



THE NEXT GENERATION

**VOLLEYBALL
ENGLAND**

Annual Report 2021-2022

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Front cover image taken by Phil Gibbin of the U18s Girls Final at the 2022 Cup Finals



WELCOME

from Adam Walker, Chairman

Before I touch on some of our key achievements from 2021-22, I want to take a moment for the most important message within this annual report. A heartfelt thank you.

To the volunteers who continually commit hours of their spare time, often behind the scenes ensuring volleyball clubs are brilliant places to go and enjoy our sport. To the coaches who organise inspirational training sessions for the next generation of players. To the officials who relentlessly drive-up standards and ensure there is a level and fulfilling playing field and to our supporters for being our greatest cheerleaders. None of the achievements detailed in this report would have been possible without your tremendous efforts.

Our Hub team together with all those who sit on our Board, sub and working groups also need great thanks for their incredible efforts. Whilst we are relatively small sport, we consistently punch above our weight in England's sporting landscape. Thanks also to our close partners, the Volleyball England Foundation, the British Volleyball Federation,

the CEV and FIVB for their wisdom and ongoing support.

For my last but one thanks, I would like to take a moment to mention Sue Storey, who recently left us to become CEO of Badminton England, for her amazing contribution over the last few years and Sam Jamieson, for driving things forward in her interim CEO role. Thank you both for being so determined, humble and committed.

Over the last few years my messages have transitioned from repair and rebuild to stability and sustainability. Within this annual report, we will focus on 'The Next Generation' to deliver ongoing growth and continual improvement.

Fuelled by a boom in junior volleyball, during the 2021/22 season with significantly more players registered to take part in national competitions than in 2019/20 and more registered coaches welcomed to our Volleyball Family we have many reasons to feel optimistic. Additionally, our positive image and reputation has enabled us to successfully secure 5 years of Sport England funding and working in partnership with the Foundation an additional

£225,000 to encourage participation growth amongst under-represented groups.

Building on these strong foundations, including a revamp of national junior competitions as well as off-court developments around our digital infrastructure – including the launch of a new website, the coming year will focus on further improving the competition experience for participants and better live coverage for fans. Thanks to a renewed focus on data and insights, we are taking on board more thoughts and feedback, which is helping us to continuously improve our products and services.

To conclude, there is a fantastic buzz around Birmingham 2022 and the prospect of England medals as well as new interest thanks to the heightened interest in the sport. A special thank you to our Vice-Chair, Clare Francis, who has spearheaded the work around legacy – it really is 'Our Time To Shine'.

It's a thoroughly exciting time to be involved in volleyball – lots to look back on with pride, and lots to look forward to with great excitement.



EXECUTIVE REFLECTIONS

Sam Jamieson, Interim CEO, and Rob Payne, Interim Deputy CEO look back on the challenges and successes of 2021-22.

After an extended period with little or no volleyball being played, it has been a delight to experience and share in the resilience of the volleyball community. We have remained cautious and constantly assessed risks and mitigations, to balance pursuing playing opportunities with the health and safety of participants, but we can say, for sure, that thanks to all of our collective efforts, volleyball has bounced back better.

From access to facilities to recruiting new volunteers and uncertainties around

participants' return, the volleyball community has risen to the challenge to tackle whatever obstacles have been in our way.

As you will read in this report, one of our greatest success stories from this past year has been our junior volleyball competitions. We have radically altered the format to create a competition that pits the very best against the very best in our top tier for national honours, in addition to creating plenty of competitive opportunities for the hundreds of children taking their early steps

in competitive volleyball. Some 2,200 players have taken part this season and thanks to the Competitions and Children & Young People Working Groups we have been able to leverage this surge and provide fantastic experiences for young people in our sport.

It's not just in the junior game that we've seen growth. Our national squad trials have been more popular than ever, NVL entries are up, we've started to catch up with the demand for coaching and officiating awards and, overall, more people are playing our great

sport. Huge thanks to the Hub team in Loughborough who have worked tirelessly to create and maximise opportunities for the sport.

Firm foundations established during lockdown, including digital transformation projects, embedding data and insights across the organisation and more support mechanism for clubs, have also helped us to build back better by improving the experience of those using our products and services and giving us the ability to better measure and monitor success.

For example, our junior competitions received an average overall rating of 8.27 this year. We've received lots of feedback that is all being taken into account as part of an overall review, especially looking at the number of Grand Prix events and the format of the final event.

As you can imagine, a lot of time has been spent on preparations for Birmingham 2022, whether that's supporting athletes or prospecting on how best clubs can capitalise on the opportunities to welcome new participants inspired by the games to scoping where the sand and equipment from the competition will be redistributed as a legacy to the

event. Huge thanks to Sport England for their funding support for our athletes and harnessing the impact

“...one of our greatest success stories from this past year has been our junior volleyball competitions...”

of the games not only in Birmingham but nationwide.

The British Volleyball Federation has played a key role in preparing our beach athletes – and, for that matter, our British sitting volleyball players – for the world stage. It's been fantastic to deepen our working relationship with them and facilitate access to funds for our athletes. Good luck to Jess Grimson and

Daisy Mumby and Javier and Joaquin Bello in their charge for medals at Birmingham 2022. The battle to represent Team England at Birmingham 2022 was a fierce one, credit to all of our athletes for making it so competitive.

