

CHESHIRE CRICKET BOARD LIMITED
MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AT CHESHIRE FA OFFICES, MOSS FARM
ON FRIDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2024 – 10am

- 1. Attendance:** Nigel Muirhead (Chair), Di Totty (Vice Chair), Scott Elliott (Management Group Chair), Richard Newton (Director of Cricket), Mike Guest (Treasurer), David Sharp (Secretary), David Humpage (Clubs), Jim Law (County Club), Paul Brown (CYC), Nick Brooks (Independent Non-Executive Director), Neeruj Luthra (Independent Non-Executive Director), Helen Nicholson (Independent Non-Executive Director), Joanna Seddon (Independent Non-Executive Director). Invitee: Julie Rafferty (County Safeguarding Officer).
Apologies: None (everyone present)
- 2. Minutes of the meeting 20 September 2024.** Agreed and then signed by the chair as a true record.
- 3. Matters arising from the meeting 20 September 2024**
 - 3.1 Infographic (item 12.1 of 20 Sept meeting refers).** The infographic shown on the website home page depicting the Board's activities has been updated with the 2024 stats. Thank you Neeruj.
- 4. Management Group.** Minutes of the MG meetings held on 25 Nov 2024 were circulated to the Directors and Member representatives prior to the Board meeting. This item includes contributions from each member of the Management Group (Scott, Mike, Richard and David S).
 - 4.1 ECB CPA.** Board representatives (Neeruj, Richard, Gareth Moorhouse, and Jessica Lewis) and County Club representatives (Jim and John Petch) met with ECB representatives at Toft CC on 13 November for our annual Performance Review.

Richard made reference (at the Board meeting) to our funding sources mentioned during the Review meeting and in particular that 48% is self-generated. This stimulated a 'think big' discussion amongst Board members regarding possible sponsorship sources.
 - 4.2 Accounts 2023/24.** The draft accounts for the year to 30 September 2024 had been circulated prior to the meeting. Following discussion the accounts were formally approved. Proposed by David Humpage. Seconded by Nigel Muirhead.

The approved accounts will be submitted to Companies House by Murray Smith, our independent accounts examiner. The accounts are formally adopted at the Board AGM on 7 Feb 2025 after which the filleted version is circulated and made available on the Board's website.

The accounts show a £75000 deficit (following a £72088 deficit in 2022/23). Forecasts for 2025 and 2026 show a break-even situation by 30 Sept 2026.
 - 4.3 Board staff.** The Board employs 28 full and part-time staff.
 - 4.3.1 Julie Rafferty County Safeguarding Officer.** The hours devoted to the County Safeguarding Officer role are to be increased with effect from a date in 2025 to be agreed.
 - 4.3.2 Joanne Herbertson Schools Coaching Officer.** Joanne is taking maternity leave from the end of January 2025.
 - 4.3.3 Amelia Short.** Amelia has been engaged as a Volunteer Coach from November 2024.
 - 4.3.4 Michele Alder Business Support Officer.** Michele has completed 25 years' service with the Board.
 - 4.3.5 Croner HR.** Our on-going arrangement with Croner as our HR consultant continues to be useful for regular guidance and advice on HR issues.
 - 4.4 Financial support for other bodies.** The management and financial support offered to the County Disabilities teams and the new County Women's team is under review.
 - 4.5. Cheshire Cricket Trust.** The Trustees met on 26 November. For clarity the Trust is run independently from the Board.
 - 4.5.1 Opening Up Cricket charity.** The Trustees agreed to support mental health sessions for Clubs, an initiative by the County Safeguarding Officer. A suitable donation from the Trust would be made at the appropriate time.
 - 4.5.2 Young Groundspersons' Bursary.** The Trustees are keen to support the recruitment of young potential groundspersons and renewed the Trust's offer to the Cheshire Association of Groundsmen of a bursary scheme similar to the Young Umpires Bursary arranged with the ACO.
 - 4.5.3 Kit bags.** The Trustees have offered to provide support for kit bags for use by those children from disadvantaged background without equipment attending CCB training courses.
- 5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).**
 - 5.1 Cricket's Core Values.** Neeruj shared a graphic prepared by ECB displaying cricket's mission, vision and core values in a clear, concise and meaningful way. The Board formally adopted these core values.
 - 5.2 EDI working group.** The ECB continues to release regular updates and bulletins, and arrange meetings for EDI leads and local working groups. Our EDI working group (Neeruj, Julie, Richard, Gareth, Chris Edwards, Reehan Rather, and Marianne Lea) continues to bear in mind the overriding need of welcoming everyone to the game and removing any barriers for them to develop.

