity made me feel sick as we had put so much in to get to that point in the season. I have no doubt the decision did not sit easy with many members, but I am sure we all acknowledge it was the right one to make.

NVL
Some 134 teams took part in the NVL during the 2019-20 season, an increase of three on the previous season. In total we welcomed 15 new teams and saw 12 sides depart the league.

Before the coronavirus brought the Women’s Super League to a halt, Polonia SideOut London had already secured the league title – their first since 2010-11. In the Men’s Super League, IBB Polonia London were undefeated and within one win of clinching the title with four matches to play when all remaining matches in the season were cancelled.

Several teams had clinched their division title by the time that the coronavirus hit too, including: Leeds RGA Men (M1), Weymouth Beach Volleyball Club (M2S), Liverpool (M3N) and Coventry & Warwick Riga (M3C). However, it was the women’s teams that clinched titles in the most style – Coventry & Warwick Riga (W2N) and Urmston Grammar Volleyball (W3N) were unbeaten en route to claiming their titles. In addition, London Lions (WS), London Giants (W3SE) and Southampton Volleyball Club Women 1 (W3SW) all remained undefeated by the time the league was suspended. Although mathematically they had not yet clinched the title, they were on course to do so. The final standings were confirmed across the NVL by the Competitions Working Group, with unplayed matches being declared a draw. This resulted in the aforementioned teams clinching the respective titles in their leagues as well as Dorking Renaissance (W1); University of Nottingham (M2N); UK Armed Forces Men (M3S); and MK City (W3C).

CEV CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
IBB Polonia broke new ground as they became the first English team to play in the CEV Champions League. The Super League and NEVZA club champions took on Mladost Zagreb of Croatia in the first round in October 2019.

Having lost the 1st leg, IBB Polonia took on the Croatian champions at home at the Copper Box Arena. The home side were supported by over 1,000 fans and aided on court by the former world and Olympic champion, Brazilian legend Giba. Despite a heroic effort on court and an incredible spectacle, it wasn’t to be for IBB Polonia as they lost out to Mladost Zagreb. Despite being knocked out of the Champions League, IBB Polonia did progress to the last 16 of the CEV Cup against an old adversary in the form of Draisma Dynamo Apeldoorn. The team from the Netherlands had previously ended IBB Polonia’s run in the 2016-17 CEV Challenge Cup. Unfortunately, it was the same story as 2016-17 with Draisma taking both legs of the match to inflict another defeat on IBB Polonia. We have no doubt IBB Polonia will be back in European action in the future, and should they meet Draisma again, I am sure it will be a case of 3rd time lucky. IBB Polonia continue to lead the way for volleyball in England and they will no doubt be making the headlines again sometime soon.

BEACH VOLLEYBALL
UK Beach Tour (UKBT), the Volleyball England- approved beach tour event provider, delivered over 80 events to 1,200 players in what was another outstanding year. There were three Grand Slam
events and 10 event organisers covered locations as far and wide as Crystal Palace, Leyton, Richmond, Oxford, Bournemouth, Weymouth, Croyde, Cardiff, Brighten and Bridlington. Issa Batrane created history by not only taking home the title of UKBT champion but also completing the triple and winning all three UKBT Grand Slams in 2019, a truly remarkable achievement from Batrane. The partnership between Volleyball England and UKBT is an important one for Volleyball England. The structure the UKBT and all the beach event organisers bring to a beach tour is what Volleyball England was looking to achieve but didn’t have the resources on its own to deliver. The UKBT offers more events to a wider range of locations than the previous Volleyball England Beach Tour format used to. It has made a beach tour more accessible, more sustainable and UKBT should be praised for their efforts in making it happen. The beach tour provides a fantastic platform for players of all abilities to compete, and has an integral role to play in the development of English beach players. Volleyball England and the beach volleyball community need to support UKBT to ensure a beach tour in England continues, especially in light of the impact of coronavirus. 115 pairs took to the sand on Sandbanks beach for the BUCS Beach Volleyball Championships, demonstrating the strength of beach volleyball across the university sector. Northumbria University claimed the top prizes taking both the Men’s and Women’s Championship golds. The Northumbria pair were Kjos and Spragg, who denied Bournemouth University’s Batrane and Jones a hattrick of BUCS beach Volleyball Championships in both the Men’s and Women’s event.

