



Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: Sport governance, HC 855

Tuesday 25 January 2022

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Members present: Julian Knight (Chair); Kevin Brennan; Steve Brine; Julie Elliott; Damian Green; John Nicolson; Jane Stevenson; Giles Watling.

Questions 370 - 483

Witnesses

I: Rod Bransgrove, Chair, Hampshire County Cricket Club; Mike O'Farrell, Chair, Middlesex County Cricket Club; Lord Patel of Bradford, Chair, Yorkshire County Cricket Club; and Gareth Williams, Chair, Glamorgan County Cricket Club.

II: Tom Harrison, Chief Executive, England and Wales Cricket Board; Barry O'Brien, Chair, England and Wales Cricket Board; Martin Darlow, Deputy Chair, England and Wales Cricket Board; and Baroness Amos, Board member, England and Wales Cricket Board.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rod Bransgrove, Mike O'Farrell, Lord Patel of Bradford and Gareth Williams.

Q370 **Chair:** This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and this is our latest hearing into racism in cricket. We have two panels today. We are joined in our first panel by Rod Bransgrove, chair of Hampshire County Cricket Club, Mike O'Farrell, chair of Middlesex County Cricket Club, Lord Patel of Bradford, chair of Yorkshire County Cricket Club, and Gareth Williams, chair of Glamorgan County Cricket Club. Rod, Mike, Lord Patel and Gareth, good morning and thank you for joining us.

Before we begin, we need to do some declarations of interest and I want to make a short statement. I will declare, first of all, that I have received hospitality from the ECB and Surrey County Cricket Club. I am also chair of the Lords and Commons Cricket Club.

Giles Watling: I have received hospitality from the ECB.

Kevin Brennan: I have received hospitality from Glamorgan County Cricket Club, which is located in my constituency.

Steve Brine: I have once upon a time received hospitality from Hampshire County Cricket Club as a Hampshire MP.

Chair: Thank you. Before we begin, I wish to make a statement. The Whips' Office need not be worried about this statement.

It concerns Mr Colin Graves. Mr Graves, who was chair at Yorkshire during much of the abuse that was suffered by Mr Rafiq, was invited prior to that session. He refused to come before this Committee, saying that he did not have anything to add. Mr Hutton claimed at that Committee that the Graves Trust, which obviously Mr Graves set up, was a roadblock to change at Yorkshire and that it stopped him from making necessary changes to the board in order to—he believed—tackle the ongoing issue of racism.

We would probably have left it at that. However, Mr Graves decided to brief a very well-trained journalist—put it like that—at *The Yorkshire Post*, where he expressed his view that the trust is only a passive participant at the board at Yorkshire and that he did not know, frankly, why we were so concerned about its role. As he had put his head above the parapet, we asked him to come before this Committee. However, he is in Barbados so he will not be joining us.

However, we received a letter from Mr Hutton, which further outlines some of the issues. I wish to read out some of the extracts from this letter about the Graves Trust and its role within the board at Yorkshire. "First of all, Mr Graves is a substantial figure within the club's history, responsible for many of the club's greatest advances and achievements and without whom the club may have become insolvent. He was also CEO



and chair at the time that many of the instances of racism were found to have happened at the club. He is, I believe, the donor to the trust, which has lent the club approximately £15 million. Whilst the trust has independent trustees and a full-time observer on the board reporting to it, what was happening on a weekly basis sometimes appeared to me as if Mr Graves was influencing the trust and sometimes spoke as if he was. Mr Graves expressed concern on how the investigation had taken place—that is the one into Mr Rafiq and his allegations—“some of which I empathised with, but his views on Azeem Rafiq, the findings of the report and how the club should respond to those findings were very different from mine. Shortly after that meeting, I was contacted by the trust’s independent observer. He explained to me very clearly that I should not consider the trust an ordinary secured creditor. He also told me, although it transpired to be incorrect, that the trust could remove me if they didn’t like what I was doing and that I should listen to what they say. The trust summoned me to a meeting and specifically asked me to listen to Mr Graves and others in the club whose views differed to those of non-executive members of the board but were more closely aligned to those of Mr Graves. I did speak to Mr Graves but our views on the culture of the club and the way forward remained very different. I formed the view that some of his opinions were very similar to those of the executive of the board and others in the club who later wrote to the board.” You will recall the letter being leaked to the press.

It seems to me from this letter—and they are allegations; after all it is “he said, he said”—that there seems to be substantial and ongoing interference by Mr Graves in the governance of Yorkshire County Cricket Club. We therefore reissue our invitation to Mr Graves to come before this Committee in order to explain himself in terms of the aspect of the handling of Mr Rafiq’s allegations but, more pertinently right now in terms of the session we have in front of us, to also explain the role of the Graves Trust then and going forward. We would like him to appear. It may not seem like a Yorkshire-type statement, more an Americanism, but we really think that Mr Graves should put up or shut up in this instance. So again we call on him to come before us.

After that, Lord Patel. Thank you very much for joining us.

Lord Patel of Bradford: Good morning.

Q371 **Chair:** Good morning. What is your view? The Graves Trust—a passive instrument: yes or no?

Lord Patel of Bradford: Since I started, I wouldn’t say they were a roadblock in anything that I had to do with them. I met with the trustees. I had very frank, open discussions. They operated very professionally. They were very supportive of everything I was doing and they certainly were not a roadblock in terms of me asking anybody to leave the club or my wish to appoint anybody to the board at all.



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However, I have read all the statements. I understand where people are coming from. I think when you have a financial agreement that has those added extras—that is, you can have an observer on the board, although my understanding is the observer just observed and did not interfere—you could veto in theory the appointment or exit of a person—

Chair: The veto power. So it is not just an observation power, it is a veto power.

Lord Patel of Bradford: They have a veto power, which again was not used while I was there and I do not believe it was used before that, from what I have seen. We have been in discussions and we are currently drafting legal documents to make sure all those powers are removed. They will be presented to the AGM. There will continue to—

Q372 **Chair:** Will the observation power still be there? Will they still be able to sit and observe?

Lord Patel of Bradford: No. They will operate like any other financial institution. We would expect them to conduct their fiduciary duties, such as quarterly financial updates, just like a bank or any other lender would. The trustees have been phenomenally supportive in that and very, very professional.

Q373 **Chair:** Is that partly because maybe they had no other choice at that juncture? The situation had run so out of control, you had lost international cricket, you were facing bankruptcy, all your sponsors had left, so frankly it would be *[Inaudible]*. You would have been very foolish to have put roadblocks up. You probably would have walked, wouldn't you, if the trust had not backed you?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I would have wanted some hard evidence why I could not do what I wanted to do with all the issues before me, without a shadow of a doubt. I don't think I would have walked but I would have put some real serious challenges in the way as chair.

Q374 **Chair:** It is fair to say that there was no option, so it is an entirely different set of circumstances to the ones that Mr Hutton faced when he was in your position.

Lord Patel of Bradford: It is difficult for me to say because I wasn't there then, clearly, but I have seen some correspondence where I believe the trust were raising questions in a proper manner linked to the finances of the club.

Q375 **Chair:** Do you recognise the fact of soft power as well—the fact that they are there, that they have the money and they are in the room, they are observing and they have that veto power? That is quite a lot of soft power, isn't it?

Lord Patel of Bradford: That is there and I think that is why it was so important that we— From the day I started, I said, "Look, we will work



this through” and we did. We worked it through and the lawyers are drafting papers as we speak. That will not exist in the coming weeks.

Q376 **Chair:** It is the fact, though, that if you recognised, by taking the actions that you did, that there was an issue there, you recognised ergo there was an issue. What was that issue? What concerns did you have that made you take the action to effectively remove some of the powers of the Graves Trust?

Lord Patel of Bradford: It was a joint decision to remove those powers. The trustees were fully on board. To some extent, they had no wish to have those powers. They must have been set up historically. There is a very clear perception, and, Chair, you have said it very clearly, that Colin has the ability to interfere in the club. Nobody doubts the massive contribution he has made to Yorkshire. Nobody doubts the massive contribution he made to the England and Wales Cricket Board. However, to have that potential or perception that somebody does have power in a place is not helpful for anybody, going forward. Personally, I would have liked to have looked at refinancing a number of our debts and consolidating them. Obviously, lenders are not queuing up at the moment to let me do that.

Q377 **Chair:** Can you say for certain that Yorkshire is a changed club?

Lord Patel of Bradford: From nine weeks ago when I walked in, it fundamentally feels different. When I went in on day one I didn’t feel quite comfortable. Last week we had near on 380 members at a forum to discuss issues, a tough two hours. I think we have travelled a long way, and this is just with the members—I will come back to the club itself—because the members are crucially important. For such a large turnout on a Saturday morning, I think on Monday morning we had 100 new memberships sign up. I had emails from people getting on in age, saying, “We need to change. The things you are doing, we did have a go at you but I think they are on the right path”. That felt a real change. Walking through the corridors every day when I walk through the door, I have enjoyed going to work. I enjoy seeing people and talking to them. That wasn’t the case on day one.

I think fundamentally we are changing, but there is a long way to go. The foundations are in place, the scaffolding is up, but to build a skyscraper is going to take some time. But I am very optimistic.

Q378 **Chair:** You drew some criticism for clearing out the entire backroom staff. What was your reasoning?

Lord Patel of Bradford: Obviously, I cannot go into detail in terms of individual ongoing employment issues, but it was very clear. This decision wasn’t taken lightly. I am a social worker by profession. It is hard on a human level to let people go for things that have happened. There was no doubt that we needed to have fresh leadership in the organisation. People had been allowed to do things. There was a culture where you couldn’t challenge, you couldn’t speak, or you felt you couldn’t. I cannot



prove it wasn't, but it feels now that members of staff come to me every day and say, "Are you sure this is the right thing to do? Can we tell you another way?" I do not think they had that ability in the past.

As an example, you just have to look at the coaching. We had to employ six new coaches and people said, "Who is going to come to Yorkshire? You just got rid of the last lot and we can't do anything." We had over 90 applications from across the world—90, some of the biggest names in cricket. I purposely did not get involved in the interview panel. We took on board the ECB's new criteria—completely blind applications. We scored each one. Darren Gough was shouting at me all weekend. It took him two days. We scored every single person, five individuals did it blind, and the best person came out, Ottis Gibson, one of the best coaches in the world. He won on the scores and he won at the interview. He happens to be black, but suddenly we have gone from people who have been in the club a long, long time, who were reasonable, to one of the best coaches in the world being head coach. Something is happening that is right. That process is echoed in our advertisement for non-executives.

Q379 Chair: Do you recognise, though, that by removing the entire backroom staff you may have got rid of people who, frankly, had little or no involvement in any of the allegations that we have heard and, in fact, now potentially could end up with their careers being blighted because of the associations that have been drawn from the fact they have been exited from your organisation?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I think that everybody at the club feels their careers are blighted, to be honest. That is the saddest part of this—going in every day, seeing young men and women who are working their socks off but are terrified that come February they may not have a job. It was sad to hear a young man say, "I got a job in here serving tea and that was the best day of my life. I got this badge, the Yorkshire badge. I have to hide it now when I leave here." I have had members of staff who have been told in the street to take their Yorkshire shirts off because they are racist.

The fact that we have come so far in such a short space of time does bode well. We are moving forward, we are looking at the positives. We have a once in a generation opportunity to produce the best county cricket club in the world and we are big enough to do it. We are bigger than Australia and New Zealand put together. We are huge. The reach from rural to urban to diversity—my inbox is full of people saying, "We want to help. If you are going to do the right thing, and you appear to be doing it, we are there to help."

You just have to look at the data. I was part of the ECB many years ago when we did the south Asian action plan. We knew then that nationally 35% of all recreational players were from an Asian background but then you got to one or two at test level. There is no difference at Yorkshire if you dig into the figures; more so because in Yorkshire, if you take Bradford and Kirklees, we are probably—I am waiting for the new census



figures—well over 50%. We have a huge talent pathway. If they are there at 10 and they are disappearing along the way, why? We are looking at all the data. We are examining where the pathways are falling, and we have a number of activities to begin to change that. But we need support. We need support from the community, from corporates, and, of course, from the ECB, which we are getting with the action plan that we are localising.