EDI remains a constant across all the Board's activities.
 - 5.3 EDI leads day.** Neeruj and Richard plan to attend the EDI leads day at Edgbaston on 4 Feb 2025.

5.4 Game-wide EDI census 2024. The results of the (third) annual census have been circulated to Board members.

6. Safeguarding. Julie Rafferty's County Safeguarding Officer's used a slide presentation to summarise the Safeguarding report which had already been circulated to Board members.

6.1 Julie Rafferty County Safeguarding Officer used a slide presentation to summarise the Safeguarding report (**see Appendix 1**) which had been circulated to Board members.

6.2 The Safeguarding report and presentation prompted discussion and questions relating to a range of issues including:

- The outcome of the recent Cricket Regulator CPA Review and associated action points
- Updates regarding changes to safeguarding training in 2025
- Proactive networking with stakeholders and planned delivery of Safe Hands training in 2025
- Safeguarding Adults, further to attendance at training facilitated by the Cricket Regulator and delivered by the Ann Craft Trust in September 2024. *Note: via Nick some interesting information about Safeguarding adults from the Ann Craft Trust was shared with Board members via email on 30 November.*
- Themes associated with reactive referrals and associated reporting

6.3 Nick welcomed the planned increase in hours for the County Safeguarding Officer (see 4.3.1 above), which reflected a continuing commitment to safeguarding and reflected the key responsibilities attached to the role.

6.4 On behalf of the Board, Nick thanked Julie for her input to the meeting and recognised the continued commitment of Julie and Sarah Hallas in respect of their continuing proactive and reactive safeguarding work.

7. Governance/Risk.

7.1 Additional independent Non-Executive Director. We continue to consider the recruitment of an additional iNED ideally with a legal background perhaps in employment law.

7.2 Data Protection/Privacy. We have formally replied to Steve Kenny (Assured Privacy) thanking him for his proposals and quotation, and advising that following consultation with our governing body, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), and discussion at our recent Board meeting, our Directors and Member Representatives have agreed not to pursue his offer at the present time.

7.3 Risk Register. Our Risk Register working group (Richard, Helen, Mike, Nick and David S) met on 8 November 2025 to review the register.

7.4 CPA2 Governance and CCB Rules review. Our Governance working group (Helen, David and Richard) met with Gareth Moorhouse to measure our performance against the Governance section of the CPA before the Board's annual review meeting with ECB at Toft CC 13 Nov. At the Board meeting Nick offered to join the group and the offer was gratefully accepted. Our working group meets again on 13 Dec..

7.5 2025 Elections. The Directors Nigel, Di, Helen, Joanna, Nick and Scott are all eligible for election at the 2025 AGM on 7 February and are willing to stand for another Term. They each have an option of a one, two or three year term of office which as previously discussed would help avoid the scenario of several Directors leaving office at the same time.

8. Women & Girls. Joanna referred members to the Women & Girls Report circulated prior to the meeting (**see Appendix 2**).

8.1 'Out of County' teams. The CWCL is considering how to support participation of clubs outside the county.

8.2 Women's county team. The representation of a Cheshire women's county team on the Board has yet to be agreed. In addition see 4.4 above.

8.3 ECB Transgender and Disparity Policies. The Board is aware of these policies in so far as they affect all cricket not just the Women's game.

9. Cheshire County Cricket Club. Jim referred members to his County Club report circulated prior to the meeting (**see Appendix 3**). In addition, Jim mentioned the following:

9.1 Accounts. The accounts to year end 30 Nov 2023 showing a small surplus for 2022/23 were approved at the AGM on 25 Nov 2024. *Owing to the County Club's reporting timetable the accounts cover the 2023 season rather than the season just ended.*

9.2 2025 Season.