Clare Francis, our Vice-Chair, has been spearheading a huge piece of work around legacy and Games-time activations. We have some ambitious plans, supported by Sport England, and will be working with clubs to make them happen.

Finally, a massive thank you to our volunteers, including the Board and the Volleyball England staff. Now into the second year of our strategy, we have real momentum behind us and I feel we can accelerate that further in the months and years ahead.





VOLLEYBALL FOR LIFE

We aim to better understand, articulate, and promote the opportunities that volleyball provides for anyone, at any stage of their life, says Strategic Manager Gillian Harrison.



This strand of the strategy is concerned with pathways: for players, coaches, officials and volunteers. It's about how we attract people into the sport and encourage lifelong participation.

For 2021/22, the main focuses have been on coaching and the long-awaited return of courses as well as officials, whom we know we have a shortage of.

Coaching pathway

In July last year we were delighted to launch our new Assistant Coach Award, replacing what was previously the Level 1 Introduction to Coaching Volleyball Award. This course is the first formal step on our Coach Education Pathway and covers the disciplines of indoor volleyball, beach volleyball, and sitting volleyball. Since then we have run 22 courses, helping more than 320 learners embark on the start of their own coaching

career. This is the most number of entry level awards we have run since 2015.

The next step on the coaching education pathway is the UKCC Level 2 Certificate. Unfortunately, due to access to venues and tutors, we have not been able to run as many as we would like and so have only supported 16 learners this year. However the Level 2 is under development to better align it to the new Assistant Coach Award. Once this work is completed, the second step on our coach education pathway will move to a blended learning model, with elements online and in person, and align to one of the disciplines too, so learners will complete a Coach Award in volleyball, beach volleyball, sitting volleyball or junior volleyball.

Outside of our education pathway, we've been able to organise opportunities to enhance knowledge and understanding of the game.

In addition to the Coaching Conference in November, we ran our very first FIVB Level 1 coaching course for beach volleyball thanks to a partnership with SideOut and FIVB.

Officials pathway

We are currently focussing our efforts on reversing the decline we've seen in the number of officials post-Covid-19 compared to before. We're exploring motivations and finding ways to attract previous officials back to the game, encouraging others to take to the stand, and most importantly, ensuring they're supported. Recruitment, training, development, deployment, retention, reward and recognition are key themes.



We have welcomed 146 new Grade 4 officials to the ranks this year, a similar figure to before the pandemic. We have also made the process for officials wanting to be upgraded simpler - all you have to do is visit VolleyZone's 'event finder' and search assessment and find the appropriate upgrade option. Thanks to support from the Volleyball England Foundation in applying for return to play funding, there is also a sizeable pot of money to invest in this area.

Workforce weekend and player pathways

We know it's difficult to plan course dates around national events such as camps and competitions, and so for 22/23 we have set aside two weekends to specifically focus on courses and CPD opportunities. Workforce Development Weekends will take place on 17th and 18th September 2022 and 6th and 7th May 2023.

Right now we're also turning

our attention to the player pathways. We've had success in certain areas, such as with the release of Volley2s – our game for children aged 7-11 – and with Sitting Volleyball Month – the first campaign to raise awareness and participation in the game, but we're now looking at the bigger picture and interventions to further fuel the growth we're experiencing.

National teams

It has been fantastic to see our England volleyball teams return to action in friendly matches and also see our GB Sitting Volleyball Team head abroad for scrimmages. Our junior volleyball teams also returned to the Cornacchia Cup, making us all proud in the process.

On the beach volleyball front, earlier in the year Javier and Joaquin Bello achieved an historic win for Great Britain at in August as they clinched gold in Cortegaça, Portugal, on the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour.

The Bellos have beaten their own record which was set almost two years ago when they took bronze in Rubavu, Rwanda – the first ever World Tour medal for an English or British Men's team. Mere weeks later they followed this up with yet another medal, this time claiming a well-earned bronze medal in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, on the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour.

With Birmingham 2022 just around the corner now, a significant amount of support has been given to our beach volleyball athletes – especially to help them play abroad against higher opposition and also for the Commonwealth Games Selection Tournament. It was an excellent spectacle of beach volleyball at Deep Dish at the end of May and I'm now delighted we have our representatives for Birmingham 2022: Javier & Joaquin Bello and Daisy Mumby and Jess Grimson.

A special thanks to the British Volleyball Federation who, thanks to their successful application to UK Sport for National Squads Support Fund, have helped take our teams Commonwealth Games preparations to the next level.

All eyes are now fixed on Birmingham 2022. Good luck Team England!





GET. KEEP. GROW.

To help clubs to achieve their goals, we want to work closely with them, transforming our work to provide even better support, says Strategic Manager Vicki Carr.



Clubs are the backbone of volleyball in England, and to better support them throughout the year we recruited an additional member of staff in the Get, Keep, Grow area.

Doubling the headcount in this side of the organisation has enabled us to provide quicker and more comprehensive support and guidance than before. This has ranged from DBS checks, guidance on club development or something specialist such as lobbying – as we did for Weymouth BVC when their home venue Redlands Sports Centre faced closure. We've also been in contact with clubs about opportunities to capitalise on heightened interest in volleyball through Birmingham 2022 and will be working hand-in-hand with as many clubs as we can to make it happen.