Q380 Chair: Do you think you have done enough to get international cricket back?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I am physically exhausted but I am really energised. I genuinely think that putting this huge encyclopaedia of information together was not just about getting international cricket back. Of course, it is crucially important because without it we are financially not viable, but it was about doing the right thing, and because of Azeem and because of his bravery, somebody like me has the opportunity to do something that just comes around once in a lifetime to change a whole county, the sport of cricket and wider sport. We are that big we can deliver in partnership with others the whole of this, because it is almost a blank sheet. People are realising every day, “Oh, I didn’t think about that.” You can see that learning happening.

Q381 Chair: How do you get international cricket back?

Lord Patel of Bradford: The ECB, rightly so as the governing body, has set us very tough criteria, a 10-point action plan. For me, it was, “Are we discriminating, are we not? What is happening?” I set up the whistleblowing helpline within a week. I started a full independent governance review, which delivers tomorrow: changing our board, changing our leadership, changing our culture, listening to people, engaging, making sure we deliver what we should as a first-class venue—the whole myriad of specific criteria we have been set. For the last nine weeks, we have done nothing else but meet those criteria. It has not been me just sat in a room; it has been every member of staff that is there. They have been involved in it. It is about challenging and saying, “How did that work?”

Of course, people are going to be defensive and say, “We do this really well, so why did this happen? We do that well, so, why did that happen?” I am targeting specific communities as well. I would love to tackle the whole nine protected characteristics. We have gone for four at the moment. I think that women and girls is crucially important; south Asian communities make up the largest population there; disability and those who are less well off with income. It covers that broad spectrum and I think that is what we need to do.

Q382 Chair: Those sound like very broad and long-term objectives, but you need international cricket back right now. When do you think you will have it back? When are you going to get it back?



Lord Patel of Bradford: There are two points; sorry, Chair. We have made immediate priorities and we are taking immediate actions now. We have a series of short-term actions from now to three months, which we have surpassed completely, six to nine months, and longer term. We will submit all our evidence by the end of this month and then we will present to the ECB on 1 February. We will then await a decision by it to see if we have met the criteria.

Chair: Okay, that is good. I am glad we have established that. That is brilliant. Thank you.

Q383 **Kevin Brennan:** Good morning, everybody. Thank you for coming along. Mr Williams, you represent Glamorgan County Cricket Club, whose Sophia Gardens headquarters is located literally a stone's throw away from the most diverse community in Wales, with South Riverside and Grangetown just down the road. As you know, I contacted the club last year to talk about some of these issues and Hugh Morris, the chief executive, was very helpful. We were not able ultimately to do a meeting that we were hoping to do, but that can still happen. Can you tell the Committee what Glamorgan has been doing about this issue of diversity at the top level of the game and down through the age ranges and so on?

Gareth Williams: It may be helpful if I begin by explaining the constitutional structure because, of course, it is different in Wales. Sport is a devolved matter in Wales. Glamorgan is a first-class professional club, which has a governing body, the ECB. Within Wales, though, the governing body for recreational cricket is Cricket Wales, which is funded in part by the ECB and in part by Sport Wales. Much of the work below us in Glamorgan is done by Cricket Wales, but we have a very strong relationship with it.

May I deal with one issue? Obviously I understand that you are looking at it from the perspective of a Cardiff Member of Parliament. Glamorgan is in a unique position because we don't simply represent the interests of the old county of Glamorgan. We are effectively a club that also represents Wales, and the ethnic diversity balance is slightly different in that context, because in Wales, at the last count I think 5.2% of the population was ethnically diverse. In Cardiff, I think that it is nearer 20%. The position at the club itself is that currently 10% or thereabouts of the playing squad are from an ethnically diverse background.

Q384 **Kevin Brennan:** How many players from Wales from an ethnically diverse background or from a south Asian background have played first-class cricket for Glamorgan in the last century?

Gareth Williams: In the last century? Well, I don't have that off the top of my head, but I am very happy to provide it to you. I can tell you—

Kevin Brennan: Would it be wrong to say it was one, or are there more than that?

Gareth Williams: Who have played for Glamorgan?



Kevin Brennan: At the first-class county level?

Gareth Williams: We have two who are in our squad currently. One is Kiran Carlson, who is the vice-captain of the entire team. He also at 23 years old was the captain of Glamorgan when we won last year in the Royal London Cup, and he is one of our potential stars. He has a huge presence, even though he is only 23, in the dressing room. We have Prem Sisodiya, who is another Cardiff man, I think.

Kevin Brennan: Yes, he is.

Gareth Williams: We have two out of our squad of 22, I think, excluding international players. We have—

Q385 **Kevin Brennan:** It has been put to me that excluding international players, those might be the only players from ethnic minorities from Wales who have ever played at the top level for Glamorgan County Cricket Club.

Gareth Williams: I doubt that would be right. What I am concerned about, bearing in mind I have been chair for just three years, is the current position. I think that we are on the right path with two of our players out of a squad of 20. Obviously our aspiration is to make that a higher number.

Q386 **Kevin Brennan:** When I contacted the club last year about this, before we had our inquiry on the Committee, Hugh Morris, the chief executive, told me about the work that was already under way at Glamorgan County Cricket Club. Can you outline what that is?

Gareth Williams: I think you also had an opportunity to speak at one stage to Mark Frost.

Kevin Brennan: Yes, that is correct.

Gareth Williams: Mark is a communities officer who is employed jointly by Glamorgan and Cricket Wales, literally 50% of each. He is doing a huge amount of work within the community and also for Glamorgan. Our aspiration is to increase the number of players who are playing at first-class level, obviously. The big issues for us are scouting, coaching and resources. We have currently five full-time coaches, none of whom is from an ethnically diverse background. It floats—we have somewhere between 10 and 15 part-time coaches. I am pleased to say that of the 10 to 15 part-time coaches, currently four are from an ethnically diverse background. We are about to recruit a fifth. Our intention is that we may well have a sixth on board within the course of the next few months. At our level, where coaching and playing is critical to us, we are, I think, making significant progress.

Q387 **Kevin Brennan:** Do you think there has been a problem historically that players from ethnic minority backgrounds from Wales are not coming through to the top level? You only have to look around the playing fields



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of Cardiff to see how many cricket-mad south Asian people there are.

Gareth Williams: I am afraid I performed as a cricketer at a very low level, but I was performing in the Cardiff mid-week league, which still exists. In my day, which would have been the 1980s, the mid-week league was dominated by British Asian players and it still is. I forget how many teams are in the league now. There are, say, 25 teams, I suspect; at least 80% of them. You are quite right: historically there has been a big issue.

This is a project for us. It has been ongoing. Mark Frost has been with us in particular for eight years. He has done a huge amount of work and I really welcome the opportunity to invite you to Cardiff to speak to him. I think you would be hugely impressed by the efforts that he, Cricket Wales and Glamorgan have made. It is a priority for us. We know that historically there have been significant issues. We are working extraordinarily hard and I would not wish to leave those volunteers who are working at this to be hugely dispirited by perhaps getting a wrong impression of a club that is trying its very best to put this right.

Q388 **Kevin Brennan:** What is your analysis of why up until now—and I take on board the steps that you are taking and have initiated before this inquiry that we held—players have not come through at the top level when there is such enthusiasm and so many players, as you have rightly said, playing the game recreationally?

Gareth Williams: I have absolutely no doubt that historically there have been issues of racism in the sport generally and no doubt in Glamorgan in particular. That must be the case because the figures simply demonstrate that to be the case.

I am satisfied that it is not the position now. As I said, Mark Frost has been in place for about eight years. It is like turning a ship slowly. Glamorgan itself, as you may well be aware, suffered from huge financial crises for a long period of time. Thanks to the work of the acting chairman of the ECB, who is my immediate predecessor as chair of Glamorgan, we have put ourselves in a position where we are now financially sound. That has been a trigger for us to be able to make an investment into the diversity programme that is so critical. Yes, of course, we have been slow at having our foot on the accelerator, but I would not wish you to think otherwise that it is not a critical priority.

This may be an opportunity for me to mention, lest I don't get the opportunity elsewhere, that on our board there are 11 directors, six of whom are independent directors, three of whom are female, and two directors are from the British Asian community. They are terrific directors and make a huge contribution. They are helping to drive our response to the EDI issue generally.

Q389 **Kevin Brennan:** Is that a fairly recent development?



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Gareth Williams: I have been on the board for just over three and a half years and they were there when I got there. I am not sure how long before, but I suspect probably three to six months before at most.

Q390 **Kevin Brennan:** It has been put to me by some people within the cricket world in Wales that children from south Asian backgrounds who show talent do not always get treated the same way as kids from perhaps better-off backgrounds, who have more opportunities in life, shall we say. What do you say to that accusation within Welsh cricket?

Gareth Williams: I cannot honestly comment on whether that is true or not. What I can say is that there is a resource issue here with which we are grappling at the lower level. As I said, Cricket Wales is primarily responsible for trying to develop ethnically diverse—

Q391 **Kevin Brennan:** Do you think they are doing a good job?

Gareth Williams: I think that they are doing a terrific job, given the resources that they have. There are big issues, for example at academy level and below, in attracting young people from an ethnically diverse background.

Q392 **Kevin Brennan:** It has been put to me that they have too many people on their books who are salaried staff, rather than investing that money into supporting young players from disadvantaged backgrounds into getting the kind of coaching and development that they need. Is that a fair accusation?

Gareth Williams: I am bound to say, from my discussions with Cricket Wales prior to this meeting, that that would not be a fair representation. All I would say, since that plainly is not necessarily within my level of expertise, is I extend an invitation to you to talk to the chair and the chief executive of Cricket Wales, both of whom are formidable ladies and are absolutely committed to work in this area. They can tell you a lot more, together with Mark Frost, about what is going on. I suspect they would say that that criticism is wholly unjustified.

Q393 **Kevin Brennan:** Can I ask a couple of questions, Chair, with your indulgence, of Mr Bransgrove from Hampshire? You have been chair for a long time at Hampshire, for over 20 years. Do you think during that period of time the governance of the club has lacked diversity?

Rod Bransgrove: No; in fact quite the reverse. When I first came into Hampshire, I joined Hampshire with my long-term business partner, Feroze Janmohamed, who happens to be from a Kenyan Asian background. One of the first things that we identified was that we had little connection with the Asian communities in Southampton, which represents a large part of the Asian communities in our catchment area. Together with Channel 4 television, we participated in a programme where we opened a city cricket club at what is now known as Hoglands Park, which is immediately adjacent to the Antelope Inn, where Hampshire cricket was first founded in 1863. This city cricket club was



primarily for the purposes of encouraging cricket amongst the Asian communities, which indeed for a while it certainly did. It wasn't sustained and that has been our concern—we could not sustain the club. It did not self-govern very well. Perhaps we could have done more to intercept that, but it did not really work.

Q394 **Kevin Brennan:** Do you have any members from ethnic minorities on your board?

Rod Bransgrove: Yes. Of course, Jan is on the board. He has been on every board that I have had for 30-odd years. We have recently been joined by a lady called Jenni Douglas-Todd, who is well known. She is the EDI director for the national health service and has enormous experience of EDI, although my brief to the directors is, generally speaking, that we are all EDI directors. Giving somebody a specific responsibility for that does not dilute the responsibility of us all to ensure that we have a diverse and inclusive attitude towards the structure of our game.

Q395 **Kevin Brennan:** The striking thing that has come out of the sessions that we have had on this is the disconnect between the number of young south Asian players that there are out there with a great enthusiasm for the game, and the startling decline in representation at the elite level of players from diverse backgrounds. What is your explanation for that, as someone who has been involved in the governance of cricket for a long time over that period of decline?

Rod Bransgrove: It is a matter of grave concern that we do lose so many players, and very often in the immigrant communities. Part of the reason for this is because many of those families live in the less wealthy areas. They live in the deprived areas. We have identified an area in Southampton known as the Flowers Estate and we have recently introduced a state school academy, which uses our professional coaches' contact with the professional game to try and encourage young people to take up cricket, which means providing space, resource and, most importantly of all, kit. Kit is a big barrier to participation in the game for less wealthy families. I am sorry to say that in many cases that does include those from Asian backgrounds and even the Afro-Caribbean people in those areas.