9.2.1 1st XI. 3-day Captain: David Wainwright. T20 and 50 over Captain: Sam Perry. Coach: Gavin Colebourn. The fixtures have been agreed and the venues are being arranged.

9.2.2 2nd XI. Stewart Macleod has retired as Manager/Coach. The team will be coached by Andy Dufty. A manager has yet to be appointed, and the fixtures have yet to be arranged.

9.2.3 Scouts. Andy Newton, Nick Anderson and James Duffy have agreed to act as scouts.

9.2.4 Showcase Match. The 2025 season match will be against Yorkshire. The venue, date and format are to be agreed.

9.2.5 200 Club. Jim asked for Board members' help in spreading interest in the County Club's 200 Club. Any enquiries to Jim please.

11. Cheshire Clubs Cricket Committee (4Cs). David H referred members to his Clubs Committee report circulated prior to the meeting (**see Appendix 4**). In addition, David H. mentioned the following:

11.1 Breast Cancer Prevention Charity. The County League’s initiative to encourage Clubs to support the Breast Cancer Prevention Charity by raising funds through activities at their Clubs raised £17,000 in 2024. A similar initiative is planned in 2025 to support Prostate Cancer UK.

11.2 County League’s 50th Anniversary 2025. A book prepared by Geoff Wellsted detailing the League’s history will be available March/April 2025. A League XI will play the MCC at Toft CC in June 2025.

12. Cheshire Youth Cricket (CYC). There has been no CYC Committee meeting since the last Board meeting. Paul referred members to the short CYC report circulated prior to the meeting (**see Appendix 5**). In addition, the following items were mentioned:

12.1 Match Programme. As many of the boys’ and girls’ county teams involve Board staff consideration will be given to their availability for the needs of the Board when arranging the 2025 fixtures.

12.2 Player Ambassadors. The initiative to appoint young Player Ambassadors who have been part of the Board Player Pathway continues. These PAs provide a vehicle for current young players to voice views and share experiences.

12. AOB

12.1 ECB Public Policy support. It was agreed to support the ECB’s wish that Boards engage with local politicians to demonstrate the significant positive changes taking place across the network and encourage support for the future of cricket.

12.2 Pupil at King’s School Chester. Di advised the sad news of the fatal accident of a pupil at King’s School Chester and a player at Chester Boughton Hall CC. The boy had a keen interest in environmental issues and to mark the sad event his parents had started a fund-raising campaign in aid of environmental charities with a target of £750. Di advised that the latest news of monies raised was over £30,000.

13. 2025 meetings. 7 February inc AGM time tba, 23 May time tba, 12 September time tba, 28 November time tba. All Fridays at Hartford House, Moss Farm times tba.

Note: the dates of the May, September and November meetings are different from those suggested at the Board meeting. The meeting room was not available for the dates first suggested at the Board meeting.

Signed

Appendix 1. Safeguarding Report (Julie Rafferty)

Safeguarding CPA update

Richard Newton and Julie Rafferty met with the ECB County Safeguarding Advisor, Fiona Holden on Thursday 14 November 2024 to discuss the progress of the CPA standards and other safeguarding matters. The Cheshire Cricket Board continues to make good progress, and it’s recognised that the CCB is in “a good place” with some small areas of development, in preparation for the transition to CPA 2 in 2025.

From Safeguarding Manager, Victoria Wiegleb:

“A great report to read showing a clear vision for Cheshire Cricket Board who are being supported in their safeguarding provision from the top down.”