This extra resource has also allowed us to revamp

much of the content on the newly elevated 'Club' section of our website. Head over to find information regarding governance, financial management, starting a club, and much more. It's also allowed us to start developing a 'Club Hub' zone that will provide additional support and resources for affiliated clubs and members through sharing best practice.

Club Newsletter

Another key development has been the launch of the club newsletter, a monthly platform to share updates and best practice with affiliated clubs. Updates were previously shared to clubs on an ad hoc basis. The newsletter provides us with the perfect vehicle to combine all of this key information in one area and share best practice more regularly too.

It features recurring sections on funding opportunities,

upcoming courses and other events and deadlines, such as competition entry dates and England trial dates. We've featured articles on live streaming, the experience of Wapping Wildcubs in hiring a full-time coach and more.

We are always looking to refine and improve our products and services, and a recent survey has helped us to do just that for the club newsletter – and rewarded one club with free affiliation for 22/23 too! Based on some of the feedback, we will be developing a portal on the new website to better store content for clubs to refer to and newsletter content will now be shorter and snappier too to make it easier to consume.

Membership

For coach memberships and player registrations, numbers have far exceeded those seen immediately before the pandemic. Rather than 493 coaches in 19/20, we currently have 632 members with coach memberships. Registered players are up to 5,300 from 2,900 too. The same goes for club affiliations with 394 affiliated clubs, compared to the 353 that affiliated in 19/20.

We have not seen people return to take out referee memberships in the same number as before, and this mirrors the bigger picture in terms of referees. We currently have 423 registered officials versus 544 in 19/20. A special project is being undertaken to understand the reasons why, and to encourage former officials back while attracting new talent to the pathway.

Looking forward, the Get Keep Grow team and sub-group will be scoping how the Volleyball England membership offer can become more accessible, user-friendly, and more fit for purpose for club use. Watch this space!

HEVOs

We've been running the Higher Education Volleyball Officer Programme popular programme for 11 years now and every year it seems to get better and better. This year the programme welcomed 48 students from 33 different universities. Despite the effects of Covid-19 and the impact of university staffing, the programme welcomed both new and returning universities, meaning even more cohorts of students were engaged in volleyball.

As part of the programme, enrolled students and universities are offered grants to support their volleyball provision and personal development. Since the September 2021 Conference, 21 students have completed their Grade 4 Referee course and 5 students have completed their Level 1 Assistant Coach Award. Students are coaching out in the community or at their host institution, meaning that the programme is providing a volleyball pathway that allows them to progress their volleyball journey even further.

The 2021 HEVO conference in

September that provided two-day training for the students, once again proved to be a huge success, ranging from sessions on how to set up 4v4 festivals to taking part in sitting and beach workshops. Participants scored an overall rating of 4.75 out of 5 with 88% of the HEVOs stating that they felt the conference prepared them for their role.

As part of their agreement to the programme, HEVOs and their host institutions send through participation reports in October (term 1), January (term 2) and May (term 3). We are collating the term 3 reports at the moment but the reports from term 1 and term 2 have been amazing, showing us that so far 2981 students have been engaged through HEVO volleyball sessions and over 16,000 sessions have been attended by students across the country. We can't wait to see what term 3 brings!

This year, we introduced a survey that was sent to past HEVOs that had been involved in the programme within the last 5 years to find out 'where are you now'. 80% of the respondents told us that they were still involved in volleyball in some capacity and that the HEVO programme helped set them up for not only volleyball provision but also for life after university, with 84% of respondents stating that they felt the programme helped develop their leadership skills and 72% stating that they felt more confident in social situations, contributing positively to their mental health.

Looking forward, there is already a waiting list of interested HEVOs and institutions ready to sign up for the 22-23 programme and we have carefully analysed feedback from institutions and HEVOs to further develop the programme.

Birmingham 2022

For now, all eyes are on the Commonwealth Games and working with clubs to turn as much new volleyball interest into participation as possible, whilst supporting clubs to achieve their aims and ambitions!

Anti-doping update

Over the last year we have worked to align our anti-doping activity to UKAD's framework. This has included planning of anti-doping education to the community; adopting an anti-doping policy; updating our website; more thorough engagements with our membership and competition entrants; improving our communications and assigning a Board member to become our anti-doping lead.

We have also delivered anti-doping education to our U19 and U17 squads, staff and parents; and to athletes who competed at the Commonwealth Games Selection Tournament.

We have also delivered a series of webinars to help clubs understand the anti-doping requirements and how they can help their members to stay clean and that the anti-doping rules apply to everyone at any level of the sport.

It has been great working closely with UKAD on what has and continues to be a hugely important piece of work.

*Bertrand Olie,
Project Lead.*



AN ACE SERVICE

We work collaboratively to deliver products and services that most benefit our clubs and the wider volleyball community, says Strategic Manager Laura Woodruff



By far the biggest services offered by Volleyball England to the Volleyball Family are competitions. Following two disrupted seasons, we have been delighted to return with a bang with a full programme of competitions for juniors and adults.

New-look junior competitions
A record 290 teams from volleyball clubs and schools entered our refreshed national junior competitions for 2022. Capitalising on the junior volleyball surge that has been experienced across the country, the new-look U15, U16 and U18 series created a level of play that is ideal for new or inexperienced teams while also creating competitive playing opportunities for the country's most talented junior athletes.

This came about from moving from knock-out cup style competitions that could see teams play just one match, into two tiers of Grand Prix-style events that matched teams against similar-level opposition.