We are addressing it. It is something that we want to put right. We have had players that have come right through our academy system to the first team but very often, of course, these are people who have been educated at private schools. Our reach-out has been much more directed towards the deprived areas and then collecting those who come from diverse backgrounds in the process of that. The very successful experiment that we are conducting in Southampton we have great plans to repeat shortly in Portsmouth, which has quite a high deprived community, and other inner cities.

Q396 **Kevin Brennan:** You are talking a good game there in terms of what should be done. Can I put something to you? Feel free to deny it. It has



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been put to me that at the chairs' meeting at The Oval that took place on 19 November you were heard to say to some of your colleagues, "The trouble is that they've forgotten the value of white men," and that you, in response to the Azeem Rafiq racism revelations, said, "I know what racism is like; I'm a white man over 60." Are those comments that you remember making? Are they accurate?

Rod Bransgrove: Certainly not.

Kevin Brennan: So you would deny that?

Rod Bransgrove: Absolute nonsense.

Kevin Brennan: Well, I have given you the chance to put that on the record.

Rod Bransgrove: Thank you very much.

Q397 **Julie Elliott:** Good morning, all. A couple of you have talked a little bit about what you were doing before the EDI strategy was announced. Mike, can you say what your club was doing before the EDI strategy on diversity within your club?

Mike O'Farrell: Yes, of course, and thank you for the opportunity. There are three things. I think it is important to remember that all the counties have been very heavily engaged in this, directly or indirectly. At Middlesex we set up a separate plan. I should go back a little and say that in the 1980s and 1990s about half our side was made up of culturally diverse people from the Caribbean background, so this is not a new situation.

In 2019 we set up a diversity and inclusion plan, which was aimed at working with the clubs in the area. Middlesex covers 130 clubs, all of which are run by volunteers. We started working with them to try to encourage. I would say that about 60% of the players in those clubs are also from culturally diverse backgrounds. We are working quite hard with them to do that.

We have had for some time—it is now talked about as a whistleblowing campaign, but actually we have very free access for members. All of us on the board particularly have emails where members come, and Middlesex members, as distinct— I must make the point that Middlesex and the MCC are separate. We are partners, but Middlesex members are not necessarily MCC members. Therefore, we encourage them to contact us directly. There has been a lot of opportunity for them to do that and they have done that. Where that happens, we go and see the individuals concerned, and I do a lot of that. Where it comes to the parents—and there has been an issue about diversity and parents with clubs and schools—we have gone out there as well. All this has been going on for some years.



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The announcements that came out in November—and I thought that Azeem Rafiq’s evidence was compelling and very powerful—have not had a dramatic impact on us in the number of people who have come to us. We have had four extra people come to us as a result of what is now called whistleblowing. Bearing in mind that within the Middlesex catchment area, as I said, in some clubs it could be 80% are culturally diverse, we have been able to keep the doors open and make sure that they have access to us.

The other thing we are doing is we are now setting up separate coaching programmes. We have been lucky enough that—

Julie Elliott: Do you do that as a direct result of this?

Mike O’Farrell: No, this was beforehand. One of the things that has been very good for us over the years is that people have come to us and said, “Can we work with you and young people?” Some 40% of people in London are below the poverty line. We have encouraged people to come and join us. Where they have not been financially secure we have encouraged, with the help of a livery company in particular, to offer scholarships or bursaries. That means that they can take part in coaching and they don’t have to pay anything.

In addition to that, we have been lucky enough to have a couple of people come to us and say, “If you are going to give us focus to allow us to support young people who are less well off, we will offer help there.” So we have been doing quite a diverse range of activities. We have a women’s section as well. We have a separate centre for women’s cricket and we have a separate centre for youth cricket.

Although this is an accelerated process, it has been in train for some years. I think that lots of other counties have as well. I am sorry, it is a long answer.

Q398 **Julie Elliott:** No, it is very informative. Do you think that this strategy coming out will make any difference to what you are doing? Has it added anything to what you are doing or are you carrying on with what you were doing before? Then I will come to the other gentlemen to ask the same question.

Mike O’Farrell: There are three things. One is it enhances what we are doing because it is necessary to do that. Secondly, and this is quite important, people have come out and said, “Can we help you?”, exactly as Lord Patel has said. We have had one or two people who are quite financially involved in the business world who have said, “Would it help if we gave you some money that would be focused on bringing in those people who cannot afford to join the game?” That is the second part. The third part is that as a result of this we have now made sure that we have some extra help so that if there are people who have specific issues we will get somebody to go to see them as well as us.



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We have also had some issues that have resulted in us having to refer letters to the police where we have been challenged on racist matters, and those are in the hands of the police. I have the police numbers if you need that. That has been addressed. So we are moving and reacting and responding in as clear and positive a way as we can.

Q399 Julie Elliott: Mr Bransgrove, what impact has the EDI publication had on what your club is doing? You have said a little about what you were doing before, but has this had an impact on your club? What are you doing differently and, in particular, what are you doing differently to boost women's cricket?

Rod Bransgrove: I think that we are pioneering women's cricket at Hampshire. We run the regional franchise, the Vipers, which runs brilliantly. We are generating larger crowds to come and watch stand-alone Vipers games. We will be increasing the number of the squad this year. We take the team out on roadshows to schools and other places to develop and encourage participation in ladies' cricket. To be quite honest with you, I felt as though we were already up to speed in that area. All that the report has done is made us revisit all of the individual aspects and say, "How are we doing here? Is there anything we can do better that we are not doing so well?"

Q400 Julie Elliott: Have you identified anything that you can do better?

Rod Bransgrove: Yes. That is why we have decided to expand the programme of the state school academies to try to reach more underprivileged groups. I do not know whether we would have done it or not, but that is one thing that has come out of us considering how we can improve our reach.

The other thing is expanding the role of Jenni Douglas-Todd to ensure that she has a good oversight of EDI across our entire group, because it is more than just Hampshire cricket in our case. We have spent a long time. We are only a 22 year-old company so we have a slightly shorter history in some respects than many other county cricket clubs. We have reflected on all of the overseas players. We have had all of the Asian players we have had through. We have tried to second-guess whether we have made any mistakes along the way. We had intended approaching everybody and asking them, but we wanted to find out first what the structure and processes would be like with the national whistleblower system because we did not really see any benefit in instigating our own system if we had a national one that was working. We feel comfortable that we are not vulnerable in any way, although we have looked at all of our documentation processes to make sure that we record things accurately in case of any challenge in the future.

I believe passionately that we were very much on this pathway and that what the report has done has accelerated our attention to it.

Q401 Julie Elliott: Mr Williams, the same question?



Gareth Williams: So far as women and girls' cricket—

Julie Elliott: EDI as well, though.

Gareth Williams: Yes, I will turn to that. So far as women and girls' cricket is concerned, I know that Cricket Wales has three full-time women and girls officers who literally go around Wales, beating the drum of cricket. I know, too, that there has been absolutely exponential growth in women's participation in cricket in Wales, some spectacular figures. It is something like about a 600% or 700% increase. I think that is in no small measure due to the efforts of Cricket Wales, which I have just mentioned, and latterly, whether it is popular or not among everybody in the cricket world, to The Hundred, which has unquestionably attracted women and girls to cricket who would otherwise not have been interested in it.

So far as EDI is concerned, of course, this issue has been a driver from our point of view, but at Glamorgan we have had EDI as a board agenda for a very considerable time. One of our British Asian directors is driving it for us. In July last year, we applied for accreditation—this was probably before this story hit the press—in Investors in Diversity. I think that we may be the only sporting organisation that has done so, certainly as far as we are aware the only first-class county. Our expectation is that we should know probably by early autumn if we are successful. That organisation does a root and branch analysis of the whole culture of the cricket club. I am reasonably optimistic that accreditation will come, but clearly we have many hoops to jump through.

Q402 **Julie Elliott:** Has the publication of the report itself made any difference to what you were doing? Are you doing anything differently from before?

Gareth Williams: It has expedited the joint plan that we have been working on with Cricket Wales on EDI and that is coming back to our respective boards, in our case in a couple of weeks' time. We will look to implement that plan. A lot of the work is going on anyway, but it has encouraged us to put a foot on the accelerator that much more.

Q403 **Julie Elliott:** This is a question for everybody. The EDI strategy came out very quickly after our session with Azeem Rafiq, and I am interested to know what consultation there was and how the ECB involved all of you in coming out with that. If we go along the line, we will start at that end.

Rod Bransgrove: In fairness to the ECB, they were incredibly engaged in this process, following this Committee's intervention.

Q404 **Julie Elliott:** How did they involve you in your organisation?

Rod Bransgrove: They pulled all the county chairs and all the stakeholders of the entire game together into one afternoon session. There was a great deal of debate, because of course there are still many of us who feel that the game is not institutionally racist but there are clearly pockets that have emerged. I was one of those who was



concerned that we might all be tarred with the same brush. But the one thing that everybody agreed with—

Q405 **Julie Elliott:** But you must agree that there is certainly, or there was certainly, some institutional racism in cricket in this country?

Rod Bransgrove: That is what emerged from the committee meeting, and obviously we had suspicions about what was happening at Yorkshire and there were other isolated cases, but I hadn't seen the game as being institutionally racist on the ground. It never appeared that way to me, and I have been in the game for 22 years but have been following it for decades. Hampshire had a long history of overseas professionals from the West Indies. These were people who came to our homes and who we got to know, and there are still very good friends of mine to this day in the Caribbean islands. So it was not something which I felt. It may be a regional thing, I have no idea, but I did agree with Tom Harrison and the ECB board that we must all be a part of the solution to this, and that we all need to re-examine ourselves and to become better at acknowledging the EDI principles.

Mike O'Farrell: I think several things. Sometimes it takes a shock to bring people home to reality. Whilst there is a very clear view that the game, and I want to emphasise this—at the grassroots level, the recreational game and the support of thousands of volunteers, about 40,000 people, unpaid, who support the game, they do not see it in quite that category, because they are all involved in playing with all sorts of different people from all sorts of different backgrounds. So when that comes out in the way that it did, it triggers in some cases, some overreaction. In some cases you have got to go back to say, "Hold on a minute, we are doing quite a lot of things very well." What the ECB has been doing over a period of time—and Kamlesh alluded to this with the south Asian players—we have been working quite hard to make the game not only seem to be more available, but be more available. This has accelerated the process for a lot of people, but also—and the ECB have worked closely with us on this one—sometimes when you are working together in a collaborative way you miss things. In this case it was very fast and we had to come together and find a way forward, and in doing that there were certain frictions which, because we were all quite grown-up, we were able to deal with. That does not mean—

Q406 **Julie Elliott:** What type of frictions?

Mike O'Farrell: A statement would be made that, for instance, "You must reach 20% or 30% by April 2022," and you could say, "Well, hold on a minute: we are moving down a path that could get us there. We would rather do it a little bit later when we have had a chance to make sure that we have got the right people in place." As it happens, many of us have got 20% or 30% culturally diverse people in our management structures, but it is no good just saying, "You must do that within a three- to four-month period," because these organisations are for the



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most part voluntary organisations. So we have to rely on the good will of everyone to work together, and that is why it takes rather more time.

I think the ECB's concept is absolutely right; how we get it to where it needs to be is part of the engagement that the counties must have. I think the counties themselves have spent an enormous amount of time working very hard at this.

Q407 Julie Elliott: Lord Patel, clearly you were very much around just at the time when all this was being drawn up. How were you involved in this with the ECB?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I am a little bit anxious, in the sense that there is never a silver bullet to sort this. If I just take the EDI plan as a starter, and some of the comments, it is really helpful that a governing body puts a framework out that is fairly clear but you localise. That is important. If it is one framework that we all localise in very different ways because of different demographics and issues, at least there is something to measure. It is really important because we have all talked about that we have known this for 10, 20, 30 years. I was a part of the ECB when we produced the South Asian Action Plan. That has been there for six years. Why have the figures not changed? The Inspiring Generations strategy is all about that cricket is a game for me, for boys and girls, for primary schools. Why hasn't it changed?