The main actions from the meeting were:

CPA Review					
No	Standard	Actions, progress, comments	Tracking		
			Red	Yellow	Green
4.1	Safe Hands Policy	Evidence produced shows the acceptance by the board and acknowledgement by all CCB staff			
4.2	Safeguarding policy and procedure	All new/updated policies and policy statements are on the CCB website and signed Codes of Conduct by the board and by CCB staff			
4.3	County Safeguarding Officer (CoSO)	The CCB has a CoSO currently working 21hrs, although she is supported by Sarah Hallas (Volunteer) and there is also a general safeguarding email address. CCB is considering options to increase the safeguarding role. Evidence of board reports for the last 12 months provided			

4.4	Board Safeguarding Lead	NB is in place and ensures that safeguarding matters are prioritised in meetings. NB is up to date with all training and CPD. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item for all board meetings	
4.5	Staff training	Highlighted that the Staff handbook now has a Safeguarding section. It was confirmed that codes of conduct are discussed and signed at staff inductions. I training matrix is maintained for all aspects of the CCB	
4.6	Safer recruitment	The CCB have trained staff in safely recruiting paid and volunteer staff and have a structured process of recruitment. The DBS and SHMS are used effectively to track non-compliance in clubs. This is a transitional period for clubs as club officials change	
4.7	Listening to children	Player Ambassadors have been identified from boys and girls CAG, who have a clear role description who are helping to draft a CCB Youth Engagement Plan. Initiatives in place allowing children to report concerns and developing ways to show how their views are being listened to	
4.8	Safeguarding reporting*	Low Level Concerns (LLC) and Referrals are recorded by the County Safeguarding Officer, although the ECB system for recording LLC's is "clunky", frustrating and not easy to use, as a result not all the CCB LLCs are not currently on the system and behind schedule. The system will be up to date by mid December 2024. The CoSO was praised for her excellent work with the Case Management team on many threshold cases that have arisen during the season.	
4.9	Safeguarding at events & hired facilities	All risk assessments are in place for venues, although a review is underway with managers to ensure all necessary safeguarding measures are in place. Support will be provided to clubs to ensure similar standards are met.	
4.10	Safeguarding in the Talent Pathway	Safeguarding inputs have been delivered to CAG and Disability players and parents/ carers. "Safeguarding in the Talent Pathway" training has been delivered, with a mop up session planned. A plan is being developed to ensure that safeguarding is imbedded effectively	
4.11	Safeguarding Adults	Several staff have attended the level 3 ECB Safeguarding Adults training in September and October 2024. In addition, paid and volunteer staff have completed the Ann Craft Trust adults safeguarding e-Learning.	

*Red because behind schedule not because LLCs haven't been dealt with

Additional work being done by County to support Leading Organisation Status (if applicable)	
1	CSO led CAG inductions with parents and players.
2	Club engagement- CSO presented a Safeguarding session at the league meeting to over 200 club members including CSOs and Chair people.
3	Posters with QR codes produced to raise a concern and provide feedback for CAG and rec clubs.
4	CSO network meetings. Themes regarding LLCs and how to manage.
5	Email to all staff re KCSIE updates and letter of assurance for school
6	Youth Engagement Plan being written for 2025 by the Player Ambassadors, Performance Leads and supported by CSO.
7	Safeguarding Development Plan is being written for Cheshire Cricket. CPA champion and CSO will work together on this.
8	CAG workshops for both Girls and Boys Pathway
9	Club Visits
10	Structure and levels of detail in the board report. Easy to read and understand.

Safeguarding training

A new suite of safeguarding courses will be made available before the start of next season, they are as follows:

- *Safeguarding Level 1 – SGL1* (previously ECB Safeguarding Induction)

This is a 30-minute online training module provided for anyone, completed when required.

- *Safeguarding Level 2 – SGL2* (previously SSR + relevant bolt on)

This has moved to one course, and the “bolts on” have been removed and will be available in January 2025. This is a 1-hour interactive online course with an assessment for everyone in a specialist role:

- Captains & team managers
- Coaches & activators
- Committee Members & Club Safeguarding Officers
- Umpires & Scorers

Reminders will be sent to all staff, volunteers and board members if their qualification is due to expire.