With 86 teams entering the U18 series, 77 sides the U16s and 127 teams the U15s, the 2022 Junior Grand Prix Series not only tops the number of entries from the last full season (112) but smashes the highest figure on record for national-level junior volleyball competitions (210). In total some 2,200 youngsters took part in the competition over the season.

A huge thank you to entrants for the hours they put in to make this all possible, whether that was through hosting a Grand Prix or through organising teams and fixtures. And a special thank you to Pete Bragg and Nick Shaffery

for their guidance in shaping these new competitions. We're looking forward to building on this momentum next season.

Inter-Regionals
The popular Inter-Regional Championships made a welcome return with more than 350 junior players taking part in the first national championships between the regions since 2019.

After months of trials and training sessions, some of the most talented players from each of the 9 volleyball regions traveled to Leicester to face off in the U15 and U17 competitions. Congratulations to London for taking the title in the U15 Boys, U15 Girls and

East were victorious in the U17 Boys competition, with London finishing as runners-up. The South West made it to the final two in the U17 Girls and U15 Girls with North West finishing in 2nd place in the U15 Boys event.

Student Cup

Bournemouth Uni bagged both the men's and women's Student Cup trophies this year.

After qualifying from the group stage and seeing off other challengers in the knock-out stages, Bournemouth Uni locked horns with their fellow Pool C rivals Cambridge Blues in the men's final. The team from the south coast had lost just one set en route to the final – that includes their qualification matches in late 2021 - and they proved too much for Cambridge. Meanwhile, in the women's final, Bournemouth were also re-united with past adversaries as they faced Imperial in the final match at the University of East Anglia. The first set went in favour of Imperial, but the final two sets came easy to Bournemouth.

Congratulations to Bournemouth University on getting the double, and a huge thank you to everyone who took part for making it such a special occasion. None of it would have been possible without the dedication of our volunteers - a special thank goes out to them.

Sitting Volleyball Grand Prix

It was a three-horse race to the sitting volleyball crown this season between Sitting Bucks, South Hants, and Help 4 Heroes – each taking their turn to win a grand prix. Ultimately it came down to a dramatic battle between the first two, who created a sensational advert for the sport in the eventual showdown at Cup Finals. Sitting Bucks came out on top of a sizzling 5-setter to claim their first SVGP trophy. 3

The series is about much more than trophies, however. In total 12 teams entered either Tier 1 or Tier 2 of the Grand Prix this season. We welcomed new sides such as Salisbury as well as Nottingham Rockets.

Cup Finals

After a 2-year absence, Cup Finals marked its triumphant return to the National Volleyball Centre, Kettering, in April for the deciding matches in the Cup, Shield, Junior and Sitting Volleyball Grand Prix competitions.

Richmond stole the headlines by winning not 1, not 2, but 7 of the national finals – an outstanding achievement for the club. In full they were crowned champions in the Men's National Cup and in every single national junior championship. Congratulations to Polonia SideOut for winning the Women's National Cup and to Stockport Men and Everton Women for winning their respective National Shields.

In total, more than 700 tickets were sold across the weekend. All of the matches were live streamed too, racking up more than 15,000 views and plenty of excitement, buzz and chatter online. With plenty of drama and entertainment on court, an interactive matchday programme, unique mementos courtesy of studio takethatphoto and much, much more, the matchday experience was new and improved.

UKBT

Our beach volleyball delivery partner UKBT continues to go from strength to strength with the introduction of more events and the junior tour. Their biggest events are the Grand Slam series where the country's best go head to head to be named national champion. Congratulations to Team Bello and Tokarenko/Sviridova for being crowned UKBT champions for 2021.

NVL

Old rivalries were reignited and new friendships forged when the league, the highest competitive level for teams in England, bounced back in October for its first full-season since the Covid-19 pandemic began. It has been a fantastic first season back. Plans are already in place for next season with a bumper number of teams applying to join.

Live streaming

In previous seasons we have arranged for a production crew to film our Cup Finals. For this season, we took that investment and put it into our own equipment so we could live stream more games across the season. We've learnt a lot on this front and now have a solid base to be able to live stream competitions with multiple courts from the National Volleyball Centre throughout the season. In total we topped 100,000 views and aim to build on lessons learnt and further improve our production.

Digital

Enhancing our products and services is a cornerstone of our strategy, and as one of our biggest services, I'm thrilled that we have been able to overhaul the website and improve its look, feel and functionality. Regular users will notice a vastly improved experience of using the site, while newcomers' first impression of the sport will be boosted thanks to the modern and vibrant design.

This is the first major piece of work on a digital transformation journey. Lots more to follow. Watch this space.





FOUNDATION REPORT

Simone Turner, Chairwoman of the Volleyball England Foundation, reflects on the organisation's accomplishments from the past year.

We are often asked what it is we do and how can others support us. The answer is simple: the Foundation exists to support the volleyball community and create positive social impact through volleyball, and there are a number of ways you can help.

The Foundation is a volunteer-led organisation. We exist and grow purely through the generosity of our supporters, donors, grants, and funding from other charitable trusts. Our projects and services are designed to aid those who are most in need, under-served or underrepresented in our communities. In this way, we can help improve the lives of others through our beloved sport of volleyball.

Currently, we do not manage large or long-term investments. However, we believe this should be and can be a realistic goal for the Foundation in the future and one we are constantly striving to achieve.