I can give you an encyclopaedia of the initiatives that Yorkshire has done in the community, from working with Afghan refugees, to women and girls, to giving free school meals with free coaching. It feels to me that the initiatives that everybody has done—and people probably will not agree with me—are add-ons. They feel like an afterthought. It has not cracked the major issue of why we still have large numbers of kids at recreational level who are not coming through the system. There is something systematically, fundamentally wrong and we have not measured it.

Q408 Julie Elliott: If we focus on that, do you think this strategy will change that and see those young people come through into first-class cricket, and how long do you think it will take us to see that change?

Lord Patel of Bradford: In the last several weeks we have worked on localising the ECB's action plan. At first sight you think, "Oh, no, come on," but actually when you work through it, I think if you localise it, put the key performance indicators in, and measure it and we are held to account, all of us can move. I am fairly confident it is a plan that will work.

Q409 Julie Elliott: How long will it take?

Lord Patel of Bradford: In some places it will take years and in some places it will take decades. This is an engrained problem. And this is not just about south Asian communities. It is absolutely about women and girls, it is about cultures, it is about poor working class. Darren Gough



has just joined us as managing director and his abiding memory is that when he first played his county game at Yorkshire they put it in the newspaper as “the rat catcher’s son” because his dad was a rat catcher and he turned up in the rat catcher’s van. He said, “If it was me today I wouldn’t be able to play because I couldn’t afford it.” So I think there are lots of factors, social, demographic, coaching factors; do your own staff reflect the population? There are governance factors. I am lucky; we have got a clean slate while we are putting all this together, but unless—

I think that this Committee is right to say, “Let’s see this move every quarter” because if we don’t see it move every quarter—even though it might take a year before things start moving—we will be back here in 10 years’ time saying, “We have had lots and lots of initiatives and we are doing our best, but those kids are still missing in the system.”

Q410 Julie Elliott: For the other three, do you think this strategy is going to work and how long do you think it is going to take? Very briefly.

Gareth Williams: I think it will work. Lord Patel is right that it is in for the long haul. It depends on the extent of resources that we as a county, and beneath us the recreational game, can invest. I know that is a significant issue but the will is there. There are all sorts of demographic problems. In Wales, for example, our average earnings are lower, those from a diverse background live in rented accommodation—a much higher percentage of rented accommodation. There are big, significant issues and there is no point in pretending that all these fine words and the actions that we take will bring a cure overnight.

Mike O’Farrell: I think it will work. I think it is working. We have three people on contract out of the 22 who come from culturally diverse backgrounds. We have a whole lot more. We have signed the agreement with Sachin Tendulkar in the academy. I believe, and I want to emphasise, that the counties have not been given credit for the work that has been done over a long period of time.

Q411 Julie Elliott: How long do you think it will take?

Mike O’Farrell: If we want to get to 30% we can do that in a year because we have got three on now. I fully expect to see our first XI, for instance, have two players of a cultural background with two others there out of the 22 professionals. I believe that we will have the same lower down, in the second XI and in the academy. There is definitely a willingness, there is definitely a commitment, and there is now the willingness on the part of the outside world to say, “Okay, if you are serious we will support you,” and we are seeing that.

Q412 Julie Elliott: Do you think that this will work and how long do you think it will take?

Rod Bransgrove: I believe it will work. I cannot put a timeframe on it, but we will use our best endeavours. In some areas I think we are already there and are probably overachieving in some areas. I think we



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have identified what the issues are in our particular area and we are addressing them, and we have accelerated that process.

Lord Patel of Bradford: It is much easier for me than my colleagues here, because I have inherited something that has blown up but is useful, and you take advantage of that. In eight weeks we have signed a partnership that would have been unbelievable eight weeks ago, when Azeem was giving his evidence here about institutional racism against a Pakistani. We have signed a partnership deal with a Pakistani Super League team, the Lahore Qalandars, who are phenomenal in doing outreach, half a million kids in two and a half years, giving them the opportunity to have regular coaching. We have signed a deal with them and we have an overseas Pakistani player coming.

We are working with universities and colleges to look at apprenticeships, looking at degree-level sport accreditation. We are working with local businesses. There is so much potential through the door of running an iconic sport venue where you can bring those other resources. We have thousands of girls and women coming through our system. We know cervical screening is a problem. Why can't we do it with them in partnership? The CCG will be happy to fund that. There are 22,000 spectators coming and we can deliver health outcomes in that process. It is thinking out of the box.

In a sense I have taken my cricket hat away and just thought, I have an iconic sporting venue, I have access to hundreds of thousands of kids and people; how can we get together? Why can't we celebrate Eid in the ground, why can't we celebrate Hanukkah in the ground? Why can't we celebrate all of these things and bring people together? Close the alcohol stands for the day. We have that great opportunity but on a large scale in partnership with others. I think this framework gives me the ability to do that.

Q413 **Chair:** To pick up on something Mr O'Farrell said—that counties are not given the credit—we are aware of some of the initiatives that you and some of the other chairs have outlined and I have seen personally. You mentioned the 1980s and the fact that there were many players of diverse background. However, most of those were overseas players. I think that Roland Butcher was from an Afro-Caribbean background.

Mike O'Farrell: Yes, and Wayne Daniel and others.

Chair: The first player to play for England from an Afro-Caribbean background. However, we are struck as a Committee by that figure that Lord Patel stated earlier of 35% recreational cricketers from a south Asian background. You operate from one of the most diverse cities in the world. How is it that you can just say, "We are not getting the credit"? You are still underperforming and that is across the board. You are still not up to speed. Do you mind if we don't actually give you credit? Would that be—



Mike O'Farrell: We are not looking for credit, Chair. We are trying to give the facts: 57% of the players that we have under 17 come from culturally diverse backgrounds, and as we move up the chain, particularly when we get to the academy, we then find that that becomes more difficult for several reasons, part of which is education. We work with three other counties, Berkshire, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, who also feed in players at that level. We also have the state versus private school sector to cover. We are trying manage all that expectation.

The other thing in the diversity bit is that the football and rugby world becomes much more attractive to the Afro-Caribbean community. In the south Asian community we find there is a moment when they do not want to commit the time that is necessary to go to the next step because they sometimes prefer—I am not saying that they always do it—to go into other educational fields, and then cricket becomes secondary. Part of that is because it is a rather more time-consuming sport than some others. So we are finding that is difficult. That is changing with the 2020 sport and the one-day games, but we are now finding that we are coming full circle, because the game is getting more exposed. There is much more choice and variation in the games and therefore the south Asian community, young men and women, but particularly the women, are finding this a much more attractive sport. So we are moving it forward; it is not as fast as we would like it to be, and we are trying to make as many opportunities as we can.

Q414 **Chair:** You were interviewed by Rob Bonnet on the “Today” programme this morning. In that interview you stated that there were three to four allegations of racism at the club that had come forward. You described that as “not particularly significant”. Why did you describe it as not particularly significant?

Mike O'Farrell: Because they were not particularly significant in the context of the professional sport. They were significant in the context of the individuals concerned, and I will use one example, if I might. I went to see this man. He wrote and so I went to see him at his club, and he suggested that we had broken the psychological barrier, I had broken the psychological barrier between him and his son, because he had not been selected for one of the Middlesex underage sides. That was a formal complaint so we treated it as such. I am not dismissing the severity of the complaint; I am saying that in relation to professional sport, that was a completely different issue. Of those four, two are like that at the moment.

Q415 **Giles Watling:** I must be very brief because I have to leave to go to the Chamber. There is a bit of confusion over the help that Roger Hutton asked for. He said that he spoke to the ECB on 4 September, suggesting that the ECB handled the investigation. He felt that that was the best way forward; in fact he told us he felt that was the best way forward. However, the ECB disputed that and told us that Roger Hutton merely asked for someone from the ECB to join the already existing Yorkshire



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investigation. I think this goes to you, Mike. Were you, as chair, as aware of Roger Hutton seeking that help from the ECB?

Mike O'Farrell: Forgive me; I am not the chair of the ECB, I am just the chair of Middlesex.

Giles Watling: I absolutely realise that. As you are chairs of your various counties, were you aware?

Mike O'Farrell: Roger told me that that had happened, and that was the first that I was aware that that was the case. He said that this was the statement that was made here, that was his view. That was the first I knew of that.

Q416 **Giles Watling:** Did you hear the ECB side of that story?

Mike O'Farrell: No, because I was only told about that very recently, so therefore I have not gone back to the ECB.

Q417 **Giles Watling:** Okay, so that is going nowhere. We know that Mehmooda Duke resigned as chair of Leicester soon after the announcement of the ECB strategy. Was that resignation related?

Mike O'Farrell: Let me be clear on this one. I respect Mehmooda immensely for her skill and her professionalism. She made it clear that she resigned on a matter of principle. That is a subject now for discussion between her and the ECB. She made it very clear that she felt that the way that the process was being conducted, particularly in relation to her, was not something with which she was at all comfortable. The ECB have received notification of that and she sent me a copy. That is now a matter between the ECB and Mehmooda.

Q418 **Giles Watling:** As far as you are aware it is not related to the strategy that was launched?

Mike O'Farrell: Not as far as I am aware, of the strategy. I think it is something specifically apart from that.

Q419 **Giles Watling:** Do you think it was to do with her relationship with the ECB on how it engaged with the issue of racism within the sport?

Mike O'Farrell: In my dealings with working with Mehmooda, I have found her very open and very direct and she is very well respected among the chairs for her skills. I think she is going to be the new high sheriff, if she is not already the new high sheriff. Certainly as a professional I found her very, very good at engaging. So my thought might be that her approach, which was very direct, was not working in the way that she wanted, though that might be the way forward. I don't know the answer to that question, except to say that from our perspective—let's talk about Middlesex's perspective—and the dealings I have had with her on matters like that, and race, she was very fair, very open and very clear.

Q420 **Giles Watling:** It does seem a shame, does it not, though, that the only



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female chair of a first-class cricket county should resign under such circumstances?

Mike O'Farrell: I agree. I think it is a great shame that she is not there, as I think it is a great shame that some of the other people are not there as well. She brought strength to the table and it is a pity that that strength is not there at the moment.

Q421 **Steve Brine:** Good morning. When Mr Rafiq accused a number of players of using racist language, one of the defences that was used was that the comments were banter—you remember that conversation. Professor James Newman of Sheffield Hallam University, who has spoken to us, led a study into football coaches. He said that sport as a whole is still too willing to accept behaviour that would be unacceptable in other professions. He said, "It's hard-wired into sport that there is tolerance of banter, and that individuals are expected to put up with things that wouldn't be allowed elsewhere. As we are increasingly finding out, it is very hard for a player to say 'you've actually offended me' when their power base perception is so low." That would concur with some of the evidence that Mr Rafiq gave us.

I am very happy to start with you, Mr Williams. Is banter a problem because there is a lack of professional boundaries in cricket clubs?

Gareth Williams: I can only speak for Glamorgan. I made some enquiries about the issue of dressing-room culture before I came to this Committee meeting. I explained that two of our players were British Asian players and I know that they have been asked whether they felt that the culture currently in the Glamorgan dressing room was one where they could take objection in any way to the conduct of other players, and they said no. It may be in part because we have a full-time female physiotherapist who has also made a significant difference to the culture within the dressing room.

Historically, I have no doubt that there would have been issues. I am encouraged by the fact that as part of this plan the ECB will address the dressing-room culture. I don't think it is for individual counties to lead on that. I think we are entitled to look to the ECB to give us direction as to how that should be done. It should be undertaken independently. You are absolutely right that the sort of language that we have heard of is totally unacceptable and should play no part within the dressing room, because the whole object of this exercise at every level is to ensure that everyone is welcome to participate and should feel comfortable in the environment.

Q422 **Steve Brine:** Mr Bransgrove, what do you think about "banter" in professional cricket clubs?

