



Sent by E-Mail.

Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020

## **RE: Return of National League System – Update**

Dear Colleagues,

We write with some important updates ahead of the 2020-21 National League System (NLS) season. As we have announced previously, The FA have been working on Scenario Planning, Club Guidance and Spectator Policy in order for the NLS to return. We are delighted that today's announcement provide the foundation for a return to football.

### **Key Dates for the 2020-21 Season**

**Subject to further approval** from DCMS and the SGSA for the safe return of spectators at National League System Grounds, we are in a position to provide the following key dates for the NLS.

#### **Start Dates:**

The following start dates are *proposed* for the commencement of the 2020-21 Season and conditional on Spectator Approval;

Step 1 and 2: No earlier than Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Step 3 and 4: Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Step 5 and 6: From Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020\*

\*Discussions to take place with Step 5 and 6 Leagues to determine each Competition start date, noting The FA Cup EP Round will be held on Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

#### **End Dates:**

The following end date has been approved by the Alliance and Leagues Committees and is fixed as with usual end dates for the NLS

No later than Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021

#### **FA Competitions:**

We have always committed to do whatever possible to ensure all FA Competitions – and the accessibility of NLS Clubs in them – was a priority in our Scenario Planning. This was always conditional on when we were able to restart the NLS. September does allow for – in principle – the full inclusion of Clubs. Key dates are as follows:

**FA Cup Extra Preliminary Round:** *Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020*

**FA Cup Preliminary Round:** *Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2020*



**Patron**  
Her Majesty The Queen  
**President**  
HRH The Duke of Cambridge KG

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<i>FA Cup 1<sup>st</sup> Qualifying Round:</i>	<i>Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020</i>
<i>FA Vase 1<sup>st</sup> Qualifying Round:</i>	<i>Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2020</i>
<i>FA Vase 2<sup>nd</sup> Qualifying Round:</i>	<i>Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2020</i>
<i>FA Trophy 1<sup>st</sup> Qualifying Round:</i>	<i>Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2020</i>
<i>FA Trophy 2<sup>nd</sup> Qualifying Round:</i>	<i>Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020</i>

### **Club Guidance Documents**

Enclosed with this letter are the NLS Club Guidance documents and The FA Guidance on the safe return of competitive training and matches. Both guidance documents are required to be observed by all Clubs. *Please distribute these to your Clubs.*

The FA Guidance is the framework approved by Public Health England enabling all competitive football to return, recommended to start with training and friendlies from August. The NLS Guidance provides Clubs additional guidance to enable NLS Leagues to commence.

**The NLS Guidance supplements The FA Guidance, which must be adhered to by all Clubs.**

We wish to highlight some key considerations for Clubs which you may wish to highlight in your communications.

- COVID-19 Officer:** All Clubs will need to appoint a COVID-19 Officer from their Board or Trustees. This person will have responsibility to ensure that Club Risk Assessments are completed and actions undertaken.
- Risk Assessments:** All Clubs will need to undertake a Risk Assessment on how they can implement appropriate measures to reduce the risk of transmission. This Risk Assessment is the tool to ensure Clubs consider all aspects of **their** Ground to be more secure. Clubs ground sharing must liaise with the host Club to create a Risk Assessment relevant to the standing of the Club the document is intended for.
- All Clubs must publish their Risk Assessment and/or their COVID-19 Action Plans on their Club Website by Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup> and notify their League that this has been completed.**
- Changing Rooms:** Clubs must give particular attention to the management and operation of Changing Rooms to minimise their use or numbers within them at any one time.

**Spectators:** We have a specific proposal lodged with DCMS, with oversight from the Sports Ground Safety Authority, on the return of Spectators at NLS Grounds. This is yet to be approved and as such, any **pre-season fixture must be**, until advised otherwise, planned to be **behind closed doors**.

We are aware of the announcements by the Prime Minister on Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> June regarding the return of spectators to elite sport and have requested clarity on the impact of this on our proposal.

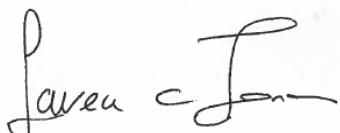
We understand that Clubs are anxious to return, and many will have been working hard already to think of how their Club can reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. We would like to thank all Leagues and Clubs for their patience and support during this incredibly difficult period for everyone involved in the NLS. The developments announced today give a roadmap to return and the support and collective work of Clubs and Leagues to be ready for September – subject to any change in Government policy – will be key in achieving this ambition.

**Club Allocations**

Club allocations for Steps 3-7 will be released to Leagues w/c Monday 20<sup>th</sup>, July.

If there are any queries in relation to the above, can they please be forwarded to [NLS@thefa.com](mailto:NLS@thefa.com)

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laurence Jones".

Laurence Jones  
Head of National League System