SITTING VOLLEYBALL

The introduction of a new sitting volleyball player registration fee has impacted on the number of teams participating in the Grand Prix. While only one fewer team competed in the Grand Prix in 2019-20 compared to the 2018-19 season, we did see a dramatic reduction in the wildcard teams who had previously entered, with 2019-20 seeing no wildcard teams enter the Grand Prix. Just under 100 players took part in the Grand Prix, with only the finals left to play. The UKBT Grand Slams in 2019, a truly remarkable achievement from Batrane. Issa Batrane created history by not only taking home the title of UKBT champion but also completing the triple and winning all three UKBT Grand Slams in 2019, a truly remarkable achievement from Batrane. The partnership between Volleyball England and UKBT is an important one for Volleyball England. The structure the UKBT and all the beach event organisers bring to a beach tour is what Volleyball England was looking to achieve but didn’t have the resources on its own to deliver. The UKBT offers more events to a wider range of locations than the previous Volleyball England Beach Tour format used to. It has made a beach tour more accessible, more sustainable and UKBT should be praised for their efforts in making it happen. The beach tour provides a fantastic platform for players of all abilities to compete, and has an integral role to play in the development of English beach players. Volleyball England and the beach volleyball community need to support UKBT to ensure a beach tour in England continues, especially in light of the impact of coronavirus.

Almost 100 players paid to take part in Volleyball England sitting volleyball competitions this season.
January 2020 marked the start of a new focus for Volleyball England’s communications as content took over from marketing as the driving force behind a more member-centric approach.

As a result, more attention has shifted to Volleyball England’s own platforms – volleyballengland.org, social media and the Time Out newsletter – over external channels. This change has led to a greater focus on storytelling, through pictures, video and words, to help bring the community’s clubs and characters to life. It has also repositioned their role as a valuable source of information-sharing.

Our members are key to a more sustainable future for volleyball in this country and our communications must therefore be better aligned to their needs to deliver better value.

**FEEDBACK**

After joining Volleyball England in January, I reached out to collect as much feedback as I could on the organisation’s communications. One recurring message was that Volleyball England was not effective at communicating with individual members. A key stakeholder in one region explained they felt the onus was on them to monitor the website for major announcements, because we were not trying to extend the reach of these messages beyond our website or social media pages.

VolleyZone is allowing us to work smarter to send out more targeted emails on specific topics. For example, since the beginning of March, all regional chairs have received the latest coronavirus guidance to their inbox as it is issued. A balance is required to ensure people are not overloaded with information and, with the help of VolleyZone, we are working to ensure the right messages get to the right people.

**DIGITAL NEWSROOM**

To try to extend the reach of our communications, we have established Volleyball England’s own ‘digital newsroom’. As we command a large audience across our digital channels, we have the opportunity to become a publisher and to plan and regularly publish our own educational, informative and entertaining content to keep that audience engaged. Additionally, to further increase the size of that audience, we have rehosted the Volleyball England LinkedIn and Instagram pages after periods of inactivity.

Before the disruptive impact of the coronavirus, there were early signs that this approach was working too. In January and February 2020, pageviews for news items on volleyballengland.org were up 30% and 55%, respectively, when compared to the previous year. We hope this is a taste of things to come.

**VOLLEYBALL ENGLAND’S SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING**

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**VOLLEYBALL ENGLAND**

Our digital home – volleyballengland.org – is the go-to portal for anyone seeking information on the sport in this country and where the bulk of our activity has been focussed.