Rod Bransgrove: This is one that clearly has attracted the attention of all of our cricket managers. There is no doubt that it occurred. I had dinner with Desmond Haines when I was in Barbados recently and we talked about all of this. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "You wouldn't believe what we used to call ourselves back in the day or call



each other back in the day” and it was seen as part of the fun. There were some boundaries they wouldn’t cross. The kids in our academies are taught not to use any language that is offensive, and that has been a byword of the academy for some time.

I think we have moderated that now, or will be moderating it, to language that could be offensive, to try and ensure that we don’t get into those circumstances. I know one very popular overseas player at our club who became club captain at one stage, and he joined the club before we took over, and we had had a history of having overseas professional players from the Caribbean. We also had Cardigan Connor, who was from Anguilla with a Caribbean background. When all of those players disappeared he termed himself “token” and he used that nickname even when he was signing signatures. So there was a degree of humour in it that emanated from the players themselves. We would obviously expect that it is not acceptable now but in many respects some of these nicknames and banter names originated from the person who was the subject of it. Under those circumstances it is difficult to call it offensive, but everybody in the dressing room, professional cricketers and the managers, now know that we just have to change that culture and that nicknames have to be a contortion of surnames or something like that, which at least has some modicum of humour about it.

Q423 Steve Brine: Mr O’Farrell, what do you think from a Middlesex point of view?

Mike O’Farrell: I think that it has been a very interesting one for us. Of course we have some old pros who see the banter as an integral part of the game, and some of those are still on the board. The newer players, both men and women, don’t accept that and our coaches, and our new coaches—and we are very lucky that our previous MD of Cricket, Angus Fraser, was a man of very high integrity—has changed and is forcing through that change. It is interesting; it is not really necessary to force it through because people do not wish to use that language.

There is a very interesting example of a game recently where something very unpleasant was said and several people engaged with the individual on the field to stop it. I see that as a sea change. It will be enhanced by what the ECB is doing, but I think to Gareth’s point that it is very important that this is seen as a whole-game approach, not just an individual one, and that it is driven from the top and that we all buy into it, because I think that is the way forward.

Q424 Steve Brine: Lord Patel, from a Yorkshire viewpoint, how much effort do you think clubs should put into developing young cricketers as ambassadors for the sport, as opposed to just being good at cricket, being good at the game?

Lord Patel of Bradford: You have hit the nail on the head for me. I think it is really important right from the beginning. This goes back to the culture piece. It is about the culture of the organisation. I have played



cricket all throughout Yorkshire since I was a kid and whether you call it banter or racism, for me it is all unacceptable.

I don't know how a stalker runs across the pitch; if you did that down the high street you would be on the sex offenders register. I cannot understand why we forgive something because it is in a stadium. If you are using language like that, you should not use it; it is as simple as that. It is from those young kids and the professionals and it is a small minority of spectators who bring disrepute to themselves and on the club, but we have to have a zero tolerance policy with those people and then move forward. But it is going to take time. It is a culture change and it is about being a good person. It is about saying, "Do you want to be treated like that? Do you want your sister to be called that? Do you want your brother to be called that? No, you don't, so don't do it to others."

Q425 **Steve Brine:** Is that the same for coaches?

Lord Patel of Bradford: Across the piece, absolutely, from your receptionist, your groundspeople right through to the customers who walk through the gates.

Q426 **Damian Green:** Morning, all. One of the points that has come out of this, and correct me if I am wrong, is that the problem that we are discussing, the wider problem of racism but specifically the problem of bringing through boys and girls from minority communities into the professional game, is a subset of the problem of bringing anyone with a financially disadvantaged background through into the professional game, because it is so expensive. In the depths of history, cricket used to have a game every year of gentlemen versus players, which is ludicrous these days, amateurs versus professionals. It feels from what you are saying that we only have the gentlemen now, and gentlewomen, presumably, and that we have lost a huge part of the country that now no longer has access to the professional game. I think, Mr Bransgrove, you made the point explicitly about some of your efforts to alleviate this. Am I right in that analysis of what you are saying?

Rod Bransgrove: Certainly in our area, sadly, that seems to be the case—that the disadvantaged people are intimidated. Even if they do play cricket, they are intimidated when they go along to a cricket club and there are kids there with £200 cricket bats and all the designer pads and they cannot afford that kind of equipment.

What we are saying in our entire development pathway is that not being able to afford it will never be a reason for a person not being selected. We must find a way of doing that where there is talent. What we are now moving on to is that not being able to afford it should not preclude somebody from playing in the first instance. I know that the Wicketz programme that ECB runs is a part of the process of us identifying people who we may be able to take into the state school academy and give them a chance to develop and grow.



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We will need help; we won't be able to pay for all of this ourselves. Our charity is making certain contributions to this, or intending to do so, but it is a programme that I will be taking to the ECB at some stage, looking for some support, to say, "Here is an opportunity." I have sent a short video piece to one or two people at ECB who have seen what we are doing and seen the way it is structured. I think that once we get this moving into other cities it is something that the whole game could embrace.

My assumption has always been that a lot of people are already doing these things. A lot of things happen at the ground with counties that we just get on with because in the ordinary course of our business we have never been asked in the past, I guess, to say, "What are you doing about this and what are you doing about that?" This Committee has focused on an area where I think we all acknowledge we can do better, and we all intend to do so, but please don't think that there is nothing going on out there to encourage young people from overseas backgrounds to participate in our sport, because there are a number of initiatives around the country.

Mike O'Farrell: I would like to add to that. I think that because we are doing so much we take it for granted that it is known. In London we will arrange cricket for disabled groups, those that are in difficult accommodation; we will put on street cricket, we will play in warehouses. We do an awful lot and our professionals go out and do that with our coaches too. That makes cricket available to so many people. There will be times at Lord's—and remember it is the MCC's ground—where the bottom end will be full of young people playing cricket, not on the main square but playing at the bottom end. That, I am sure, goes on in many counties.

Again, there is so much work being done at the local level by volunteers to bring people into the game. So I see this whole process here as a reinvigoration of what we need to do more of, and not just we, but a recognition that everybody has a part. Cricket is one of the few sports that you can get to the top without being 6 foot 5, built of muscle. Sachin Tendulkar is 5' 2", 5' 3", one of the greatest players in the world. It is hand-eye co-ordination, and that is what cricket can do for those who are less fortunate, those who are poor, for women, for everybody, and we have a part to play as a whole game. I think this is a wake-up call.

Gareth Williams: The issue in Wales is, in a sense, particularly acute because state schools effectively play little or no cricket and there are very few private schools, although the private schools do play cricket, which comes back to Mr Brennan's point about how critical it is to engage with diverse communities and so on. There is fantastic work being done at ground level with local schools and the All Stars and the Dynamos programme. We have to make that work. It is a Cricket Wales and Glamorgan joint initiative. If you are talking of cricket and Glamorgan



cricket as a business, I think it is critical for our future business that we make it work.

Q427 Damian Green: A completely different point for all four of you is that the process point is that the ECB is both a promoter of the game and the regulator of the game, and in principle that feels like a conflict of interest. Do you think the game needs to address that and separate out those two functions?

Gareth Williams: I don't, and it may be provocative to say so but I will put my lawyer's hat on. I have been a lawyer for very many years and for much of my time I was involved with rugby. I think it is a common issue in all sports where you have a governing body that is both a promoter and a regulator. I am sure the ECB would be the first to say that in this particular instance they didn't get it right but I don't think that you should necessarily make the one instance an opportunity to make a completely savage revision to the current arrangements. Generally speaking, the regulator's job is to make sure that if a charge is brought against a club, an organisation or an individual, that charge is properly dealt with and if it is a hearing it is constituted before a properly independent tribunal.

My experience of those tribunals in sport is that invariably they are conducted before quite often a retired High Court judge, a distinguished QC and so on. I think that it would be grossly insulting to them to suggest that in some way their impartiality might be compromised because they are undertaking that inquiry under the auspices of a governing body. In this particular case the ECB does have an appeal procedure, which I suspect would involve yet another layer of distinguished lawyers and ex-sportsmen. For my part, I don't think you should rush to make a conclusion. I understand that in other sports there is a movement towards independence. I think the right course is for the ECB to conduct a thorough review of its own governance before taking any hasty steps to separate promotion on the one hand and regulation on the other.

Q428 Damian Green: We will be able to hear from them in a minute. Lord Patel, what do you think?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I have to put it on record that I spent five and a half years as a member of the ECB board. When I started there I was among the few people who instituted the governance reforms. If you think back, there was one person who was in charge of integrity and regulation and we formed a whole team of some very eminent people who were brought in from outside on antidoping. We must not forget the huge amount of regulatory work that has been done. I have always referred to it as a governing body because that is what it is.

I have been a regulator, chair of two Government regulators and a member of three others. I think you can do both and I think you can do both well. I think the ECB can do both well. I don't see that separation



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happening because unless you are going to make it a formal regulator and give it statutory powers and then separate it, I think there are huge problems with it. There is a benefit of it being a governing body. We have just talked about children right through to that professional level. They have got that piece and that is what they need to be driving.

There is an issue of how many counties there are, funding, all sorts of other things, but in terms of the direction of travel, I think that the foundations are there. That may need tweaking a bit, but I am very comfortable with it.

Mike O'Farrell: I am going to be slightly different, because I think that at this particular time, given what we have been through, it is time to reappraise the two things. There are other areas where you see a separation and I think that before we rush to any judgment we need to ask ourselves, because we are all part of the game, are we doing the right thing in the right way? At the moment it is not clear in my mind that the current structure is fit for purpose going forward for the long term. I would like to see us look very hard at this, in the same way that we are going to look hard at the constitution; because I think that how we go forward will define whether the young people who we all want to stay in the game will still find it attractive. For me, the jury is out on this one.

Rod Bransgrove: It is probably no secret that I have had my issues with the ECB from time to time, and this hearing is not about Hampshire and its circumstances, but what I have had is 22 years' experience of ECB as a governing body. Indeed, I was one of the people who voted to change from the first-class forum, to have a properly constructed board of directors to run the business, but what has become apparent to me throughout that period of time is that it is almost impossible to get a decision that is totally free from some bias. The comment that you made earlier that I had said that I know what prejudice is like—I might have made a comment like that, but nothing about being white or 65. I do know what prejudice is like. I do know what it is like to be overlooked for reasons that are completely outside of your control, and you feel isolated and alone. You can't sleep; it is on your mind all the time. My sympathy was with people who are prejudiced against.

I do believe that the dual role of the ECB as the promoter of the sport and the group given the right to exploit our assets to the benefit of the stakeholders, is the same group who then regulate and I think control—possibly more control than regulate—using that very chequebook that is there to provide wealth for its stakeholders. The division between that is unclear for me. I have very little visibility about how the board works. I have not received board minutes for years. I probably don't even know when the board meets.

I believe that there are some very well-intentioned people at ECB and some very high-quality people on the board of directors. I believe that the process that has occurred during this Committee's investigation has



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started a dialogue between the board of directors and its stakeholders. It is vital that that dialogue results in a structure that provides proper governance and safe decision-making whilst finding a mechanism to govern the game, not necessarily to scrutinise and manage everybody who is participating in the game but to govern the game on the other hand. I am very hopeful that that will be achieved.

Damian Green: It feels like we have two votes for change and two votes for the status quo here, so we should have five witnesses. We need to appoint a chair witness.

Q429 **Chair:** On that point, Rod, it is a bit of a blunt instrument then, just based on the chequebook. We saw that what eventually brought Yorkshire to heel was the international cricket. Shouldn't there be more subtle and more transparent means by which the ECB interacts with the counties?

Rod Bransgrove: Of course. There should be much more transparency in the ECB, but the way decisions are made don't appear to be like that. I should point out that international and test match cricket is vital to all of the, at the moment, seven accredited test match grounds but it is only one that had it taken away right at the beginning. I do believe that that is only a symptom of decision-making. I find it very difficult to believe that a board of independent people would look at a proposal to distribute 30 test matches to seven grounds and see that one is excluded completely and not say what is the reason for that. That doesn't seem right somehow. That has never been explained to me.

