

WE
are
the
GAME

CHARTER FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



manifesto



WE ARE THE GAME

A CHARTER FOR FANS OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

THE CHARTER'S DEMANDS

1

GROWTH MODEL

The establishment of a growth model for the women's game avoiding excessive commercialisation - including fan-based ownership and cooperatives

2

PROTECTION

Protection against misogyny, sexism, homophobia, sexual assault for all trainees, players and staff with special protection for those in academies

3

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Investigation into women's health, menstruation and injuries leading to development of medical and mental health support systems

4

ACCESSIBILITY

Full accessibility for fans at women's games, control over ticket prices and broadcasting



5

SPONSORSHIP

Ban betting and gambling sponsorships and encourage alternatives including unions, government bodies such as the NHS, local/regional/nation governments, not-for-profit sector

6

REPRESENTATION

Representation of fans on boards and encouragement of models of community ownership



7

ONGOING SUPPORT

Post playing career support - medical and mental health support and training to participate further in the game (coaching, managership etc) on retirement



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SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY LINKS

Clubs to establish plans to support grassroots/amateur women's football

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EQUALITY ISSUES

Clubs to campaign on equality issues and to encourage the promotions diversity throughout the players, staff and management.



10

KIT AND EQUIPMENT

The right to equipment and kit for players specifically designed for women or with women in mind



Why we need a charter for women's football

The women's game is beginning to gain more traction in the aftermath of the Lionesses' victory at Euro 2022, and as a result attendance numbers are rising. We need to establish a charter for fans of the women's game in order to recognise and protect some of the unique issues the game and its supporters face. The charter will also act as a preventative measure to help block the excessive commercialisation of the women's game, and ensure it exists for all to enjoy in a safe and positive environment.

CHARTER DEMAND 1

The establishment of a growth model for the women's game avoiding excessive commercialisation - including fan-based ownership and cooperatives

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The men's game thrives predominantly off of huge transfer fees, sponsorships, and exists in a pyramid that makes the chances of clubs being relegated and promoted extremely difficult. The gap in quality and wealth between grassroots and non-league clubs is exponential, and some may say irreversible. This has taken place over a long span of time since the Football League was founded in 1888.

The women's game is a lot fresher in its development, and therefore there is the chance to prevent it from having the same fate as the men's game. The general goal is for structures/ legislation on ownership and rules to be put in place in order to avoid such huge wealth gaps becoming replicated in the women's game. This is an opportunity to experiment with different more inclusive models of ownership, allow fair wage structures and treatment for players and workers within the sport. A focus should be on keeping the game accessible for working class fans.

CHARTER DEMAND 2

Protection against misogyny, sexism, homophobia, sexual assault for all trainees, players and staff

Every club should take responsibility and measures to protect players and fans from misogyny, sexism, homophobia and any form of abuse/sexual assault. There should be safety officers appointed and fan surveys should be conducted to ensure that measures are effective.

The end goal should be creating a space where all feel welcome and safe, and able to be themselves in the terraces and the perimeter of the grounds. Special consideration must be made to ensure the protection of fans travelling to and from the home ground and in collaboration with host clubs, to those travelling away, including abroad.

Players should similarly be protected from abuse from supporters. Campaigns should be promoted about consent, anti-domestic violence and misogyny.

Clubs should establish women's and LGBTQ+ supporters groups, for fans who seek allyship and comfort. These measures are specifically needed to give such fans the opportunity to attend matches together, in order to help them feel safer in a space that has generally been male-dominated and sometimes hostile, unwelcoming and unsafe.

CHARTER DEMAND 3

Investigation into women's health, menstruation and injuries leading to development of medical and mental health support systems

Women's health concerns are unique in many ways, just as certain injuries to women in sport are. A survey by the British Medical Journal found that lower limb injuries incurred during matches are a substantial problem in senior women's football. The prevention of lower limb joint, ligament, muscle and tendon injuries should be a central focus of injury prevention interventions in senior women's amateur club, elite club and international football. ACL injuries are particularly common, and are one of the most severe injuries one can incur.

The fans charter urges clubs take responsibility into commissioning research into this area, in order to provide a solution, and for physios and doctors to be up to date on the findings, and implement them to protect players.

Menstruation - all clubs should provide period products in women's toilets on match days to create a welcoming environment for all and to help combat period poverty.

As well as injuries being investigated, the effects of menstruation on women's performance levels during certain times of the month should be looked into by clubs and their doctors. Rest days relating to menstruation should be offered and diet should be analysed in order to offer players the best possible support for their health

Maternity - Players should be provided with fair policies and support relating to maternity leave.

Women players are prone to similar mental health pressures associated with male sportsmen. Clubs have a responsibility to develop clear guidelines to support players facing mental health issues such as stress, depression especially when facing long term injury. We argue that these should be made available to players on retirement from the game.