Our model is to generate opportunities based on need, and then look for external third-party partners to help us facilitate and deliver those

projects. This is essential, as we don't have the capacity or resources to do it alone.

Below we have detailed some of the great work the Foundation team has done in the last 12 months.

With little or no volleyball taking place, the Foundation initially focused on the Sport England 'Return to Play' funding pot to support the volleyball network at grassroots level in three key areas:

1. Application writing - the Foundation managed to secure £250,000 in assisted funding through 48 funding bids, that benefited over 120 clubs nationwide, providing infection control kits and other critical resources that allowed clubs to safely return to play.
2. Sitting volleyball - funding of £9,500 that allowed our inclusive discipline to start back ahead of general volleyball, with the provision of Covid-19 compliant nets and infection-control packs
3. Officiating - due to the loss of qualified referees through the pandemic, the Foundation assisted and obtained £9,900 in funding. The Officials Working

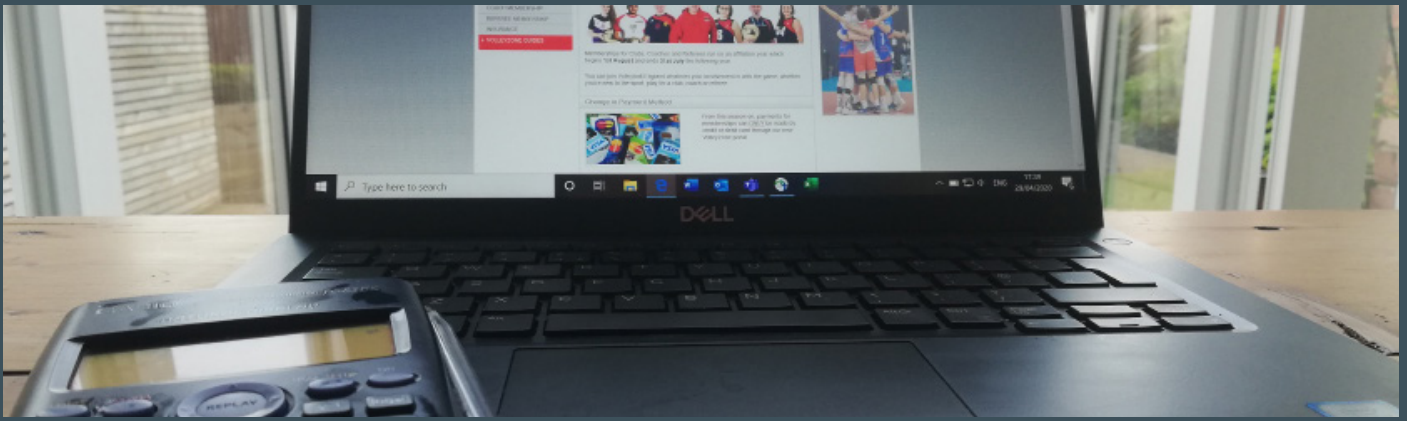
Group have been able to deliver training to run more indoor and beach refereeing courses and work to upgrade referees.

The Foundation has also supported the sitting community as part of the Sitting Volleyball Working Group. With Foundation support, 5 new sitting volleyball teams have been developed. If your club is interested in developing a sitting team, there will be another round of grant funding in the summer.

Support the Foundation

A big thank you to all who donated items to, and bid on, our Annual Christmas Auction, which raised just under £1,000. We raised a grand total of just under £3,000 for the year from our regular supporters and private donors. If you would like to become a Foundation doner, please visit the Foundation website.

As always, we are reliant on goodwill and support to continue our work. Please feel free to reach out directly to us for any further information about any of the projects we are currently working on.



FINANCE REPORT

An update from Financial Consultant Kevin Fletcher.



Volleyball England's financial situation is positive. Thanks to the support given to us by Sport England and strong membership numbers, we have emerged from the pandemic in a healthy financial position.

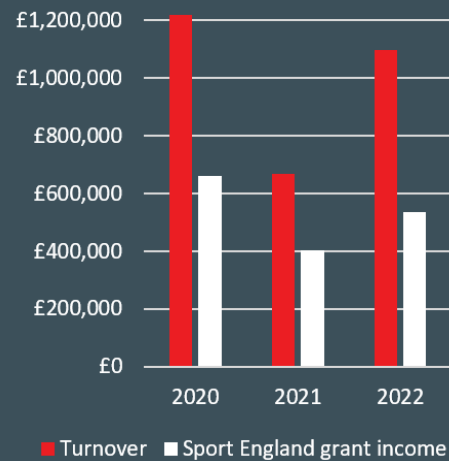
During 21-22, Volleyball England was selected as a 'System Partner', which is only awarded to their closest partners. At their Board meeting on 14th December, Sport England approved an award of £2,122,584 to Volleyball England from April 2022 to March 2027. Most of the funding is for 5 years but a small element is for 3 years. This equates to the same support we received from Sport England during the 21-22 season.

The return to play during the 2021-22 season has been very encouraging. National Volleyball League and Student Cup entries, courses run and membership numbers have all surpassed expectations.

At the end of the last financial year, we targeted commercial income as an area for potential growth and I am pleased to report that during 2021-22 our commercial income rose in excess of 300%, albeit from a low base, and we have budgeted a further increase for 2022-23.

With some of the exciting digital development work that has either come to fruition - such as

the website - or is about, combined with the huge opportunities created by the Commonwealth Games, 2022 and beyond looks to be a very exciting period for volleyball in England.



Where did the money come from?

Sport England Grants 21-22	£ 533,739
Other Government Grants	£ 8,223
Commercial Income	£ 23,339
Talent Income	£ 131,533
Technical Courses	£ 69,538
Student income	£ 6,127
Membership	£ 47,007
Diploma in Sporting Excellence	£ 108,320
Competition & Events	£ 169,858
TOTAL	£ 1,097,684

Where did the money go?

Operating Costs	£ 199,646
Salaries	£ 484,725
Commercial Cost	£ 19,233
Talent	£ 142,716
Technical Courses	£ 38,099
Student	£ 22,485
Commonwealth Games	£ 76,854
Diploma in Sporting Excellence	£ 30,211
Competition & Events	£ 36,173
TOTAL	£ 1,050,142



REGIONAL REPORTS

North East

Starting with achievements, Durham Uni won both men and women's Super League; Sunderland Men finished 6th in Super League; Sunderland Women finished 6th in Division 1; and we had teams play in the national U18 and U17 Inter-Regional competitions. Like others across the country, we have seen more juniors take to the game.

While it has been pleasing to see our local leagues return, it has been a challenge to get them started and then completed because Covid impacted half of the season. Accommodating for the surge in juniors has been a good challenge to have, but the availability of venues and coaches has made it extra tricky. The reduced number of NVL and local league teams in the area is a huge concern, including the exodus of mature volleyballers with a wealth of experience.

We must look to increase the number of clubs and teams. We are also looking at setting up junior leagues in the Northern Counties to capture the current, extensive junior interest.

North West

With representation from 7 clubs across the region, the NW U15s boys did us proud by reaching the finals of the 2022 Inter-Regionals. From entering no boys teams in the competition a few years ago, this has been our long term goal. Congratulations to all the players, coaches & clubs involved in helping to make this happen.

Junior volleyball was well represented in the National Junior Grand Prix events, with teams from Frodsham, Urmston, Liverpool, Manchester and Stockport. The number of NW teams applying to enter NVL continues to increase & NW clubs were well represented at the Cup Finals, with both Everton & Stockport winning their respective Shield finals.

Beach volleyball also continues to go from strength to strength within the NW, with beach series events run by Everton VC at Crosby beach. The NW region supports these by lending beach nets & equipment.

A number of clubs struggled post-Covid, with some sports facilities remaining closed &

this caused issues with playing matches. This especially knocked back sitting volleyball across the region.

With the number of NW teams playing in the NVL, the number of qualified officials is starting to impact clubs, with ongoing difficulties in finding referees.

Looking ahead, we want to maintain the development of the NW boys programme in conjunction with junior clubs across the NW. We also want to support NVL clubs by increasing & sustaining the number of NW referees to allow matches to be fully staffed by qualified referees.

Finally, we want to re-invigorate the sitting programme within the NW & hold a sitting Grand Prix event, with entries hopefully from across the region within the next 6 months.

Yorkshire

21/22 has seen the completion of 4 adult leagues which has enabled competitive volleyball across Yorkshire for a range of abilities. In total, 27 teams competed in our leagues. High standards of play were observed across the region,

and we are pleased to be supporting 2 teams, Bradford Eagles and Harrogate Goats, in their ambitions to compete in the NVL next season. Barnsley Braves were champions in the Men's Premier League and Hull Thunder were champions in the Women's Premier League. Barton Blockers were winners of both the Men's Championship League and Women's Championship League.

The explosion in Junior Volleyball across all regions of the UK has been unprecedented. We have seen a massive uptake of young people wanting to play our sport. Junior teams from our region competed in Tier 1 & Tier 2 in the national Junior Grand Prix. Leeds Gorse U15 Boys just missed out on the Grand Prix Tier 1 final, finishing 3rd nationally. Earlier this year junior players from across our region attended Yorkshire coaching and trials ahead of the Inter-Regionals. At the event the standard of play was very high from all regions. Our girls finished 7th in each age group. Our U17 boys narrowly missed out by sets difference in the semi finals and finished 5th overall, whilst our U15 boys lost their semi final game to London, who won the tournament and finished 3rd overall.

Beach volleyball is now fully integrated with Skyball as a full member of the Yorkshire Volleyball Association. In 2021, 10 UKBT events took place in Bridlington, Yorkshire.

Yorkshire sent 4 boys to compete at the Beach Inter Regionals, finishing 5th, narrowly losing their quarter final match. Yorkshire boys Gladstone & Quick (U18s) and Makowski & Parsons (U16s) won Bronze Medals at the UKBT Junior Championships at Sandbanks too.

£9,898 of Return to Play Lottery Grant money was a welcome boost for all our clubs after a very difficult year. A further £1,600 of subsidies was distributed by the Association to support clubs with refereeing and coaching courses.

We are looking forward to

ever increasing numbers of junior players, the life blood of any sport. For this we have to thank the coaches, the organisers and the parents who support and give of their time freely to make all this happen. In the adult leagues we will be introducing a 3 tier league system. In addition to our Championship and Premier Leagues we will have our very own Yorkshire Super League that permits the involvement of players who already compete in NVL divisions 2 & 3. So we will see volleyball played in Yorkshire from base level through Premier to Elite level in a meaningful and equitable competition format.