But that is a personal experience. There are other circumstances and other decisions where we have been bemused—the decision, for instance, to pull out of a commitment to go and play in Pakistan, which didn't seem to make any sense, given what Pakistan had brought to England the year before during the height of the Covid situation. Understanding decisions; the connection between the board of directors—I have not even met some members of the board; so it is very difficult for me as a stakeholder to assess how well our directors are performing for us.

Q430 **Kevin Brennan:** Mr Bransgrove, to clear up what you just said, I asked you earlier about some remarks that you denied you had said. In a previous answer to Damian Green you said, "I said something else about prejudice". Is it that you were drawing, in the remarks you made, a comparison between the prejudice that you feel that you faced as chair of Hampshire Cricket Club and racial prejudice? Is that what you were saying—that those two things were analogous in some way?

Rod Bransgrove: What I was saying was that I have enormous empathy for people who suffer from prejudice, because it gnaws at you all the time. When you cannot explain the reasons why somebody has a particular lack of regard towards you, whatever the background is, prejudice is a dreadful thing to suffer from, however it occurs. My



sympathy was with anybody who has suffered prejudice. We would never allow that to happen at any company of mine.

Q431 **Kevin Brennan:** Were you in any way suggesting that the prejudice you had suffered was greater than the prejudice that has been reported to this Committee?

Rod Bransgrove: No, of course not. What I was suggesting is that I understand how people feel when they are prejudiced.

Chair: That concludes our first panel. Gareth Williams, Lord Patel, Mike O'Farrell and Rod Bransgrove, thank you very much for your evidence today.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Tom Harrison, Barry O'Brien, Martin Darlow and Baroness Amos.

Q432 **Chair:** This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and this is a hearing into racism in cricket. We are joined in our second panel today by Tom Harrison, the chief executive of the ECB, Barry O'Brien, the chair of ECB, Baroness Amos, board member of the ECB, and a late entry, Martin Darlow, ECB deputy chair and cricket non-executive director, who I understand has been at Yorkshire over the last month.

Martin Darlow: I have been there quite a lot, Chair, yes.

Chair: Thank you. Good morning, anyway. Thank you very much for joining us. We have seen your "Tackling Discrimination in Cricket", your 12-point plan. You have clearly raided the Getty Images as part of putting it all together. It all reads very nicely, lots of jargon, quite a lot of buzz words. We were challenged, or you were challenged, in the first panel by Lord Patel on whether you are going to properly look at the numbers, whether you are going to have proper targets and whether you are going to report these on regularly. It is all very good marketing, but where is the beef in what you are going to do?

Tom Harrison: Thank you, Chair, and good morning, everyone. First, we welcome the opportunity today to meet with you again and update you on our progress on the action plan that we launched in November last year. Can I once again register my thanks to Azeem Rafiq and his powerful testimony in the last session, and indeed to other whistleblowers who have come forward to provide evidence and explain their experiences of cricket?

We have made some significant progress in the last few weeks and we are here to explain that to you. Before I do that, I want to say that everything that has happened over the last six or seven years in this game has been designed to make the game bigger, broader and better for everyone in it, to create a game for everyone. That has been the ambition behind Inspiring Generations, the plan that we launched in 2018, which came into being in 2020. It was the theme behind the South



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Asian Action Plan and the Transform Women's and Girls' pathway from 2019. What I am trying to say here is that we are building on foundations where we are trying to tackle the biggest issues facing our game. We are extremely grateful to this Committee for giving us the impetus and the adrenaline shot into our plans to enable us to accelerate and put a sense of urgency into this huge issue of tackling racism and discrimination in our sport.

To the matter at hand, the meat, as you called it, the beef. The 12-point plan is backed by £25 million of additional resource and investment from the ECB. We have a burgeoning partnership with Kick it Out, for which I need to thank the Chair for his idea to open that nascent relationship. We have matched some funding from our partners, Sky, in investigating and researching how Kick it Out can expand its operation into cricket, which will be the first such venture outside football. We are in the process of creating a new, antidiscrimination unit within the ECB. That will be ready by the start of the international season this year, so the end of May.

We have a launch day of the dressing-room culture review, under the leadership of Clare Connor, who I have asked to take that on. Clare will be well known to members of this Committee. She is a former England captain, a highly-decorated England cricketer and the current managing director of women and girls cricket at the ECB and also the serving MCC president. She is ideally placed to lead the review into dressing-room culture across the men's and women's game in this country at all levels, and, indeed, sweeping governance reform. That is headlined by the 30% gender balance in all boards at professional and domestic level across ECB stakeholders, and matched with ethnic diversity levels that match the local demographics of the population in the areas of the respective stakeholders.

Those are some headlines, and I can go into a lot more detail. You will be concerned about scrutiny and how we are holding ourselves to account for this. The headline issues will be overseen by EY independently, who are creating, effectively, a dashboard that will be publicly available. We will be publishing those quarterly updates and of course providing annual updates through the annual report on our progress.

Q433 **Chair:** On that point, it is now quarterly?

Tom Harrison: We will be reporting to you quarterly, which will be information that comes from that. Over and beyond that we obviously have our own KPIs and milestones along the five different pillars of the plan.

Q434 **Chair:** What are the KPIs? Obviously it is jargon again, but basically it is key performance indicators.

Tom Harrison: It is basically, what we are trying to achieve by when. For example, we have recently concluded a game-wide census, an EDI census across the game. We hope by the end of 2022 to have 90% of



people who are interviewed through this panel—you have heard about the scale of the game at volunteer level, over 40,000 volunteers, but also people throughout the game, at recreational and professional level—reporting back on whether they feel cricket is an inclusive and diverse sport. We have set a target of 90% for the end of this year. The level at the moment for the recreational game is 80% of people reporting through that game-wide census. It is lower through the professional pathway at 68%, so we have a huge amount of work to do there.

Another example of a key performance indicator is the talent pathways where we want to get at least 30% of the young boys and girls who are in those talent pathways from ethnically diverse backgrounds. To report on some progress on that, in 2018 the number of ethnically diverse—the statistic refers to the boys' game—was 11% going through the talent pathway. We identified that as a key issue as part of the South Asian Action Plan and within those three years it has moved to 28% of young boys going through the talent pathway who are from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Q435 **Chair:** That is 28%, but is your target 30%?

Tom Harrison: It is 30% throughout, and that does not reflect the levels in the professional game. That is the talent pathway and we have identified through recent events—

Q436 **Chair:** To be clear, you are not just setting yourself a target that you have already reached?

Tom Harrison: No, we are trying to continue to grow that.

Q437 **Chair:** It is a 2% difference between 28% and 30%.

Tom Harrison: Specifically the boys' game—we have obviously got work to do on the girls' game—and then take that 30% as a low minimum target across the game as an average, to make sure that we take that into the professional game as well, through dressing rooms around the country.

Q438 **Chair:** Sorry, to be clear here, your target is 30%; is that correct?

Tom Harrison: By the end of this year, yes.

Chair: By the end of this year, okay, and you were at 28% at the start of this year; is that right?

Tom Harrison: Yes, clearly we have—

Chair: You have had a 17% increase in three years. That is 5.5% a year. You should really be at 35%, shouldn't you?

Tom Harrison: What we aim to do is make sure that we have a flood of talent coming through, of which 30% is the low target. If that number in some parts of the country is 50% or 60%—



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Q439 **Chair:** This highlights an issue that we have. With a game-wide reporting census and this very low target, we are really concerned, as a Committee, that the game itself is not going to effectively come up with what are quite key performance indicators across the piece, that can be clearly seen by the public. The important thing here is the wider public and what they see the game doing. It doesn't fill me with confidence that one of your key indicators is a 2% increase when you have already achieved 17% in the previous three years.

Tom Harrison: I think what we are trying to ensure is that that 30% is across all parts of the country by the end of this year. We obviously have ambitions to take that number through the game, and let us take it through to England dressing rooms, for example, by the end of 2025. There is no reason why all England dressing rooms should not have that kind of talent knocking on the door for international recognition in both the men's and women's games.

I think what it is telling us is that the strategies that we have employed as part of the South Asian Action Plan seem to be making a difference, but they are not making a difference nearly fast enough, or indeed in all parts of the country. So we need to work doubly hard to ensure that is the case, and that we are reporting on an over-delivery against those KPIs and not an under-delivery.

Q440 **Chair:** Yes, because you have set such a low target.

Tom Harrison: Well, we can look at that target, Chair.

Q441 **Chair:** Our dispute is whether these are, frankly, targets that you are set up to achieve.

Tom Harrison: That is probably the best statistic I can offer you on the progress that we have been making recently. I also want to mention the fact that through the South Asian Action Plan, which has been mentioned a couple of times in this morning's proceedings, we have created 2,000 female south Asian activators of our sport. We are at 1,400 now and we have a target of 2,000, so we have some room to grow in that space.

The other bit of positive progress to report is around urban cricket centres. I would love to offer the invitation to the Committee to come and see one of these urban cricket centres in action. We have work happening in Bristol and Bradford and of course the one that is up and running is in Leyton, so more good news there. We are not trying to pretend here—and I don't think anyone on the panel this morning was trying to suggest this for a second—that we are anywhere near where we need to be in any of these measures. We have a huge bond of trust to create with the communities around this country that have felt let down. We understand, through the work of the ICEC, the work of this panel, and indeed the research and work that has been undertaken through the creation of whistleblowing hotlines and so on, the scale of the task that is ahead of us.



Q442 **Chair:** I am keen to hear from Baroness Amos because I know we are short of time with her. Tom just mentioned there about board diversity being one of the key metrics that the ECB is looking at. What needs to happen to improve that diversity? What cultural changes do you think need to happen to encourage greater diversity on boards?

Baroness Amos: May I go back one step before picking up on that question? I really want to add to something that Tom said. I have been on the board since May and as board members what we are really interested in is transformation and change in the game. We know that that is the way that a game that we all love will survive. You are absolutely right to push us on the numbers, the targets, the metrics and that we need to be challenging about those; but it is about more than that. It is about leadership. It is about representation—and we can look at targets for that. It is about attitudes, behaviours, culture change, how we measure and how we monitor.

On board diversity we have to be absolutely clear that we go out and look for the kind of people that we want on the board. One of the mistakes that a lot of boards make is that they employ head-hunters and they expect people to come to them. You have to go out and look for people, because if you don't have the role models on the board already, people are not necessarily going to feel that this is something for them. A board must make the extra effort. They managed to find me; I think it will be absolutely possible to find other people. There are lots of people with a passion for cricket in this country who care about cricket and want to be part of that transformation.

Q443 **Chair:** How do you feel that the only chair from an ethnic minority has just resigned, partly in frustration at what she believes to be effectively the paucity of action when it comes to the ECB over these issues?

Baroness Amos: I think it is a huge pity. I very much hope that Mehmooda will continue to stay connected with the game. She has a huge amount to offer. I have actually spoken to her. She and I have talked through a number of issues, which I think it is important for me to bring to the attention of the board.

Q444 **Chair:** What are those issues?

Baroness Amos: It was a confidential conversation, so I hope you will respect that.

Q445 **Chair:** Clearly, she feels that the ECB has not been at the races, as far as this issue is concerned, and that is the reason why she has walked.

Baroness Amos: She raised a number of issues with me. They are matters that I think we must address, which I will bring to the attention of the board.

Q446 **Chair:** Do you think that it is rather disturbing that at a time when we are talking about extra diversity on the board, the one person from an



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ethnic minority who is a chair decides to leave as a result of inaction in this area? That is a hammer-blow to the ambitions of the ECB.

Baroness Amos: I think it is a huge pity that she has resigned.

Q447 **Chair:** Is she right to?

Baroness Amos: I can't speak for another person. There have been lots of circumstances in which—

Q448 **Chair:** Do you sympathise with her, though? Do you sympathise with her frustrations at the ECB?

Baroness Amos: One of the reasons, in my view, that she asked to speak to me is because I think she hoped that I would understand some of the issues that she wanted to put on the table. I see part of my responsibility as bringing those issues to the attention of the rest of the board. She has given me permission to do that; she has not given me permission to talk about those issues in this Committee.

Q449 **Chair:** Do you think she was legitimate in feeling that she was being used in tokenism when it came to endorsing the ECB's response to the racism inquiry?

