WCL Chair’s Report 2022

As outgoing Chair, Chris Sheppard has asked me to submit the Chair’s report for this year’s AGM on behalf of us both.

The last twelve months have again proven a challenging one for all sport, cricket included, for several reasons, not least the ongoing pandemic. However, the growth and development of cricket during this period has again proven what can be achieved when the cricket community in Wiltshire pulls together.

As well the Operational achievements and developments, which the Managing Director’s report will provide more detail on, this year also saw several changes take place ‘behind the scenes’, that will impact us as our organisation for the foreseeable future and on the game itself.

The merger of the County Board and County Club into one single organisation continues to become established and we are already seeing the benefits of this on players of all genders and ages.

The introduction of the Skills Framework is a significant development and one that will hopefully support consistency in the development of players at all stages and in the communication and awareness of our talent pathway. Tom Morton, and those that have supported its development deserve huge credit and we are already seeing the impact of Tom’s role and his work to date.

My thanks also go to John Collins and Brian White who have continued to work tirelessly and their cooperation with the merger has been gratefully received.

We also welcomed also five new Non-Executive Directors to our Board following a robust and competitive recruitment process. They are:

* Dan Howells
* Harriet Leach
* Jehangir Khan
* Joanne Vickers
* Robin Hand

More details on the profiles of each of these new, as well as current, Board members can be found on [our website](https://www.wiltshirecricket.co.uk/about/board-of-directors.html). Their additions have undoubtedly made us stronger as an organisation and I can safely say that their knowledge, experience, and expertise places us in the strongest position we have been as a Board both from a diversity of thought as well as background.

They have already made hugely valuable contributions to business, and I would like to welcome them on record and thank them for their work to date. In addition, I would like to thank the existing Board members – Chris Sykes, Chris Sheppard, Steve Sadler, and Rob Moyser – for their continued hard work and support.

Changes have also been seen to our safeguarding provision within the County with the appointment of Iestyn Lewis to the contracted position of our County Safeguarding Officer. Undertaking this role previously as a volunteer, Iestyn will now be supported appropriately to offer important support in an area that is a priority for us as a Board.

This year also saw the signing of the County Partnership Agreement with the ECB. This is in essence the WCL’s contract with the ECB and drives the level of funding we receive. The ECB is the principal funder of ~~the~~ WCL.

A ~~recent~~ evaluation of progress against this agreement has recently been completed and I am glad to report we are on track with development and expectations. This is due to a combination of the hard work of our professional staff, Board of Directors, and the cricketing community of Wiltshire.

Strong foundations are now in place that leave us well placed for continued development and growth in the year ahead, such as:

* More opportunities to play across the County for players regardless of age, gender, ability, background, or ability than ever before.
* A growing professional team continually demonstrating their dedication and commitment.
* The most diverse and representative Board we have ever had as an organisation with highly experienced and knowledgeable Directors.
* Committed and passionate member organisations who continue to do so much for those wanting to play or volunteer in cricket across the County.

We have set up new [Sub-Committee groups](https://www.wiltshirecricket.co.uk/about/board-sub-groups.html), led by Non-Executive Directors, in strategic priority areas to continue to develop the work we do and supplement those already in place.

Cricket has rightly been in the spotlight recently due to experiences players have faced that have been far from inclusive or equitable and as a result action plans have been implemented to drive change. This has been a priority of ours however before this increased attention, with the launch of our [Opening Up campaign](https://www.wiltshirecricket.co.uk/news/2021-01-11/wiltshire-cricket-launches-inclusion-and-diversity-campaign-opening-up.html) at the start of 2021, and we look forward to launching our own Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan shortly, led by our EDI subgroup and EDI Board lead – Joanne Vickers.

Being a well-run and fit for purpose organisation has always been a priority of ours and our governance subgroup, led by Governance Board lead Robin Hand, has continued to make strides in this area to ensure we meet the expectations required of us with the result of these changes to be communicated shortly.

Which just leaves me to say thanks, on behalf of the Board, for those who make cricket happen in our County and work so hard to provide positive experiences.

Thanks to the cricketing community, across all levels, which has been inspirational in the way you have continually faced the challenges thrown at you. Cricket, and all sport, does not survive without volunteers and we are lucky to have some of the best in Wiltshire!

Thanks to our committed and passionate professional team led by our hard-working Managing Director – Pete Sykes - who ensure we continue to punch above our weight nationally across all areas. I am continually impressed by their dedication, innovation, and perseverance to support and provide at all levels and it is exciting to see plans develop to expand our team allowing us to do more.

Finally, on behalf of the Board and cricket community across Wiltshire thanks to our departing Chair – Chris Sheppard. His service to cricket in our County, in several roles, over a considerable number of years is one that deserves the recognition he is rightly receiving, including from the ECB’s own Board of Directors. Leaving an organisation in a better place than when you joined has always been a personal benchmark of mine for the impact someone has, and Chris can rightly leave his role safe in the knowledge that he has done just that. I have welcomed, and enjoyed, the opportunity to work alongside Chris and look forward to seeing him around the grounds this summer as a staunch supporter of Wiltshire.