



# 2021/22 ESCA AGM - President's Report

Date  
26<sup>th</sup> January 2022

I think we were all relieved when we realised 2021 may be closer to 'normal', at least in cricketing terms, and that something resembling a full season was possible. I was not upset to see the significant scenario planning around the 'what if' of Covid, and implications on fixtures, ultimately be wasted. I was certainly not upset in not having to deal with potential scrapping of promotion and relegation and the inevitable fall out.

As it was, a large amount of cricket was able to be played. Congratulations to Gala in winning the Championship and although it was a shame to see them not make the EPL, we will be happy to see them back to take on the challenge of retaining their title in 2022. Congratulations to the other league winners on hard fought campaigns, for which we will sort silverware out for the pre-season meeting, so at least you can have the trophy on the mantelpiece for a summer. Congratulations to Carlton on winning the Masterton and Edinburgh South the Terry Newcombe, but additional congratulations to Morton on not 1 trophy, but 3; taking home the CS Challenge Cup, Parks Trophy and Braw Skelp.

Once again, we thank our sponsors at Baillie Gifford, Felsham PD and Readers for their support. Their continued support is appreciated and is absolutely vital to the development, growth and playing of grassroots Cricket in the region.

Although 2021 can be classed as successful, I think we can agree it still had its challenges, particularly with the threat of Covid still lingering and restrictions in place...and still a lack of teas.

Other challenges were perhaps not so immediately obvious. Collectively, we did well to avoid the 'lost season' in 2020; the success of the efforts made clear in that there was a drive by a lot of clubs and membership to get back to cricket. However, the initial surge of enthusiasm did not necessarily reflect the full situation, with some clubs not able to get playing or volunteer numbers back to where they were in 2019.

It will be interesting to see how this develops in 2022. We have already engaged clubs around playing numbers, where there seems to be significant optimism from some, given (now) 6 new teams have highlighted their intention to join the league. I will invite these clubs to say a few words on this tonight, as there are clearly some good news stories in this, with clubs benefiting from some of the unintended benefits to working practices forced on us by Covid.

Whilst I too am optimistic, I also retain a level of wariness. The thought of 66+ new players is great, but I can't help feeling that some of these numbers may have been plying their trade elsewhere previously, and that the 'elsewhere' doesn't necessarily realise they are now past tense. As such I would ask clubs to keep an eye on their playing numbers as people come

out of the winter hibernation and loosen off aging (or aged) muscles and get ready for the inevitable aches that come with the first net session of the year. Thank you to Heriots for their review, approach and subsequent communications around their proposed 4ths today.

I will reiterate what I have said in previous years around the need for flexibility and collaboration, particularly in the lowest leagues, to ensure we have as many people playing every weekend as is practicable. This may not be just playing membership, but volunteers too.

In relation to volunteers, I have some thank yous to make. I'd like to thank my ESCA committee colleagues and advisors for the effort put in to ultimately make this happen. I'd like to thank David Gibson and Phil Yelland in particular for their continued support, particularly when juggling various other roles for club and beyond. Certainly I think we have been very fortunate that Phil decided that his spare hours of retirement clearly needed filling with yet more cricket! Thank you also to Chris Grindell, who steps down as South of Scotland Cricket representative.

As before, I cannot reiterate enough that the ESCA committee members are all volunteers and sacrifice their own time to make cricket happen for many people. I ask that everyone involved in cricket in the East bears this in mind when we ask for support and sometimes patience. I am appreciative to those who have put their hand up this year to help, particularly to our new vice president elect, Kash Hussain.

For 2022, there are going to be changes coming. I had expected one of them to be the Presidency of ESCA, but clearly 3 years isn't enough punishment. Some of the changes will be technological, as we hopefully welcome a new returns system and the opportunity to live score games. Huge thanks to Peter Kingsbury for his Cricket Stats system over the years. Some will be unlikely to help waistlines, with the potential for teas to return. However, some are far more important.

Cricket had something of a watershed moment in 2021. The widespread implications and fallout of the harrowing testimony to a Parliamentary Select Committee in November are still being felt. Evidence of racism in cricket continues to be identified with more individuals coming forward and sharing their experiences. We need this to happen in the whole of Scottish cricket, including the East, irrespective of how uncomfortable the findings may be.

As hopefully you will have seen, the Plan4Sport independent investigation has been launched in conjunction with sportscotland and I reiterate the call for people to come forward and share their experiences. As noted on the comms to clubs and on our website, it doesn't matter if someone feels their experience is in some way too small or insignificant, the review team wants to hear from everyone who has a story to tell. The experiences shared with the team will help shape the recommendations and make the sport a better place for everyone involved. All contributions will be treated in full confidence and will not be shared with anyone directly involved in Scottish cricket.

We continue to be committed to reviewing and actioning the findings of the independent review when they are made available and have engaged with both Cricket Scotland and sportscotland. We have also started to engage and listen, including meeting representatives of Running out Racism, with follow ups expected in February, as well as engagement with Plan4Sport.

We, as ESCA, have also started to review our own existing structure and policies and to identify actions we can take now. Although racism is a key driver for the need for change, equality, diversity and inclusion needs to extend further. We have already got some positive things in place, such as our approach to Women and Girls' cricket thanks to Annette and the launch of the funding scheme, and some diversity within the committee, but we have a long way to go and a lot to learn.

As such, we will be looking to appoint a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion lead, responsible for leading the EDI sub-committee. This team will have the remit of creating a strategy for implementation of the independent review recommendations, identifying safe space for reporting, training needs and generally discuss ideas on how cricket can be more welcoming and engaging for all.

Out of challenge comes opportunity and change for the better. In this case, I strongly believe the cricketing community have the opportunity to learn, listen and then lead the necessary change that can be used to educate others within cricket and wider sporting circles and rebuild trust. But we need to work together to do so.

**Neil Granger**  
ESCA President