



Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

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Ms Margaret Pearson
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Dear Ms Pearson,

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 September, regarding support for football clubs and the return of spectators to football matches in England and Wales. I am replying as a member of the Ministerial Support Team.

Football clubs are the heart of local communities, with a unique social value and great histories. This department is aware of the financial pressures on clubs at this time which have been caused by coronavirus restrictions.

In terms of spectators at football matches, it is up to the respective governing bodies to determine what constitutes the boundary between elite and non-elite within their sports. In football's case, The FA's definition means that only leagues below the National Leagues North and South can currently continue with spectators. On 18th August, the government amended its guidance to provide extra clarification for organisers of non-elite sports events to help them manage and admit spectators safely, adhering to social distancing.

We recognise that the delay to previously planned pilot events for spectators at elite football events was disappointing to many clubs and their fans, particularly after all the work on test events and preparations for October. However, we have to take difficult decisions that give us the best chance of containing the coronavirus this winter. We had said that we would not hesitate to pause changes in order to protect the public.

We have worked closely with football throughout the pandemic including getting the Premier League and English Football League back behind closed doors and we have been clear that we expect the game - where it can at the top tiers - to support itself. We have now provided the National League with assurances that financial support from the government would be forthcoming so that they could start their season on the weekend of the 3 October.

Further, many football clubs have benefited from the government's unprecedented support to businesses, such as the business rates relief for eligible leisure businesses, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme:

- 38% of the workforce for sports were estimated to be on partial or full furlough leave by the ONS
- The sector has accessed hundreds of millions of pounds worth of loans through the cross-economy loans schemes



- Over half of organisations in the sector have accessed at least one government support scheme (from the DCMS Business Survey)
- On the grassroots side, we have worked with Sport England to provide a £210 million package of support to help community clubs through this crisis

We continue to work at pace across the football leagues to understand which clubs are facing the most challenging circumstances and to ascertain what support they may require. We will set that support out fully in due course.

I hope this response is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Downing
Ministerial Support Team