In the last financial year it has featured articles on: Richmond VC’s funding success; Joel Banks, the English head coach of the Finnish national team; and the story of how one of the country’s youngest affiliated clubs, Stafford Knights, was created. There have been updates on our international athletes, major announcements and extended articles providing more detail behind such decisions as the introduction of VolleyZone and new player registration fees. Some of these topics have been challenging to write about, but we are committed to being transparent.

We understand volleyballengland.org can be tricky to navigate at times – after all, it was built at a time when there was a bigger Hub team to manage it – and we are slowly working to improve the user experience.

**SOCIAL MEDIA, VIDEO & TIME OUT**

Across our social media channels we’ve seen an increase in our following and hope to see that continue as we look to increasingly treat them as publishing platforms in their own rights rather than as vehicles to share website articles.

While reading about volleyball is entertaining, if you can’t get to a match we know that nothing beats watching it. At the end of 2018/19 season the video live streaming production came in-house for Cup Finals and it was fantastic to see so many people tune in to watch – we racked up 10,000 views.

Finally, our monthly member newsletter, Time Out, is regularly sharing news to some 5,000 subscribers.

**CORONAVIRUS**

The coronavirus pandemic challenged Volleyball England’s communications and led us to adapt our approach as the situation evolved. We started by issuing guidance on small measures to minimise the risk of passing on the virus – and were featured on BBC Radio for it – and later released a series of unprecedented statements to cancel Volleyball England events. At that point, our communications became even more important as we tried to keep the community engaged, active and informed of the latest developments.

We issued advice to struggling clubs, tried to keep people moving through volleyball-inspired home workouts and social media campaigns (digginginthegarden and VolleyballRoundTheWorld) and organised our first-ever webinar. During a difficult period, I like to think we provided the guidance needed to bring the community through, as well as the light-hearted moments to bring it together.

**SUMMARY**

Recently we’ve started to see Volleyball England’s approach to communications change. We’re looking to add more value to our membership offer by better serving our members’ needs. With the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games around the corner, there are opportunities to be more ambitious, but we must first consolidate and build stronger foundations.

Metrics for our digital communications are now being recorded differently, which means that, come next year, we’ll be in better position to analyse the bigger picture and see if those early signs were proof of even better things to come. Before then, we are confident that members will start to see and experience these improvements for themselves.
Proudest achievements
Newcastle VC’s successful move to the Eagles Community Centre, home to the most successful team in British basketball history, as well as securing funding have been two of the region’s proudest moments. By moving to a new venue, the club has been allowed to grow and gain many more members playing volleyball. Instead of three teams, the club now has five. Add those squads together and there are more than 100 club members, which is double the size of the membership at the club’s former home, Newburn.

Durham University Men and Women’s side and Northumbria Men were also due to contest the BUCS finals before it was cancelled.

A resurgent North West junior programme has continued to grow across the region. The focus of both the boys and girls programme is to increase the engagement with regional clubs and to grow the number of clubs sending players to development sessions. The junior sessions have engaged with players from 14 different clubs from across the region.

Our 2019 Christmas fundraising tournament had representatives from all North West counties, with 12 teams entering. The event raised money to help support the regional junior programme and showed people’s willingness to support the programme.

Biggest challenges
To maintain engagement with all volleyball activity throughout the region. The North West has a reasonable online presence; however, this needs to remain active and relevant to the varying needs across the region.

The Lancashire area has no active volleyball league currently and the region is working with a few new clubs to provide competition as well as looking into the possibility of linking it into the Greater Manchester League.

We’re struggling to find volunteers willing to take on roles. This begins in the clubs, who inform us of their own difficulty, then for our two area associations – the Northern Counties Volleyball Association and the Tees Valley Volleyball Association – and finally to our regional association which is really struggling currently and is in need of a new chair.

In the short-term we need to recruit more volunteers to sit on the regional committee. In the long-term we want to form regional junior squads and secure funding to be able to enter them in national competitions.

Biggest achievements
We have set up two junior training squads, one representing the North and West and the other the South and West clubs in the region. These were due to come together as Yorkshire to train for the Inter Regional Championships, which were cancelled. Several of the juniors successful in being selected to join the England Talent Pathway programme.

