ACCELERATE OUR GAME 2021–2025

SCOTTISH FA STRATEGY FOR GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

INTRODUCTION

Women's football is the biggest growth area in our national game: its potential limitless; its possibilities endless for those who seek to play, support or simply enjoy.

Recent successes on the domestic, European and international stage have brought us to a critical juncture: a moment in time when ambitions are fuelled and the collective willpower of the women's football community can propel the game to new frontiers.

Accelerate Our Game is the Scottish FA's catalyst for the next stage of the journey: a commitment to ongoing improvement from elite international level to grassroots; and a manifesto produced in collaboration with those passionate about the game's present and its future.

Women's football in Scotland has created role models to inspire the next generation to follow in their footsteps on the field and to share in their success from the stands.

From Glasgow City's historic 14 successive SWPL titles, to two Scottish representatives in the UEFA Women's Champions League and, of course, the historic qualification for UEFA Women's EURO 2017 and FIFA World Cup 2019 — these achievements will be used to reinforce the foundations of our domestic game.

ACCELERATE OUR GAME HAS BEEN PRODUCED IN CONJUNCTION WITH UEFA AND IS FOUNDED ON BEST PRACTICE FROM WOMEN'S FOOTBALL ACROSS EUROPE AND TRENDS IN WOMEN'S SPORT THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

While inspiration has been drawn from afar, the strategy is uniquely Scottish and incorporates the growth opportunities throughout our domestic competitions, explores the commercial and marketing potential, and provides a pathway from curiosity around women's football to competing on the grandest stage.

Accelerating women's football is a key component of the Scottish FA's new strategic plan, The Power of Football, and this document outlines the many ways in which we will commit to achieving our objectives.

We must be innovative, dynamic and adaptable to capitalise on the current trajectory. In the past five years we have qualified for major tournaments for the first time and doubled participation. Yet this is only the start of a journey that will require support from clubs, partners, sponsors — as well as local and national governments — to maximise the game's full potential.

It is our responsibility to ensure that we build on recent successes and tackle inequality by leading, by being ambitious and by taking a collaborative approach to providing the best possible platform for the game to realise its potential.

We know that the impact of women's football transcends the sport: it improves confidence and fosters friendships that can last a lifetime. We want to harness the power of women's football to encourage more girls to play and to provide a platform for our elite players, coaches and officials to become the best they can be. We aim to capture hearts and minds, inspire the next generation of football fans and empower girls and women to reach further than ever before in a culture where diversity and inclusivity are celebrated.

SUPPORTING OUR NATIONAL GAME: NICOLA STURGEON – FIRST MINISTER

"The Scottish Government is a committed and long-standing supporter of women's and girls' football, and I am especially proud to be patron of the Scotland Women's National Team.

Great progress has been made in recent years. Like many of you, I was there to cheer the national team on when it played in its first ever major international tournaments. We have a strong domestic league, with more clubs committing to developing teams. And more women and girls than ever before are inspired to start playing our national game. We are working with the Scottish FA and Scottish Women's Football to build on those strong foundations.

This new strategy is crucial to ensuring the continued success of women's and girls' football at all levels in country. We want to see a successful national team competing regularly in the World Cup and European Championship, supported by a flourishing domestic game. That success will continue to inspire more women and girls to start kicking a ball, in turn developing the stars of tomorrow.

But, above all, the reach and impact of football inspires the delivery of positive outcomes for individuals and communities — highlighted most powerfully by our national team. This strategy will help us harness that power to ensure women's and girls' football in Scotland goes from strength to strength."

