

£10 million lifeline from the National Lottery for National League football announced by Culture Secretary

- Will help much-loved local teams play this season and allow clubs to continue vital work in their communities
- UK Government now working with the National Lottery to ensure similar initiative with Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland FAs
- Government work continues to expedite the safe return of fans in England

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden has today announced that National League football clubs will receive £10 million funding as part of a unique partnership with The National Lottery.

The support will benefit the 66 clubs in the fifth and six tiers of English football, so that they can continue to play behind closed doors after the return of fans was paused due to rising infection rates.

Alongside the support for clubs, National Lottery players will also get a range of benefits – including free tickets once stadia are safe to reopen, grassroots football opportunities, and VIP experiences at Wembley Stadium.

It comes after the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport assured the National League that emergency financial support would be forthcoming so that it was able to start the season earlier this month. All 66 clubs are playing football this season as a result.

The £10 million emergency support package, which will reach clubs quickly via the Football Association (FA), is in recognition of the important role National League clubs play in their local areas – being a source of pride to their towns, giving children opportunities to get active, and being at the heart of their communities.

Many clubs and their supporters have also been very active in their areas throughout the pandemic, rallying round to help the elderly and isolated, and raising money for front-line charities.

Oliver Dowden, Culture Secretary, said:

I know from a brilliant club in my area that National League football clubs are the beating heart of their communities and too precious to lose. This £10 million fund will provide a bridge to help clubs survive this immediate crisis whilst we work together on

the safe return of fans.

I'm very grateful to National Lottery players for getting help to these community clubs so quickly.

Nigel Railton, Chief Executive of National Lottery operator Camelot, said:

The National Lottery has been making a huge difference to communities across the country for the past 26 years, so we're delighted to be working with the National League and FA to protect these essential clubs and help them to continue the vital work they carry out in their local communities.

Millions of National Lottery players love football, so our partnership will also see them receive a range of great benefits. It's our way of saying thank you to our players, who make a difference every time they buy a ticket.

Mark Bullingham, FA Chief Executive, said:

This financial support is crucial as these clubs are the heartbeat of their communities and it would be a travesty if they were not able to survive. We have worked hard with the National League, Government and The National Lottery to make this happen and would like to thank everyone involved.

The return of fans to stadiums remains a priority for us and we will continue to work with the Government and stakeholders across the game to reintroduce spectators in a safe way as soon as possible.

This initiative is with the FA and National League, and the UK Government is now working with the National Lottery to ensure similar initiatives with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland FAs.

Funding will be distributed to each of the 66 National League clubs to help cover their lost gate revenue from the delay to fans being permitted to return, that was originally scheduled for 1 October. The decision was taken to pause this relaxation of the rules on 22 September, in order to stem rising coronavirus infection rates across the country.

Work continues to ensure fans can return to sporting events as soon as the public health picture allows. This includes the [Sports Technology Innovation Group \(STIG\)](#) – made up of medical experts including Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jonathan Van-Tam, sports authorities, and representatives from the tech sector – which is looking at innovative solutions to enable the return of spectators without the need for a coronavirus vaccine. The STIG will make recommendations to the government.

Today's announcement builds on support the government has already given the sport sector to help it stay afloat during this difficult time. Sport England announced a £210 million emergency fund, largely enabled by National Lottery funding, for grassroots clubs, and [earlier this year the Government stepped in to protect rugby league with £16 million in emergency loans.](#)

These interventions were on top of the multi-billion pound package of business support from the Treasury that enabled many sports clubs to survive, including the furlough scheme and business interruption loan scheme. From 1 November, businesses can claim under the new Job Support Scheme, which has been extended to help those required to close due to coronavirus restrictions, including sports venues.

The Government is also working at pace with sports governing bodies and clubs across the country to fully assess what support is needed as a result of the decision to postpone the return of spectators from 1 October.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

The money for the initiative is coming from a National Lottery promotional fund. It is not being funded by money allocated for National Lottery Good Causes or by Camelot.