East Midlands

As with everyone else, this past season was one of rebuilding. We have been rebuilding our committee and recruiting new members who are bringing new and exciting ideas to how we operate. We want to take that into next year and develop stronger relationships with clubs in the region and help promote volleyball more. As part of that, we aim to develop a 5-year plan based on the clubs' input that will guide our work. We would like to complete the development of our 5-year plan in the next year. We want to do this because we can see the impact of Covid on the number of coaches, referees and adults playing volleyball and we want to help clubs address that.

Whilst we have seen a drop in the number of adult teams playing in the regional leagues, we have seen a huge increase in the number of juniors playing across the region. Every team we speak to, tells us of this increase and this led to our proudest achievement; the development of our junior teams. We had amazing numbers for the Inter-Regional trials and that resulted in really strong teams playing at the tournament in May.

West Midlands

We can't be alone amongst volleyball administrators in feeling that year one since the pandemic has been

characterised by a range of differing emotions. And as we look ahead to what should be a phenomenal summer for sport, for volleyball, particularly in the West Midlands, the contrasting emotions are no less stark.

Joy: Who could fail to feel the happiness of every volleyball player as we took to the court for (barring a small window in 2020) the first time in 15 months? Getting a mini league up-and-running for those clubs who were ready to play was a highlight of the early months, and we've followed that up with a five-division league running properly since Christmas.

The region's clubs have had a huge season in the NVL as well. Coventry & Warwick Riga topped both men's and women's divisions, while Black Country Men, Wombourne Men and Tamworth Spartans Women all took promotion honours through the play-offs a few weeks ago. Volleyball at national league level across our region is in rude health.

But while we can, and should, celebrate these achievements, it would be wrong to focus solely on them. We've also seen a number of clubs who have not returned from the pandemic. Sports centres focusing their efforts elsewhere and effectively blocking access for less profitable sports have been one of the biggest barriers to overcome for some clubs – but it's true that others have felt the squeeze from losing players. In some cases, the blame can be laid firmly at the door of the UK's decision to leave the EU as some of our European family return to Europe – leaving volleyball in the UK the poorer for this. And elsewhere, players have taken up new activity which was hit less hard by the constraints of lockdown. Whatever the level, each club which has not returned from the shutdown is a source of real sadness to me.

Across our region, whatever the factors, we have seen a huge and welcome increase in juniors playing volleyball. We've seen our clubs organise mini tournaments between themselves, and others

enter various national junior competitions for the first time ever. And getting four teams to the inter-regional championships in May was a huge highlight, given the time and calendar constraints we were working to, and each and every player who represented the region did us proud.

But it's also fair to say that we face a looming obstacle in terms of volunteering resource. The number of referees in particular will soon pose an insurmountable challenge, and I have seen clubs at all levels of the volleyball pyramid struggle this season. Coaches and administrators too, to a lesser extent – but it's officiating where we have a particular pain point.

The future can be bright – and here in the West Midlands, we are thrilled to have the Commonwealth Games on our doorstep. There's plenty of work done already to ensure clubs can take advantage of the opportunities the Games in Birmingham present, but there's lots more to still to do. The lack of a beach venue in Birmingham or its immediate neighbours has been, and will continue to be, discussed elsewhere – but we at the WMVA need to come together over the coming weeks to ensure that a lasting legacy in terms of participation is the Games' gift to the region. There's work to be done – but we're going to have a wonderful time rising to the challenge.

Eastern

Summer 2021 saw 8 junior players from the East competing in the Inter-regional Beach Volleyball Championships at Cardiff. Our men's squad came second and our women's squad narrowly missed out in the semi-finals and the subsequent play-offs, each by just 2 points.

September 2021 saw the revival of the indoor competitions such as the NVLs and the 16-team Eastern Region Volleyball Series organised monthly by the Norfolk Volleyball Association. Other county Volleyball Associations also provided league

competitions for players.

January 2022 saw one of the most exciting competitions for this season - the Junior Grand Prix series organised by Volleyball England with the support of various clubs in the country. The format of the Grand Prix series provided fabulous opportunities for our junior players as they were able to compete against other teams and clubs of a similar level. It was a rewarding and worthwhile experience as we saw the progress and passion for the sport from our junior players who took part in the series.

The Inter-Regional championships were held in May 2022 – all our junior players had an amazing time - our U15s came 5th (Boys) and 6th (Girls) and our U17s 3rd (Girls) and 1st (Boys).

A huge thank you to our brilliant coaches and referees - volleyball wouldn't be the same without their dedication and commitment to the sport.

We hope to invite more members to be a part of the Eastern Volleyball Federation (EVF) committee so that the Region can be developed in the way its members want it to.

We also hope to increase the number of coaches and referees within our Region by running more courses in 2022-23.

South East

I am delighted to report that the volleyball in the South-East had not only managed to get back on its feet following the enforced Covid breaks but has in fact thrived in many areas. We are now happy to be able to report that all the signs are that the progress made since the last lockdown has been sustained if not further enhanced.

The county leagues in the region have by and large been able to complete or at least be on schedule to complete their fixtures despite everything, which is a testament to the league organisers and the flexibility shown by the teams in reorganising fixtures cancelled due to Covid.

Referee and coaching

courses have taken place throughout the year in the region to address the ongoing need for more people getting qualified and work within our clubs to cater for the surge in interest in the sport.