- *Safeguarding Level 3 – SGL3 (Safe Hands course)*

A 3-hour face-to-face workshop led by an ECB trained tutor/ County Safeguarding Officer:

- ECB Safe Hands Workshop for Club Safeguarding Officers (CSO) (Recreational Game)
- Safeguarding in the Talent Pathway (Performance Pathway / Professional Game)

It's hoped that the delivery of the Level 3 Safe Hands training courses for the 2025 season will take place in February, March and April 2025. As it stands there is over 100 CSO's that need refresher training and there may be additional people standing down from role, so that figure will probably increase. In view of the numbers, at least 6 courses will be delivered. As a minimum, courses will be delivered in the following areas:

- Trafford & Tameside
- Stockport
- Wirral
- Mid Cheshire
- East/ South Cheshire
- Macclesfield

Policy development update

All the main policies and policy statements have been updated and are now published on the CCB website.

The draft Low Level Concern policy will be sent out for consultation and comment ready for the next board meeting in February 2025.

Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO) network meetings

End of season CSO network meetings took place in October and November. Attendance has been good, with nearly 75% representation from clubs. As well as outlining relevant information from the ECB and CCB, the CSO's were asked about the challenges and the triumphs of the season. The following issues were raised:

Challenges	Triumphs
Lack of understanding of SHMS	No safeguarding concerns
Lack of understanding of DBS	Use of support plan for player (Behaviour)
Resistance to completing L2 safeguarding	Use of team emails
Recruitment of volunteers	Promotion
Keeping track of volunteers DBS and training	Increase in kids' teams
Language barriers	Winning competitions
Weather – over willing to play and unsafe	Nurturing junior coaches
Managing changing rooms (children & adults)	The game played in good spirit
Use of social media	Junior players encouraged to ask questions
Transport	Better reporting (increase)
Young umpires (comments & lack of respect)	Energy in clubs
Inappropriate comments	Junior forum (BVCC) – influencing change
Livestreaming (including use of Go Pro)	Having more than 1 CSO – spread workload
Juniors in Open Age cricket	
Junior player behaviour	
No feedback to CSO from league (discipline)	
Use of junior scorers	

As a result, many actions have been taken away to improve support and provide further training for CSO's for the 2025 season.

CSO compliance and Safe Hands Management System (SHMS)

Overall non-compliant CSO's	No/ expired DBS	No/ expired safeguarding training	Non-compliant for both
13	4	9	0

The SHMS has highlighted that 13 (6%) CSO's are not compliant on the system, that said, clubs are currently going through a transitional period with impending changes to club officials as the AGM's take place. Clubs will be fully supported before the start of the 2025 season to ensure full compliance on the SHMS for all club officials.

Key pieces of work for 2025

Youth Engagement Plan

The Player Ambassadors are part of a small team starting to develop the CCB Youth Engagement Plan, with a view to getting something in place for the start of Season 2025. This is a key piece of work to show that the CCB are committed to listening to children in cricket and how their opinion can help influence positive change.

Safeguarding/ Safer Culture Development Plan

The Cricket Regulator have highlighted the importance of having an action plan to harness a safer culture in the organisation, which is outlined in 3.2 of the CPA 2. By developing a Safeguarding/ Safer Culture plan will help to imbed effective safeguarding procedures which influence and impact everyday practice.

ECB Cricket Regulator Safeguarding Strategy 2025-2028 update

On 25 October 2024, ECB Cricket Regulator launched their Safeguarding Strategy. This aligns with the release of Inspiring Generations 2025-28 and cricket's core values.

This document outlines the strategic objectives for the next three years. In the upcoming months, they will be communicating with stakeholders regarding the measures they will be implementing to achieve the aims and actions identified in the 3 main areas of:

- Culture
- Delivery
- Environment

Safeguarding Themes – Referrals and Low-Level Concerns

There has been a considerable increase in safeguarding issues and cases being reported for the 2024 season, from low level concerns to cases being referred to other agencies.

The CCB made 12 threshold referrals to the Cricket Regulator and receiving close to 50 low level concerns, the main themes of the referrals are as follows:

Threshold Referrals	Low Level Concerns/ Discipline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CR Suspended player trying to register at another club • Spectator being investigated for abuse • Captain & coach – sexually inappropriate comments • Domestic Abuse seen at a club • DBS Blemishes (several) • Player subject to tribunal for sexual misconduct • Player being investigated for child abuse (Couple) • Racist and discriminatory allegations • Player on trial for serious sexual offence • Captain & coach arrested for serious sexual offence • Stalking & harassment of cricket official • Social member is sex offender • Player comes out of prison and want to play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach & bad practice (several) • Spectator had unhealthy interest in young players • Attitude of coaches and senior players to young players (open age) • Communication between coaches and managers (including opposition) • Aggression towards senior and junior players • Parents wandering into changing rooms (suncream) • Bullying behaviour • Assault in disability cricket • Unregistered players & not on Play Cricket

Appendix 2 Women and Girls

CWCL Report (Joanna Seddon)

Development and growth discussions seem as busy as ever as we get deep into the off-season, with plans for an ever-growing CWCL evolving and numbers continuing to rise for female participation across the county at all age groups.

Women and Girls update (from Jess Lewis)

ECB are in the process of finalising their 2024 numbers and will report-out soon, but we already know that we saw an increase across Cheshire of women and girls’ teams and sections, consistent with the ECB strategy to grow the female game, and Cheshire continue to be in a very healthy position.

Also connected to ECB initiatives, as part of the Metrobank program delivery, Cheshire coaches will be able to work with and mentor club coaches in their own club environments moving into next year.

Plans for 2025 are well underway, with confirmed delivery in 18 secondary schools as part of the girls’ leadership program and expressions of interest already being registered for the women’s softball division (CWCL Division 5) and the Cheshire Girls’ Cricket League (CGCL).

Developments for the county age group teams include the Cheshire U18 girls being moved into a new division where they will compete against teams such as Lancashire, Derbyshire, Notts and Staffordshire next season. Excitingly the Cheshire Women’s senior team is all set to go and will be playing in Division 1 of the new Tier 3 structure. We await details of fixtures and alignment across this, Thunder and existing club and league schedules.

CWCL and CWCL Exec update

Planning is now well underway for the 2025 season, with the AGM held on Wednesday 13th November at Warrington CC. Five new hardball teams have been approved to join Division 4 of the CWCL, three of these “moving up” from previously competing in the Division 5 softball competition. Further evidence that the focus on softball to hardball transition across the county, and with support of the Board, is continuing to pay off. The full

league set-up now comprises 46 teams, from 34 different clubs, with divisions 3 and 4 regionalised into sub-divisions to optimise the structure.

CWCL Exec met with CCCL representatives prior to the AGM to talk through and share ideas on some of the challenges faced by CWCL, which have been raised at previous meetings. These were all also discussed and debated at length at the AGM. Travel distance and balancing regionalisation of a division structure with competitiveness of the cricket (at the right level) remains a challenge, particularly in Division 2. This leads to a discussion on “out of county” team participation which has a number of challenges for CWCL. The current CWCL constitution is being reviewed and revised and will likely need to carry some clearer guidance and criteria around out of county participation. This will need to balance the desire to continue to support the growth of the women’s game and providing good quality cricket for as many as possible, with the constraint of a limited group of volunteers and increasingly stretched resources to run an ever-growing league. The Exec committee has sought (and had some success) with recruiting additional volunteers to support various aspects of running the league, but are very conscious that these resources are thinly spread and currently fulfilling needs of neighbouring counties as well as Cheshire.

2nd XI eligibility rules were also intensely debated – currently the CWCL relies on a “spirit of cricket” guidance and agreed at the AGM to move to a more formal guidance and specific rules on this topic. Detailed proposals will be gathered before the January rules and captains meeting.

Finally, we await further details of the Thunder Premier League (or Thunder Cup in 2025). Early discussions both at Old Trafford in an open forum session, and subsequently specifically with the CWCL Exec have clarified some of the proposed set-up and intent of this league, essentially acting as a bridge between the highest standards of Club cricket and county representative cricket. Whilst the prospect is very exciting for the growth of the game, and opportunities for our best club players to be further stretched against teams from across the North West, this will need to be carefully balanced against preserving the strengths (and fixtures!) of the current CWCL as well as the new Cheshire senior team and other competing competitions (e.g. National T20). More to follow on this as additional details are made available. We will be part of the working group going forward.