Yorkshire also took part in the inaugural Beach Inter Regional Championship and is developing beach training squads.

Chair: Phil Chanin
Web: www.volleyballnorthwest.co.uk

Yorkshire run a successful local league with eight mixed teams. On the beach front, the Yorkshire series continues to grow as the region hosted UKBT events, which were organised by Skybay Beach VC. In sitting volleyball, Sheffield VC continue to represent the region.

Regional overview
The NVL was cut short with Leeds RGA Men’s at the top of Division 1 and the Women’s side in 2nd place in Division 1. The number of women’s NVL teams grew as Doncaster Miners entered a team into Division 3. In total there are six men’s and seven women’s NVL sides from Yorkshire.

Yorkshire runs regional leagues at three levels and there was a welcome return by Bradford Friends in the Men’s Championship. Hull and East

Chair: Tim Godson
Web: www.yorkshirevolleyball.org.uk

Yorkshire run a successful local league with eight mixed teams. On the beach front, the Yorkshire series continues to grow as the region hosted UKBT events, which were organised by Skybay Beach VC. In sitting volleyball, Sheffield VC continue to represent the region.

Biggest achievements
We have set up two junior training squads, one representing the North and West and the other the South and West clubs in the region. These were due to come together as Yorkshire to train for the Inter Regional Championships, which were cancelled. Teams were entered into Volleyball England’s junior age-grade competitions with great success. York Men’s U18 side reached the last eight while Leeds RGA reached the last eight unbeaten.

Several of the juniors successful in being selected to join the England Talent Pathway programme.

Yorkshire also took part in the inaugural Beach Inter Regional Championship and is developing beach training squads.
Proudest Achievement
I took over as Chair of the WMVA at the start of this season. So much of what we have done has been about reflection, consolidating the fantastic work done so far and defining our strategic priorities for the coming period. Having said that, a particularly proud moment was seeing over 60 volleyballers of all ages come together for the first ever WMVA Awards Evening last June. We wanted to hold an event to both present trophies to senior league winners but also to recognise the amazing efforts of our junior squads.

Short and Long-term Aims
We began the year with a survey of clubs to ensure we were on the right path and that the work being done by the executive committee was targeted in the right way. With only a small volunteer workforce, it was important to understand where we should concentrate our efforts.

Therefore, our priorities are now to: run and manage the regional league successfully; coordinate the activity of our regional junior squads; and promote West Midlands volleyball to a wider audience.

Short and Long-term aims fall within this:

- Develop our inter-regional squads to continue to be competitive, win championships and develop players;
- Expand the number of teams engaged in league activity in the region; and harness any opportunities which may assist us to achieve those two aims.
- Long-term, we clearly have an aspiration to build viability of the game regionally as a direct result of the Commonwealth Games taking place in Birmingham.

Biggest Challenge
Of course, the coronavirus crisis has had a catastrophic effect on many aspects of life and our regional volleyball activity has been no exception to this. Normally, with any challenge, I would talk about next steps and how we find opportunities, even in testing times. However, as I write this, we simply have no idea when or how the lockdown might end.

Until then, our volleyball activity, like so much else, remains on hold – with us all looking forward to the promise of brighter days.

South East

Proudest Achievement
This year there were 18 teams (11 men’s and 7 women’s) from the region that competed in the NVL – an increase of five from the previous year. On a regional level, teams competed in the ever-popular Eastern Region Volleyball Series, which is organised by the Norfolk Volleyball Association. Five county associations also provided league competitions for players.

Between October and February, Essex and Suffolk provided regular junior coaching, which also benefited players from neighbouring counties. These development camps have made a huge impact on our budding players.

Competing in the Grand Prix Series, Essex Pirates SVC provided sitting volleyball opportunities to players from the Eastern region – several of these players have gone on to train with the GB Women’s Team.