THE STORY SO FAR

Girls' and women's football has experienced a sustained period of growth recently, providing a solid platform on which to build even greater success over the next five years and beyond. The highlights so far include:

1 *Scotland Women's National Team Qualification for* **UEFA Euro 2017** *and the* **FIFA Women's World Cup in 2019**

2 **Record levels of Participation:**
- *17% growth since Women's World Cup*
- *17,241 registered players*
- *622 registered teams*
- *2500 U7–U11 players*
- *100 female match officials*

3 **2400 participants** *across 72 Soccer Centres nationwide*

4 **Six full-time Girls & Women's Development Officers** *based regionally to support club development*

5 ***15*** *graduates from National Performance Academy selected for the* **SWNT**

6 *Increasing professionalism of Scottish Women's Premier League (SWPL) with* **71 professional players** *and* **over 30 full internationals** *from eight nations*

7 **Record attendances** *at domestic and international level including* **18,555** *at Hampden for SWNT match v Jamaica*

8 **£100,000** *annually invested into Elite Club Licencing Programme*

9 **Increased visibility of women's football:**
- *All SWNT fixtures broadcast live on free-to-air television*
- *18 SWPL 1 games live broadcast on free-to-air television (BBC Alba)*
- *16 SWPL 1 games live streamed by BBC Scotland online*

10 **Four** *new commercial partners since 2019*

STRATEGY FOR ALL

The Scottish FA and Scottish Women's Football (SWF) are key partners in the delivery of girls' and women's football in Scotland. We will work collaboratively to support the growth of the game during this transformative period at all levels.

VISION

Harness the power of women's football by changing perceptions and empowering people to inspire the nation, transform lives and build an inclusive, respected and successful game

MISSION

Protect, develop and promote women's football for all, by investing in the people, product and pathways, so current and future generations can enjoy and love our national game equally

VALUES

Focused | **Connected** | **Respectful** | **Leading**

STRATEGIC PILLARS

- ***Inspire & Support Lifelong Participation***
- ***Take Elite Competitions and Clubs to the Next Level***
- ***Deliver Successful National Teams and a World Class Performance System***
- ***Improve Visibility & Change Perceptions***
- ***Increase Commercial Revenues***
- ***Optimise Organisation and Governance Structures***

GAME CHANGERS

Our new strategy contains six game-changing objectives, each identified as key to accelerating the growth and development of girls' and women's football.

They focus on different areas of the game, from participation to performance, and outline our ambition and objectives.

Success will only be achieved with an inclusive approach: from government and local authorities, league bodies, clubs, coaches, match officials, players, parents, volunteers and of course the supporters who are the cornerstone of all that we aim to achieve.

INSPIRE AND SUPPORT LIFELONG PARTICIPATION

Increase participation and have over 25,000 registered players by 2025

We already have a record number of female players but research tells us that the potential for growth remains significant. We aim to maintain growth and provide quality, tailored opportunities that encourage and enable participation for all. To do this, we will:

- *Invest in new ways to introduce and retain girls' and women of all levels of ability to participate*
- *Support clubs to grow capacity and deliver more quality & sustainable opportunities*
- *Support and strengthen the voluntary and professional workforce*
- *Support and deliver defined and sustainable pathways for clubs, players and coaches*
- *Ensure the game is accessible and is seen to be accessible to all groups*

TAKE ELITE COMPETITIONS & CLUBS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Professionalise the elite club game

Sustainable elite competitions that meet the expectations of players, clubs and stakeholders are fundamental to the future of our game and a significant influence on the perception of women's football in Scotland.

We are committed to improving all aspects of elite competitions to help professionalise the environment and attract increased commercial investment. To do this, we will:

- *Review how elite competitions are delivered and implement an improved governance model by the 2022/2023 season*
- *Invest in an enhanced licencing system that improves player safety and raises standards across medical, sport science and technical provision for players*
- *Improve competitions by delivering an increased number of fixtures and a more equitable and competitive format*
- *Increase number of professional players in Scotland by 10% year-on-year*
- *Improve standard of match officials for elite domestic competition*
- *Double commercial revenues and support clubs to maximise commercial assets*
- *Showcase our game through bespoke marketing and communications strategy to support commercial growth targets*

DELIVER SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL TEAMS AND A WORLD CLASS PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

Qualify consistently and compete at major tournaments

The women's national team has been a beacon of success in recent years, with back to back qualifications for the UEFA Women's EURO in 2017 and FIFA World Cup in 2019. The visibility of our national team players competing on the world stage delivers role models for young girls, inspiring them to participate in football. We believe our nation belongs at this level and our players should aspire to be truly world class elite athletes. To enable and support this ambition we will:

- *Introduce a national Under-23s programme to help bridge the gap between youth and senior international football*
- *Develop a coaching framework to support a successful and distinctive SWNT identity*
- *Develop a robust regional, national and international scouting system*
- *Work in partnership with clubs & SWF to review national performance programmes and to ensure they continue to enhance player development*
- *Enable best v best development for young players domestically and internationally*
- *Support clubs to deliver a performance environment and culture*

IMPROVE VISIBILITY AND CHANGE PERCEPTIONS

Showcase our game so that it is valued by stakeholders and the general public

The perception of women's football in Scotland is positive and compares favourably to other UEFA National Associations. However, women's football accounts for around only 2% of mainstream media coverage of sport in Scotland, with men's football dominating this space. We have had a glimpse of what enhanced media coverage does for women's football via the FIFA World Cup in 2019 — over six million people tuned into BBC to watch Scotland play against England in the Group D opener. Our challenge is to harness that interest and convert into regular, longer-term audiences for the women's national team and for our domestic leagues in Scotland. To help us achieve this, we will:

- *Make Hampden the home of our Scottish Women's National Team and increase crowds by 10% annually*
- *Deliver a marketing and communications plan to amplify visibility and improve perceptions*
- *Work with key stakeholders to increase the quantity and consistency of coverage of female football in the mainstream media*
- *Increase average crowds at domestic league and cup fixtures by 10% annually*
- *Support growth of audiences in-stadia, online and on television with the support of broadcast partners and sponsors*
- *Increase visibility of domestic club and international matches through a multi-channel digital approach*

INCREASE COMMERCIAL REVENUES

Double commercial revenues

In recent years commercial revenues in women's football have increased, enabling greater investment into the game and increased distribution of prize money.

We want girls' and women's football to be self-sufficient through the generation of new revenue streams that ensure girls' and women's football thrives within Scotland.

We want to double the commercial revenues generated by both the domestic club game and national team and performance programmes. To do this we will:

- *Generate new commercial inventory across the game and develop a pipeline of title and category partners and sponsors*
- *Increase the girls' and women's football database to increase engagement, advocacy and fandom*
- *Work with clubs to create a compelling and universal brand for domestic women's football*
- *Incorporate partnership opportunities within the marketing and communications strategy*

OPTIMISE ORGANISATION & GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Ensure women's football is appropriately represented and has a voice on key decision-making bodies

The professionalism of the girls' and women's game has grown beyond recognition in the past 10 years — yet the organisational delivery and governance underpinning it has remained largely unchanged during that period. We seek to modernise the governance model and ensure the organisational structure is fit for purpose, serving the needs of all stakeholders within the girls' and women's game, and ensuring appropriate representation in key decision-making bodies. To do this, we will:

- *Implement an improved governance model that delivers for all areas of the game and improves representation across all key decision-making bodies including the Scottish FA*
- *Empower female leadership across all levels of the game*
- *Improve leadership opportunities and develop top-class leaders and future leaders equipped with the necessary skills and support to lead and represent girls' and women's football*
- *Provide a forum for players and young people to be engaged and involved in the strategic process throughout their careers*

ENABLERS

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WORKFORCE

We want the best for the people that make football happen. We will invest in the personal and professional development of our workforce and ensure that football is reflective of Scotland's society from the boardroom to the dressing room.

DATA & ANALYSIS

The Scottish FA is almost 150 years old but embraces the challenge to evolve and find relevance among new audiences. Our decisions will be data-led and use insight to find innovative ways of improving the game.

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PERFORMANCE TRACKING

We have an extensive to-do list at all times but our strategic approach enables us to give greater focus to the projects that really matter. Performance tracking will enable us to achieve our ambitions, working efficiently and effectively as an organisation and with relevant partners.

FUNDING

To grow we must invest and that requires commercial innovation. We will Accelerate the Game by engaging partners and sponsors and make them part of a compelling journey.

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"EVERY GIRL DESERVES A PLACE TO PLAY FOOTBALL; EVERY ELITE PLAYER DESERVES TO STRIVE FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE. THERE SHOULD BE NO LIMITATIONS, BECAUSE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IS FOOTBALL AND IT IS FOR ALL."

NADINE KESSLER, UEFA'S CHIEF OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL