

**Rt Hon Caroline Dinenage MP**  
**Chair, DCMS Select Committee**

Sent via email.

14 November 2024

**Dear Caroline,**

Thank you for your letter and your ongoing support of our game. I have answered your questions below. Please let me know if you have any further questions.

***Will you confirm that in selling a 49% stake in each of the 8 teams, the ECB will maintain control of the cricketing schedule and IP of the Hundred in the long term?***

Yes, I can confirm that the ECB will maintain full control over the cricketing schedule, including the period in which The Hundred takes place each year and all central competition IP.

***What arrangements will be in place to ensure host counties retain control over their team franchises should one party acquire a majority stake?***

It is up to the host county to determine how they want to proceed with the remaining 51% stake. If the host county does decide to seek further investment, the ECB will support accordingly, and the county will be required to agree with investors on the specific terms of their investment and balance of control moving forward.

It is important to clarify that the franchises are the only asset for sale through this process – there will be no loss of control around the county club, the venue or any other assets. Except Hampshire, all host counties are owned by their membership base.

***What is the intended balance of powers in future decision making for the Hundred between the ECB, first class counties and new private owners?***

As per the above, the ECB will retain control over core competition matters including the brand, format, schedule, regulations and any other critical element that could impact the wider game.

Team owners (host FCCs / investors) will make decisions regarding the strategic and commercial elements impacting their franchises. However, this will be within the scope of parameters set by the ECB.

All ECB members (both FCCs and National Counties) will have a say in wider decision-making including fundamental changes to the structure of The Hundred, as they do now in relation to other competitions, via the ECB Articles of Association

We will be establishing The Hundred Committee, which will operate as a dedicated, decision-making sub-committee authorised by the ECB Board to lead, scrutinise and monitor the administration, operation, and commercialisation of The Hundred. We are finalising the details of this committee, but the membership will consist of a blend of ECB non-executive directors, franchise representatives and independent directors.

***What assurances can the ECB provide that money from private investment will be fairly distributed across clubs and will support grassroots at county level?***

This process presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for a significant capital injection into cricket in England & Wales. It is a rare moment when we have the collective power to ensure that these funds are utilised fully in ways that will provide long-term financial sustainability for the whole game.

The ECB has worked extensively with stakeholders from across the game to agree a financial distribution model that will see 100% of sale proceeds distributed to the professional and recreational game. 10% of the sale proceeds will be distributed to the recreational game, on top of ECB plans to distribute more central revenue than ever to the recreational game over the next four years.

We have also outlined a set of financial sustainability principles that will govern the distribution of proceeds. This will mean that the equity will be spent on things like building reserves, reducing debt, or infrastructure projects that will create long-term stability.

***How do you plan to mitigate against a sharp disparity of income between the 8 host and 11 non-host counties?***

Certain mechanisms within the financial distribution model aimed at reducing any potential disparity between host and non-host counties. For example, we will apply ratchets on the 49% stake that result in more value being distributed to the non-hosts. There will also be an economic carry to the non-host counties on any of the 51% stakes that are sold.

The ECB will also continue to issue annual distributions in relation to The Hundred, regardless of whether the county is a host or not.

As per the above, the ECB has recently committed an additional £35m per year to the cricketing network. We are committed to ensuring the money flows to where it is needed most, benefitting cricket fans, players and volunteers.

On the pitch there is no sign of a disparity in clubs. Last year saw Gloucestershire win the Vitality T20 Blast, and Somerset compete for all three county competitions. Non-host counties such as Essex, Durham and Somerset have been awarded a Tier 1 women's team.

***Can you clarify what steps you are taking to assess the suitability of prospective investors – are you using a fit and proper test and what criteria are you using?***

The ECB have Directors' and Officers' Regulations in place, alongside Financial Regulations. These determine the circumstances under which an individual will not be permitted to be a Director or have control over a Hundred Team, and follow the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986. This aligns with other major sports and covers topics such as criminal convictions, insolvency and corruption. The ECB Board will also be able to request evidence of source and sufficiency of funds from investors.

***Can you confirm how you have engaged with counties, sought their views and been transparent about the sales process?***

We have consulted extensively with all counties for the past 18 months to reach this point. This has included a series of agreements to align on the direction of travel, including a

commitment to team franchising, alignment on a centralised sale process and agreement to specific red lines. The sale process specifically has been developed in collaboration with the host counties, as well as our advisors, and wider non-host counties have been consulted.

***What assessment has the ECB made about the long-term impact on Test and county cricket by scheduling the Hundred in August, and what safeguards are you going to put in place to protect county and test cricket?***

ECB are committed to the long-term future of Test cricket. We have seen no concern to date that Test cricket cannot thrive commercially outside of August – last year's Ashes summer was the best since 2005 across pretty much every metric. We expect another blockbuster series against India next year.

We work hand-in-glove with counties to support them on growing the game in their region. Our aspiration for the game is to reach 4m ticket sales per year, and to achieve that requires thriving domestic competitions, including the Vitality Blast, Metro Bank One Day Cup and Vitality County Championship.

The Hundred has been exceptional at engaging new audiences, most notably with families. In 2024, 31% of ticket buyers for The Hundred were female, and 23% of the tickets sold were for juniors. It has also had turbocharged the growth of women's cricket, with over 1 million fans attending women's matches in The Hundred since 2021. Having The Hundred window strategically aligned to the school holidays is exceptionally useful for achieving these aims.

I hope the above helps to provide reassurance, and the Committee can support the game to use this moment as a chance to put cricket on firm financial footing for generations to come.

Please let me or my team know if you have any follow-up questions.

Best wishes,

Richard Gould  
CEO  
England and Wales Cricket Board