Biggest Challenge
One of the biggest challenges we face is the time that our volunteers, particularly coaches and referees, can put into the sport as they try to balance their work/home life. Suitable venues in some counties are also an issue.

What are the Region’s Short and Long-term Aims?
We hope to increase the number of coaches and referees over the next two years to keep the sport going within our region. We also need to build the committee and develop a strategy. We currently have two vacant positions, Chairperson and Treasurer, within the Eastern Volleyball Association.

Regional Overview
The region’s leagues, which provide competition for 150 teams, continue to grow in the region. In particular, there are 44 women’s teams competing in dedicated leagues with another 21 mixed teams. There are now 20 teams from the region that compete in the NVL, a slight increase on the previous year.

While junior and local league volleyball continue to grow in the region, we must ask ourselves whether this is at the expense of NVL participation, and whether this is a good or bad thing for regional development. We feel it is important to have a full player development pathway, for juniors to learn the game, get their first taste of competition and progress to local league teams, regional age group competitions and eventually the NVL.

Short-term and Long-term Ambitions
We will continue to run regular referee and coaching courses, but we need to look at support once someone has qualified. Long-term we need to find ways to support and develop newly qualified coaches. This could be running Volunteer training events, additional workshops, opportunities to work with regional squads or mentoring.

We will continue to build the U14 Grand Prix and the next logical step would be to introduce a competition for the next age group up.

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<td>Chair: John Biddiscombe</td>
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Key to our future success is to build on the firm foundations that we have in place – having places to play, people to deliver and the pathways for all to succeed – which will help us to continue our growth. Juniors are supported at school, clubs are supported with facilities and officials. Recreational players are supported with pay-and-play sessions and tournaments and there is an elite pathway in place. In total 13 London juniors received 16 national call-ups in the last 12 months.

During the last 12 months, the London Volleyball Association presided over approximately 400 matches in the London League, which offers opportunities for NVL standard players as well as new and intermediate teams in the lower divisions. The league has seen an increase in the number of teams and a levelling-off on the number of registered players. London’s ability to host significant volleyball events in the capital has been a major success and we have had involvement in a number of these events: CEV Beach, CEV European Cup, LYG School Games, London Youth Games, LYG Primary Games and Police Sport UK.

We have had a big drive to increase the competitive opportunities for junior volleyball in London through a series of Grand Prix events at three different age groups for boys and girls - U13/U15/U18. Over 350 players participated in regular junior tournaments. These have proved to be increasingly popular and, together with the popular volleyball manga series Haikyuu, have contributed to a surge in the junior interest in volleyball across London.

We will develop an achievable and ambitious plan for Volleyball in London that will be able to cater for current uncertainties and our future aspirations.

We have been able to crown winners and runners up for our senior leagues – congratulations to Exeter Storm and Cheltenham & Gloucester (Men) and Taunton Kitz and Torex (Women). Our regional junior squad training programmes are well organised, with a full team of coaches and committed young players.

**BIGGEST CHALLENGE**

Maintaining and growing the sport with no external financial support and a limited volunteer force. Not a challenge, but a regret that our regional junior squads which have trained hard all season will not have the opportunity to represent the region at the Inter Regional Championships.

**SHORT AND LONG-TERM AMBITIONS**

In the short-term, we need to support clubs through these current difficult circumstances and try, when allowed and relevant, to provide regular competitions as soon as possible. We can only hope that not too many clubs fold or cut back their programmes because of financial difficulties. The ongoing and long-term aim will be to broaden our volunteer base to offer more competitive, coaching and refereeing opportunities – particularly to encourage younger volunteers and support them with more senior mentors.

Volleyball in this country owes a huge amount to the fantastic network of volunteers, sponsors and key partners that support its delivery and development. Volleyball would not be the same without your backing, so thank you.
Volleyball England Equality Statement: Volleyball England supports the principle of equal opportunities for all participants, members, representatives, and employees whilst working for or on behalf of Volleyball England. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination on the grounds of age, colour, race, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, sexuality, HIV status, or unrelated criminal convictions, or disability.