Jo Seddon – November 2024

Appendix 3 Cheshire County Cricket Club (Jim Law)

As ever, challenging times.

Increasing levels of administration and other demands such as increased backroom support, enhanced communications etc – are a stretch for most counties and while we’re managing well, it can be a strain. However, I know many are finding life more challenging than us.

We’ve recently contributed to the ECB’s annual performance review as part of the Cheshire Cricket Board and I’m proud to say that ‘Cricket Cheshire’ once again had a glowing review. It’s great to know that the hard work across the county – at all levels of the game – is paying dividends. Closer to home, we’re clearly doing something right at county club level.

Whilst that may me the case however, our small ‘hands on’ management team has had its work cut out as we seek to ensure full steam ahead on two counts:

- i) managing our player pathway, as juniors move through board-managed age group cricket through into our seconds and senior side and potentially further.
- ii) ensuring players of the opportunity to excel at the highest level of recreational cricket possible

I stress these points as I highlighted to the ECB that we have **two** aims. Sometimes it feels that everybody gets carried away focusing on producing the next England captain...

That said, we continue to play our part in progressing players into the professional game. We know the recent stories of Harry Dearden, Ben Gibbon, Rob Jones, Mike Finan and Charlie Barnard. This year saw Rob Lord grace our ranks enroute to a Nottinghamshire contract while Jack White seems to have reinvented himself with a move to Yorkshire and Charlie Barnard has represented England U19s. Doubtless more to come too.

I’m regularly asked when or whether, like half of the National Counties, we’ll become ‘absorbed’ by the Board and Cheshire will a become single entity.

We’ve an outstanding relationship with our Board, manage resources well between us and work well together. In 2028 the ECB is shaping to review the monies that counties receive and there is much focus on ‘reserves’ that

individual counties hold. For the record, we're currently reasonably well placed with c two years future activity 'in the bank'.

So, whether it's that financial catalyst, people skills or some other factor, and if it's agreed by both parties to be in the County Club's best interests, we'll review the situation as we did three years ago. If that's on my watch, I'll have no problem, for the right reasons.

I need to recognize the people who've supported our club so well during the year. And the important thing to note here is that I'm talking about volunteers. With a capital 'V'.

I therefore hugely acknowledge our management committee members - Stuart Anderson (Treasurer), John Petch (Secretary), Pete Babbage (Head of Cricket), Julie Rafferty (Safeguarding), Diane Babbage (EDI), Inge Bevers (Membership/media support) and Andy Newton (VC and cricket support).

Great support too from Ian Brown (Seniors), David Sharp (membership and online) and Derrick Hastings (stats).

The 'old guard' – John Pickup and President, David Bailey continue to support the Club as they always have. They remain great mentors to me too, and real level heads.

After many years' support too, I am so grateful to Stewart Macleod who is stepping down having looked after our development/ 2nd XI for so many years. Stewart is looking forward to a well-earned rest.

Thank you too of course to our members and supporters. Great to see them turning out across the county and country. Their support is hugely appreciated.

Looking to 2025, I believe our white ball game is in an excellent place. There's restricted opportunity for multi-day cricket at a senior level in the county however, but more is played at age group level. We're recognizing this and looking to move younger age group players seamlessly as best we can, to play a significant part in 2025's red ball game.

Pete is establishing a structure for this and ensuring coaching support across our first and second elevens. We're indebted to Gavin Colbourn, David Wainwright and Andy Dufty here as well as an emerging 'scout network' to keep abreast of local (and not so local) talent.

So, we certainly have good people. Great clubs too. Travelling the country makes it clear that we're spoilt by the clubs we're privileged to play our home games at. Thank you to all who host our 1st XI, 2nd XI and senior games. I know from first-hand experience what goes into putting on Cheshire games. Once again, volunteers come to the fore.

But times are a' changing. We're growing older, things are moving quickly, costs are soaring. We must scrap for our income.

In addition, our 2025 challenges include:

- bedding in our new coach regime
- 2nd XI progression i.e. age-group to senior level
- specialist white and red ball squads
- member development and communications
- 200 club development
- potential readiness to embrace Cheshire CCC women at a future date
- technology – specifically streaming advancement

The 2025 season continues to develop with new skippers and coaches. We have also finalised most home venues with potentially eight grounds for 1st and 2nd XI games.