Baroness Amos: Chair, you are going to try to push me to say things that I have already said to you I—

Chair: That is what she has told us.

Baroness Amos: That is fine, that she has told you that. She has not given me permission to talk about our conversation in this Committee. I don't feel that I can do that.

Q450 **Chair:** Mr Darlow, you have been at Yorkshire, so Red Adair effectively, I suppose, would be in the ECB parlance, showing my age yet again. What do you think they have done that would allow them to get international cricket back and what do you think needs to happen in the next six months, to root it down, to bed it down?

Martin Darlow: I think the decision we made way before that, first of all, and I have spent a lot of time in Yorkshire with Kamlesh and his team—I have to say the team on this has completed a phenomenal amount of work in such a short timeframe. The scale of their ambition is not necessarily matched by the resource they have available. But nevertheless Kamlesh is working all hours, with his team, to get to where he wants to be.

The timeline for the decision on international cricket return is—I was up there on Saturday and addressed a very feisty Yorkshire members forum.

Chair: Is there any other type of Yorkshire forum?

Martin Darlow: It is difficult, as a southerner, to go to Yorkshire on a Saturday morning to speak to 380 Yorkshiremen where you have



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removed international cricket. It was a tough gig. But it went really, really well. I had some great feedback about honesty and my forthrightness, which is ironic given I was in Yorkshire, and Kamlesh appreciated that, without a doubt.

But that was to talk about the need for change and to talk to the members. The timeline: I was there on Saturday. This Thursday I am leading an ECB team of service experts to review the 10 points that we have asked them to comply with. I think that it has been shared with the Committee. Then a report will be supplied to me and the ECB for us to consider, with a presentation next Tuesday to the board on progress by a Yorkshire contingent. Then the big day is the extraordinary general meeting with the vote by Yorkshire on the rule changes. Once we are through that—that will be 2 February—I anticipate the board will be making a decision or will be considering other options soon after that.

Q451 Chair: So the removal effectively of some of the powers of the Graves Trust is absolutely germane to the return of international cricket at Yorkshire; is that fair to say?

Martin Darlow: I think a review by the Good Governance Institute, which I think Kamlesh referred to earlier, identified that there were some things that needed to happen to the rules to change so that they could comply with the county partnership agreement requirements and just good governance for Yorkshire.

Chair: Is that yes?

Martin Darlow: I understand that they are being removed.

Q452 Chair: That is right, but my question is whether or not it is a prerequisite, in your mind, for the return of international cricket to Yorkshire that the Graves Trust has its powers curtailed.

Martin Darlow: They, I understand, have accepted the need to remove those powers, so it may be a hypothetical question. My view is that it would be a much better run organisation if they didn't have the vetoes in place.

Q453 Chair: I am not sure you have entirely answered the question. Obviously I have spent the last couple of weeks not answering questions, I have to say, over other matters. It does seem to me that effectively the Yorkshire members have a choice here. If they choose not to vote for the changes that are put ahead, including the governance changes, including the changes over the role of the Graves Trust, effectively is international cricket not going to return this year?

Martin Darlow: It was a question that was asked last Saturday by a Yorkshire member and my response was that you are not voting for the return of international cricket; you are voting for the future of the Yorkshire Cricket Club and it is the right thing to do. That was the answer I gave and that is the answer I am giving you today.



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Chair: So they are not connected. So if they don't vote for it, it doesn't make any difference to whether or not international cricket returns.

Martin Darlow: I refer to my earlier answer.

Q454 **Kevin Brennan:** I will just go back to Mehmooda Duke and what the chair was asking but perhaps ask Mr Harrison, because I know that Baroness Amos has had a private conversation. Did Mehmooda Duke contact the ECB about her resignation? What light can you shed on what she said about why she resigned?

Tom Harrison: First, I can say that I share the board's view that it is a real shame, an absolute pity, that Mehmooda will not be part of the immediate future anyway. I had a discussion with Mehmooda in October last year and my discussion with her was about whether she would be a candidate for chair of the ECB because I felt that she has all the right kind of experience and wherewithal to put her name forward. So from a personal perspective, I am very saddened that she is not part of the chair's group at the moment.

With respect to what she has submitted, I refer to Baroness Amos's comments about it being a confidential matter, which Baroness Amos will lead on behalf of the board.

Q455 **Kevin Brennan:** Did she feel intimidated, coerced and manoeuvred by the ECB and traumatised by the experience of being on the ECB?

Tom Harrison: I can't answer that question, Mr Brennan. Again, it is a matter for the board to consider on the basis of what she has submitted.

Q456 **Kevin Brennan:** Did she feel there was talk of partnership, that there was total lip service in her dealings with the ECB?

Tom Harrison: Again, I can refer to the fact that it is a matter for the board to consider, but clearly we take partnership as at the heart of everything that we do with our stakeholders and our commercial partners. Our game is one big partnership. We have to do things in partnership for things to work.

The 12-point action plan is a great example of how the whole game has come together. The 18 first class counties, the recreational game, the 21 county boards, the National Counties Cricket Association, the MCC and the PCA, and all the professional women's cricket hosts have come together to commit to a 12-point action plan to deliver lasting change across the game.

Q457 **Kevin Brennan:** Did she feel like she was a token woman of colour being rolled out as a poster girl for the ECB?

Tom Harrison: I am going to refer to Baroness Amos's answer about confidentiality with respect to something that Baroness Amos will lead on behalf of the board.

Q458 **Kevin Brennan:** How would you categorise your relationship with the



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chairs of the county clubs?

Tom Harrison: I have had excellent relationships with the vast majority of county chairs over the course of my—are you talking about ECB or myself in particular?

Kevin Brennan: Both.

Tom Harrison: Nothing happens without partnership with our county chairs. We are a big sport and we rely very heavily on our professional environment and recreational environment to enable strategy to take place. They are effectively the delivery arm of everything that we put together. Our partnership is absolutely key.

Q459 **Kevin Brennan:** Can I ask a question of Mr O'Brien? Obviously something went horribly wrong with the relationship between the ECB and Mehmooda Duke. Whether or not what I have put to Mr Harrison is what she communicated to the board, I accept the fact that you are not going to confirm or deny that that was her reason for leaving, but something went horribly wrong. Do you have any insight into how that relationship went so wrong?

Barry O'Brien: I don't think I can say anything more than has already been said.

Q460 **Kevin Brennan:** I am not asking you to say what she said. Can I put the question another way? Is there anything in your dealings with her that you regret and would have done differently if you were faced with the same situation again?

Barry O'Brien: I clearly regret that she resigned.

Q461 **Kevin Brennan:** I was not asking you about that, though. I was asking you about your dealings with her. Is there anything in your own personal dealings with her that you regret that might have actually triggered that resignation, or been part of the reasonings for that resignation?

Barry O'Brien: I don't believe so. There were a number of robust conversations that took place at the time. I think that the real reason was perhaps, in Mehmooda's view, about the regulation of the ECB where she didn't think we were going far enough and quickly enough.

Q462 **Kevin Brennan:** Was she unhappy in any way with any of your personal dealings with her and the way that you handled her concerns?

Barry O'Brien: She may have been.

Kevin Brennan: In what way?

Barry O'Brien: Look, we are beginning to get into the confidential area, which Baroness Amos will look into, along with two other independent members of the board. We will communicate our response back to Mehmooda in due course. I would like to say again, we very much regret



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that Mehmooda resigned. She was a force for good. I very much hope that she will come back into cricket at some stage.

Q463 **Chair:** Baroness Amos, are you involved in the internal investigation that is going on into this resignation?

Baroness Amos: I would not describe it as an investigation. I had a confidential conversation. On the back of that conversation I was asked to raise certain matters with the board. Those were communicated and it was agreed yesterday between myself and Mehmooda that this could be communicated to the board. As a result of that, our senior independent director has tasked three of us, including herself, to look into the matters raised.

Q464 **Chair:** Three directors are going to look into the matters raised from what Mehmooda talked to you about confidentially?

Baroness Amos: Yes.

Q465 **Chair:** The outside oversight of this is an independent director; who is that?

Baroness Amos: Brenda Trenowden, who is the senior independent director on the board.

Q466 **Chair:** Are there any plans, Mr Harrison, to bring in anyone else? The concern here is that effectively it is yourselves looking at yourselves.

Baroness Amos: If I may, can I repeat again, I had a conversation with Ms Duke, at her request. On the back of that she has communicated some issues, which I consider it is important that the board look at. I asked her specifically if I could share her concerns with the board. She agreed that yesterday and, on the back of that, we will look at those matters. I think it is very, very important for us as a board to reflect on them.

Q467 **Chair:** Yes, that is fine, but is it an investigation?

Baroness Amos: Nothing formal has been asked to be put to the board, so that is why I say there is no investigation.

Q468 **Chair:** A panel of three people have been formed in order to look at this. I am using your phraseology and saying "look at it". Mr Harrison, I am sorry; I will have to address these questions to you, as the buck stops with you. Is this an investigation? Are you investigating her departure; yes or no?

Tom Harrison: No.

Chair: Just looking at is not—

Tom Harrison: It is not a formal investigation, Chair, as Baroness Amos has clearly explained.

Q469 **Chair:** It does not seem to be anything, really, apart from the



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phraseology is “look at”. Basically, communicate, have a conversation and then look at.

Baroness Amos: Chair, can I pick you up on that? I was asked—

Chair: I am really sorry about this. [*Interruption.*] No, sorry; excuse me. Order.

Baroness Amos: I think the context is important.

Chair: Excuse me, Baroness Amos. The reason why I am taking that particular approach with your chair is because we have been in this investigation now on several sessions and we have found, frankly, that often within cricket there is just the aspect in which people just mark their own homework all the time. It looks to me, and this Committee, like it is happening again in that respect. I don’t know whether or not it is a looking at, an investigation. I have been told it is not an investigation. My question to the chief executive is whether or not you think there should be an investigation now that this has been brought out into the public domain.

Tom Harrison: I think that is a matter for the board to decide, Chair, with respect, and that is the conversation that we have very recently instigated and been given permission to share with the board. Baroness Amos will lead that discussion.

Q470 **Chair:** Leading a discussion, okay. What we would like to see as a Committee, please, is some transparency of this in the public domain. We want to see who is actually taking part in this discussion, the times or dates that they occur, and please a précis, under confidentiality, of basically what is being discussed. We want to be certain that these matters will be looked over properly rather than just yet another behind-closed-doors, seemingly not really an investigation—a conversation and nothing more than that. We need to see absolute transparency in this respect.

Tom Harrison: Understood.

Baroness Amos: May I just add?

Chair: Yes, of course.

Baroness Amos: I really think it is not fair to categorise it in that way. The reason that I say that is because if something has been brought to me, marked “private and confidential” on the back of a discussion, I consider it to be unfair to characterise it as a lack of transparency. It is absolutely open for the Committee to speak to Ms Duke about her concerns and to put those on the record. But I do think that it is not fair to characterise what has happened with respect to her interaction with me as a lack of transparency when she has been very clear that it is marked “private and confidential”.

Chair: We will be transparent about it then, won’t we, when we get all



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the information from Mr Harrison and the board about what is going on and the steps that you are taking, and then no one can say there is any lack of transparency.

Q471 **Damian Green:** I will widen this out to a more general point about regulatory process and structures, which I can illustrate best by literally quoting from the last time that the ECB came to the Committee. This is an exchange starting with my question, "Who holds the ECB to account?" Answer, "The Independent Regulatory Committee". My question, "Who appoints the Independent Regulatory Committee?" Answer, "The ECB". This is clearly a circular arrangement and you will have seen the exchanges earlier on. You had a two-all draw from the county chairs, basically.

But nevertheless, do you feel that there is something inherently unsatisfactory in an arrangement where a body appoints an Independent Regulatory Committee that it presumably can then unappoint and the Independent Regulatory Committee is what holds it to account? That does not feel very satisfactory.

Tom Harrison: I think it is the model of self-regulation that is employed by many sports bodies in this country. Self-regulation is one form of regulation where we try to create the independence required within our own structures—admittedly within our own structures—to enable proper decision-making and proper integrity of process to be the principles of how things are managed. In the vast majority of cases our regulatory framework is absolutely sufficient for what we need, predominantly in the discipline space.