The interest from junior players both taking up the sport and continuing to train and play with our clubs shows no sign of slowing down. This was reflected in the huge numbers of youngsters who came to the trials for the regional squads. A huge thank you to all the coaches and team managers who managed to take this in their stride and eventually select representative squads in the age groups, and through hard work achieving the following results at the Inter Regional Championships:

- Girls U15 – 3rd Place
- Girls U17 – 5th Place
- Boys U15 – 4th Place
- Boys U17 – 4th Place

The new format Volleyball England Junior Grand Prix events has proven to be a great success in providing multiple opportunities for youngsters to compete against other teams, with several rounds hosted in the region. While the finals were dominated by established teams from the North-West and London regions, the South-East did provide the one and only junior team from outside of those regions with VBDC in Surrey getting silver in the U15 Girls final.

It was a different story in the Sitting Volleyball final with two South-East teams battling it out as Sitting Bucks just pipped South Hants in a 5-set thriller.

Two stalwarts of the Sitting Volleyball community in the South-East were recognised by the World Para organisation with an Outstanding Achievement award, namely Richard Osborne and Dee Wauchope.

Our sport is almost entirely powered by volunteers, and I hope you all realise the huge part they play in the sports future growth and that you give them the appreciation they deserve in the clubs they serve. A few emails and conversations I have had with parents has

really highlighted the positive impact we are having for youngsters playing our sport in this post covid world. On behalf of the whole SEVA community we would like to express our appreciation for all the hours that volunteers put in to make our sport a success.

South West

This has been the season where we managed to restart organised volleyball again. During the lockdown periods we had managed to keep our organisational structures intact with regular SW meetings – albeit online. This allowed us to consult with areas and clubs to ensure that plans were in place to start competitions and junior squads as soon as possible.

The SW Leagues have run successfully without problems with 9 mens and 10 womens teams – won by Exeter Storm and Torexe respectively. The SW Vets tournament in November was won by Torexe Saga Louts.

We have run a full programme of training for the regional junior squads, with large numbers in attendance from across the region. The programme continues to develop both players and coaches, with a stream of assistant coaches moving up to head coach roles over a number of seasons. A particular mention here for the two SW girls teams who were each runners up at the IRC finals.

Training sessions are now taking place for the SW junior beach squads who will play in the IRB. We will have a full complement of entries for that event, taking up spare places if available.

The SW JuVoTo series took place across the winter at a number of events across the region. As usual it was popular and successful.

Most areas have seen their competitions start up again with generally stable or slightly increased numbers and thankfully little disruption.

As we do every year I would like to thank all those volleyballers who give up so much of their time in the region, areas and clubs to make organized volleyball

possible. A particular mention here for our Chair – Dave Reece who gives up so much of his time to the cause. We remain short of a number of volunteer officers and this will handicap our progress moving forward – particularly in coach development.

Very few coaching and refereeing award courses have taken place this season, not helped by the changes to the award structures. We intend to run more coach and referee award courses.

We aim to continue senior and junior competitions with at least current levels of entry, but hopefully with some expansion.

London

Last year we spoke about looking at places to play, people to deliver and pathways for all to succeed. We have moved forward with this and opened up new venues, worked with more schools and supported the development of officials. There is still a lot to do and we are moving in the right direction.

As we reflect back on the year and look forward to what might come next for the young people we work with, we are certainly not overstating the situation when we say it's been an incredible year; a year that has seen enormous growth in junior activity and created new challenges for clubs, organisers and coaches and new opportunities for more young people. London is split into 32 boroughs and we now have junior opportunities in 20 boroughs up 5 from pre pandemic activity. Sitting volleyball for primary school year 5/6 has been relaunched and will see hundreds taking part in the June competition.

Nevertheless, the executive can look back with an absolutely enormous amount of admiration for how the clubs have responded to the crisis of returning to play following the Covid pandemic.

London received £70k+ to help with getting started again after lockdown. This has been crucial in getting the teams ready to get going. More court time, more sessions, more

differentiation and all done safely. Whilst league entries are slightly down, we have seen an increase in opportunities for pay and play sessions and mid-season tournaments.

The beach centres in London have had a busy summer, getting together to put on the first London Youth Games Beach Volleyball event, organizing many events and programmes over the summer. It was great to see adults returning to the sand and to see so many young people wanting to get going on the sand courts.

London League – Our flagship playing product got going late in 2022 and ended with 75 teams. Although the number of teams remains fairly constant the 1,218 participating players is down on previous years but the rise in junior participation far outweighs the fall in adult players.

It is widely acknowledged that there was a shortage of referees for our NVL, London league and Bucs competitions and London started to address this back in July by piloting an online refereeing course and qualifying 6 new referees. We have been successful with grant funding to develop scorers and referees and now have interest for the upcoming referee courses from 40 candidates and have already qualified 21 new scorers.

It was recognised 2 years ago that the refereeing system needed updating, so we looked at developing a bespoke system in order to future proof the appointments process. The system was introduced to the league and we experienced some technical challenges and are now confident that the new version will greatly reduce the number of hours spent on making officials appointments.

London came first in both of the U15s events and the U17s Girls at the Inter-Regionals, finishing runner-up in U17 Boys.

The executive have undergone some slight changes but remain strong and together and looking forward to moving volleyball in London forward.



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VOLLEYBALL. THE HUB. THE BOARD.
THE GAME PLAN.
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