To end on a couple of 2024 highlights:

Beating a full-strength Derbyshire side in our showcase game at Nantwich was a special day. Especially when we had to 'cobble' a side together as our big day clashed with the League's T20 Final's Day and Cheshire Cup games where clubs accounted for half our possible players.

And while the trip to Wormsley was enjoyable despite defeat, the semi-final win over Berkshire at a rejuvenated, post-swamp Alderley Edge, will live long in the memory.

Some good memories, some good times, some challenges.

We move enthusiastically into 2025...

Jim Law November 2024

Appendix 4 - Cheshire Clubs Cricket Committee (David Humpage)

The winter meeting season is now well under way, and my diary is looking quite full!

In the CCCL and the CCL changes to playing regulations are likely to be tweaks rather than radical ones this year. The CCCL has decided to have a long-term look at its Management Structure to see if improvements can be made. Volunteers are becoming harder to find in the modern world and we need to ensure that the way we run matters matches up to club and player requirements. We are reviewing the web site and looking into more automation for the collation of various marks.

It is the 50th Anniversary of the CCCL in 2025 and we have arranged to play the MCC in June to mark the occasion. Details of the arrangements for the day are yet to be finalized although it is likely to be at Toft CC in June. To mark the occasion Geoff Wellsteed has written a book detailing the history of the league from its inception. The book will be available in the spring of 2025 and I can assure everyone that having seen the draft that is well worth the read.

The Cheshire League are considering plans to extend the regionalisation of the lower reaches of the league to reduce travel.

I am pleased to report that Irby CC have rejoined the Cheshire League after two years away. It would seem that the grass is not always greener on the other side!

I am in touch with some other clubs that have shown interest in looking at the possibility of joining the County Pyramid, but any further entries will not be until the 2026 season at the earliest.

I will leave Di and Jo to report in detail on the Women's League season, but suffice to say that side of the game continues to grow with several new clubs joining the hardball section in 2025. We held a useful joint meeting with the Executives of the men's league and women's leagues and discussed the structure going forward and other items of mutual interest. It looks likely that the league will move to appointing panel umpires in the forthcoming season in Division 1 (or The Premier Division if the name is changed).

The subject of facilities is still high on the agenda. We are currently looking at the possibility of expanding the use of artificial surfaces for junior and lower standard cricket, particularly in the urban areas where pressure on grounds is the most intense. The use of such pitches has the approval of both the Women's League and the CCCL Junior League where the pressure is at its greatest. A number of such pitches are in being at schools but making them available for clubs poses several problems – access, safety, security, cost, etc. To be explored further.

The three umpiring bodies in Cheshire (ACO, CCCL Umpires Association, CCL Umpires Association) have now merged into one body under the Chairmanship of Martin Roberts. This has taken a great deal of work, and I should thank in particular Derek Barnett for his efforts in this direction. I understand that the Board is now responsible for the recruitment of umpires – a challenge indeed!

The Groundsmen's Association continues to lay on courses and is now active in many ways in assisting clubs with any problems. Several club visits have taken place under the ECB scheme to advise clubs, and it is the intention to visit all Cheshire based clubs in the next couple of years. There are several vacancies for groundsmen at clubs and the training and recruitment of groundsmen remains a serious and urgent issue.

Finally, the now customary thanks to Gareth, Jess and Dave. Customary it may be but sincerely well deserved.

DTH Nov 2024

Appendix 5 - Cheshire Youth Cricket (Paul Brown)

There is not a great deal to report from CYC. We are not having our next committee meeting until the New Year. However, a couple of points to note:

- The CYC awards which was due to be held on Saturday 23rd November has now been rearranged for early January.
- Dave Atkinson has his post season meetings with the leagues - to quote Dave "Not much back from the leagues other than it was another successful and busy junior season, weather causing issues at the start and end of the season, but participation figures are stable or increasing in most leagues and co-operation between leagues is benefitting both clubs and leagues."

END