CHARTER DEMAND 4

Full accessibility for fans at women's games, control over ticket prices and broadcasting

In 2023, Fifa shamefully threatened not to broadcast the Women's World Cup after rejecting multiple bids from a number of public and private broadcasters for what it described as significantly under-priced bids. The federation urged broadcasters to bid more, stating 'it is what the women's game deserves'. This approach is completely counter-productive, with its sole aim being to commercialise and capitalise off of the women's game.

Football should not be sold as a product to the consumer, and if rights are sold, it should only be to public broadcasters for all to enjoy at no cost. International tournaments such as the Euros and the World Cup should be available to watch and stream for free on the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 etc, with the aim to further promote the growth of the women's game and its fanbase.

Broadcasting rights should not go to "the highest bidder" - in the cost of living crisis, football should be made accessible to all and should be broadcast on freeview with free outdoor screenings in major cities.

Community streamings of matches should be encouraged, but so should affordable ticket prices. Clubs should keep costs as they are now. For example, men's Premier League club Manchester United charges up to £950 for a season ticket, whereas their women's team charges £60 for adults and £30 for concessions – this is based on a cost of £6 / £3 per home Women's Super League (WSL) fixture, with one fixture allocated free of charge. No more than two shirt releases per season, at a reasonable price.

CHARTER DEMAND 5

Ban betting and gambling sponsorships and encourage alternatives including unions, government bodies such as the NHS, local/regional/nation governments, not-for-profit sector

Clubs should separate sponsorship of contracts covering women and mens teams. This would allow introduction of different kinds of sponsorship to be applied.

The women's game should outlaw sponsorship based on gambling or betting of any kind. They are instead encouraged to promote messaging that reflects the needs and interests of local communities along with charitable causes and campaigns supporting the morals and the values of the club. This approach should run throughout the team game, across all elements of the club, its premises and external signing. Where possible this should include stadium naming rights on Women's match days.

We urge clubs to recognise the important influence they have on communities and young people and use this responsibility to use the sponsorship system to raise awareness of health issues. This could be coordinated with local schools, councils and the NHS.

Proceeds from shirt sales can be donated to the causes promoted, as well as helping fund the running of clubs and players' wages.

Clubs should offer support to fans who have suffered with gambling addiction, and create a safe environment for those who have to enjoy match days without feeling triggered.

CHARTER DEMAND 6

Representation of fans on boards and encouragement of models of community ownership

Fans will be allowed to form a Supporters' Union for each club in the Premiership and the Football League. The Union will have annually elected officials on the boards of clubs who can contribute and agree to internal procedures, similar to other unions.

An agreed percentage of season ticket sales will go to the running costs of the Union. The Union will also be able to fund itself through membership fees and other means.

The Union will have a right of consultation over changes that profoundly alter the nature of the club from the supporters' viewpoint. This includes ground relocation and whether a proportion of stands be allocated to standing.

At least 50 per cent of the board should be made up of women and/or LGBTQ+ supporters. Women and minorities voices need to be heard, and particularly in the running of their own clubs that deal with the unique issues relating to womanhood and sport.

CHARTER DEMAND 7

*Post playing career support
- medical and mental health
support and training to
participate further in the game
(coaching, managership etc)
on retirement.*

Each club will aim to establish welfare, health and training departments that continues to work with players, staff and management after their retirement.

CHARTER DEMAND 8

Clubs to establish plans to support grassroots/amateur women's football and sport

Clubs should encourage and promote community football, amateur local teams and where they decide appropriate, extend this to other sports. This can be funded directly, in association and collaboration with others and through the development of their own sponsorship programme.

CHARTER DEMAND 9

Clubs to campaign on equality issues and to encourage diversity throughout the players, staff and management.

The lack of diversity among women in football is clear, particularly in British football. Despite the number of black, Asian and minority ethnic players selected for England women youth teams increasing from 7% to 17% between the 2017-18 season and the current campaign, the Lionesses winning team at the Euros in 2022 had an all white starting XI.

Funding and schemes should be put into place by the FA and by each individual club starting at academy level, to ensure equal opportunities for female players from minority backgrounds.

Clubs should support campaigns that tackle equality issues such as under-representation, anti-racism and women's rights.

CHARTER DEMAND 10

The right to equipment and kit for players specifically designed for women or with women in mind

Players have the right to feel comfortable and to be equipped with kit that allows them to maintain their performance levels. England's Lionesses will wear blue shorts instead of white at the Women's World Cup following player's concerns over periods, and this should be a policy rolled out at every club, with different options available.

There is a big difference between men's and women's football boots, mostly in terms of the fit. Until 1975, only men's boots were available for purchase and use. Boots are often marketed to women by big brands which are just smaller sizes of men's boots that already exist. Women's football boots should be specifically designed to fit a narrower foot, are usually lighter in order to help with greater ball control, and have different studs. Female players should have access to boots designed for women's feet treads to help them achieve the best possible performances on the pitch.



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