I think the debate that we are going to have now as a game will be exactly that, which is, in what circumstances does that regulatory framework need to be tightened up? Does the independence between the ECB and the ECB integrity team and the regulatory committee need to be clarified for people to enable that self-regulation model to continue? That is the debate that the game needs to have, but clearly there are other options.

Barry O'Brien: We will certainly be looking at this as part of our governance review. It may well be that to deal with the perception that the chair of the disciplinary committee has been appointed by the ECB, we might look to a third party—Sport England, perhaps—to verify that appointment. I do not think anybody has suggested that the members of the disciplinary committee have ever been anything but very tough and independent, but if we need to endorse that through some third party we will certainly look at that as part of the governance review.

Q472 **Damian Green:** You heard the evidence just before you—particularly Mr Bransgrove—where the argument is whether, as part of promoting the game, the ECB hands out large sums of money and at the same time it has the regulatory powers as well, and that therefore, effectively, it can use the distribution of money, or in this case the awarding of



international games, as a way of, in principle, ensuring that people stay in line. How do you separate the promotional and regulatory roles of the body in practice now?

Tom Harrison: There are certain matters where the board will make decisions around, for example, the allocation of matches. It is linked to the Yorkshire case because in this case it is the ECB board taking decisions around imposing criteria on which sanctions need to be considered on the allocation of matches. That is probably the key criterion.

The award of international matches is done by an independent panel as well, set up by the ECB board, which is called the HVP, the Host Venue Panel. That will make decisions across a whole raft of criteria around where matches will be played. Those criteria include meeting certain EDI standards as well as safety, capacity and a raft of other matters that need to be considered when we are allocating international cricket matches across a period of time.

Q473 **Damian Green:** Are any of the same people involved in that decision-making process involved in regulatory decisions as well?

Tom Harrison: No; they will be some independent members of events expertise, for example, and that is headed by our senior independent director of the group. The HVP that I am talking about is headed up by our senior independent director. The regulatory function is quite separate and would not have any involvement in that decision.

Q474 **Damian Green:** Is it separate in any kind of permanent institutional way, or is it just separate because you have decided to keep it separate or it happens that different people have different expertise?

Tom Harrison: I think that in terms of the regulatory committee overlapping with the board, it is very deliberately very separate and very independent.

Q475 **Steve Brine:** Welcome back, and hello to some. In 2018—it seems like a long time ago in the current parlance—the ECB launched its South Asian Action Plan, Tom, describing the improved engagement that you want with the south Asian communities. It is part of your core ambition, isn't it, to grow the game and make cricket a game "for everyone"? Can you update the Committee on the status of the South Asian Action Plan and do you think your current strategy will have a greater impact than the action plan? Give us a status update on that, please.

Tom Harrison: There were a raft of recommendations—11 recommendations—made through the South Asian Action Plan. I have already updated the Committee as to some of that. The urban cricket centres, the female activators and the talent pathway, and the movement in the talent pathway, are three areas where we have seen some really positive movement.



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To answer your question, a lot of what the EDI action plan—the 12-point plan that we announced in November—will do is inject some proper pace, energy and urgency into a lot of the work that the South Asian Action Plan started. I think the South Asian Action Plan has been successful in parts. We need to accelerate that and go further, much faster than we have been able to. I am grateful to the Committee for its work and for, frankly, holding us to account on this as a game, so that we can take that pressure to the market, to our stakeholders and to the wider cricket community and make a difference.

Q476 **Steve Brine:** What does that acceleration look like? How will you maintain the momentum of keeping this as a priority for the county boards?

Tom Harrison: It is a raft of different things—removing barriers in the talent pathway, listening, educating. The education process that we have now got going through the professional and recreational game will be very different this year to the way it has been in other years. Creating welcoming environments for fans and spectators. Building on the progress that we made in 2021. The Committee may not be aware, but we had some hugely positive and successful data coming out of that year with respect to, for example, the number of people buying tickets for domestic cricket from ethnically diverse backgrounds. The Hundred was the best example of that, with 12.5% of ticket buyers being from ethnically diverse backgrounds. We are aiming to push that to 15% this year, and then to 20%, and then to 30% and then beyond that over the coming years.

The women and girls' game has seen unbelievable growth statistics over many years. We obviously took that to a new level last year, with 250,000 people coming to watch the domestic women's competition last year, which was fantastic. It is taking the game back to free-to-air television; over 100,000 young people joining All Stars and Dynamos cricket; over 500,000 people buying tickets for The Hundred last year in its first year; huge support for the Blast once we were able to get crowds back into the ground; massive streaming data for four-day championship cricket in April and May, where we had the attention of the nation on cricket in this country while the IPL was on. It is a really good opportunity for us to focus on all the fantastic things that red ball cricket is delivering for us across the season.

We have not been able to talk positively about a lot of that information, for obvious reasons, in recent months but we believe that there is a huge amount for us to build on, and a huge amount of good work going on in this space on EDI. I am the first to accept that we are absolutely nowhere near where we need to be and we have an awfully long way to travel.

Q477 **Steve Brine:** There is lots of good public affairs stuff in there but you said removing barriers, listening, a welcoming environment. They are good pillars, good buzz words, and I too can read a brief, but just unpack "removing barriers" for me. What is "removing barriers"? Does that come



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into the financial support—targeted financial support for young south Asian players, with bursaries to young players on the talent pathway? Is that what you are talking about?

Tom Harrison: I think it is more complex than that, Mr Brine.

Steve Brine: Tell me what.

Martin Darlow: Can I raise a point of clarification on something that Mr Bransgrove referred to earlier, which is relevant to this point as well, that the Wicketz programme is run by the ECB. It is not run by the ECB; it is run by Lord's Taverners and we do fund Lord's Taverners. We have our charity partners doing a great deal of work in the community to remove barriers. We have the Lord's Taverners Wicketz programme, the Chance to Shine Street programme, Capital Kids Cricket across London, the ACE programme. There are many others who are working alongside us to remove these barriers for access to cricket that then can lead on to a talent pathway and access to the game. I just wanted a point of clarification and also to update you on what we are doing.

Steve Brine: That is fine.

Tom Harrison: It is all very well having datasets and measures to which we hold ourselves accountable but, as Baroness Amos said earlier this afternoon, this is about a mindset shift as well. It is about an understanding of the challenges that ethnically diverse communities face, whether that is about cost—and I know that is something that will be and has been mentioned already today—the provision of kit, the provision of opportunities, hardship allowances, which is what we have. We have hardship funds across every county and county board in this country to enable young people who are struggling to meet the costs of cricket, where that is an issue, helping to make sure that is not an issue. We need to take that a lot further, based on the feedback that we are seeing and the information we have got coming back to us.

We have put in county education officers to support the talent pathway. Each county now has those and we have athleticism and nutritional advice going into talent pathways to enable particularly south Asian families— The challenge is for us to understand the challenges that are facing young boys and girls from ethnically diverse backgrounds. It is a complex challenge but it is one that has been highlighted by Azeem's testimony and others as well. It is one that we need to get to the bottom of if these young people are going to come through, as we want them to, into the talent pathways, into professional cricket, and then into international dressing rooms going forward.

Q478 **Chair:** I have a couple of final questions. Mr Harrison, this question could be applied to politics as well as cricket, particularly given recent events. Do you think that players and coaching staff should conduct themselves according to the standards most of us would expect in a working environment, and how do you influence it?



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Tom Harrison: Of course I do. I think our project on dressing-room culture is a case in point on this. That is why I have asked Claire to lead this work. But we are building on some real positives here as well, as some of the issues that we have seen very publicly highlighted through recent months. I can tell you that the England dressing room take this matter incredibly seriously and have talked about it as a group.

I think that we are able to highlight best practice in some cases in the past where diversity has been a huge asset to dressing rooms. I will take the World Cup-winning 2019 team as an example of the very best of diversity, bringing through success under mutual understanding, people being able to be their authentic selves within dressing-room environments, while preserving the sanctity of the dressing room. Everyone who has played cricket at any level, and indeed other sports as well, understands that there needs to be a sanctity around a dressing-room environment; but it needs to be consistent with modern workplaces and the standards of behaviour that we expect through those.

Q479 **Chair:** We heard from Mr Bransgrove that he had not seen any ECB board minutes for years. Is this indicative? We saw a split of 2:2 on whether or not there should be reform at the ECB. Is part of the whole problem here that there is an antagonistic relationship between the ECB and the counties, and that that makes it much more difficult for you to effect change apart from situations such as we found at Yorkshire, where there was a key moment in time when you could effectively put your finger on their financial pulse and bring about at least a radical shift in direction? Do you really need to address, as a collective, your relationship with the counties? I cannot speak for everyone on the Committee as we have not discussed it, but it does look terribly frayed to me.

Tom Harrison: I think it is a complex relationship because of the way in which the ECB is constituted. We are effectively a product of our stakeholders. There are certain very protected areas of the game where the control that the ECB has matches the control that the game wants us to have.

There are always areas of conflict and we have a hugely changing environment. The world of cricket is changing around us: the role of white ball cricket, opportunities for players to generate a living all over the world, player power, player influence, the control of ICC events, the strength of IPL. There are huge tectonic plates shifting around world cricket that we need to manage within. We are doing so very successfully in lots of ways, but the impact is being felt, I think, at the level of our relationship with our county stakeholders. We need to continue to communicate and help share the challenge that we have.

I think this 12-point action plan, if you will forgive me, is a really good example of how we have come together. I accept it is not perfection.

Q480 **Chair:** You had only one resignation in coming together, let's be honest about it. It is not a particularly great example to use of a relationship that



is working smoothly in that regard, but I take your point.

I know, Barry, you want to come in because I think this is a really important matter that gets to the heart of it—the relationship and the feeling of antagonism that is there, and whether or not that means you can effect change.

Barry O'Brien: I think that the relationship with the first class counties is good, despite the fact that we do have some discussions with them. They are under enormous strain; the impact of Covid financially on a number of the counties has been very significant. That is where the discussion around test match allocation becomes very, very important.

The other thing that we must recognise is that we represent the whole game. The recreational game, if it was here this morning, would tell you that they have a very good relationship with the ECB, and the women's game, the disability game. We cannot necessarily pander to the first class counties the whole time and they have to recognise that they will not get everything that they wish.

On the governance review, we will have a very open and honest conversation with them about how they may be able to organise their voice in a more structured way. The Professional Game Group became the Professional Game Board and chairs originally declined to sit on the Professional Game Group. They are now saying that they regret that and that if there is a space for them on that, that would be very good indeed.

Q481 **Chair:** Did you say that they refused to serve on it?

Barry O'Brien: Yes. They voted not to put chairs on to the Professional Game Group, which we were very surprised about.

Q482 **Chair:** What was the reason?

Tom Harrison: They felt it was an operational job for the chief executives of each of those counties.

Barry O'Brien: There was a very good relationship with those chief executives.

Tom Harrison: Absolutely.

Chair: Not a lack of willingness but more—

Barry O'Brien: No.

Martin Darlow: From a board perspective, I consider my relationship with every first class county chair and chief exec as very good, and in some cases excellent. But you have heard this morning that the first class counties cannot necessarily agree themselves where they want to go and sometimes there are issues of conflict that we have to deal with. I do not want you to get the impression it is a them and us. It is definitely not that. We work together very closely on many issues but there are some



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decisions where we cannot agree or they cannot agree and then we cannot agree. But it is an excellent working relationship, I have to say.

Q483 **Chair:** One last thing before anyone goes. Mr Harrison, you have one final thing to say and then we will adjourn.

Tom Harrison: Yes, I also wanted to mention that we have just come through two years of pandemic where the game has come together in the most constructive way to navigate through the enormous challenges that we faced at domestic and international level. While we always have our issues, there is a huge amount of partnership involved in how we operate.

Chair: Thank you very much, Tom Harrison, Barry O'Brien and Martin Darlow. Baroness Amos had to leave us at 12.30. That concludes our session today.