



**NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM**  
***COVID-19 – SCENARIO PLANNING***  
**CLUB GUIDANCE ON BEING COVID-19 READY**

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# SCENARIO PLANNING

## Roadmap to the return of the NLS

- COVID-19 has created the most uncertain framework to the commencement of a 2020-21 season.
- Currently only two Government 'sport' strategies.
  - The Return to Elite Sport Framework
  - National Sport and Recreation Policy
- NLS sits between these two levels but may not receive specific Government guidance.
- DCMS fully aware of the NLS. Continuous dialogue from initiation of Lock Down to discussions on resumption.
- Planning has considered a variety of potential strategies.....

**FOR THE NLS**



# NLS SCENARIO PLANNING

## Lock-Down Easing strategy considerations

- Resumption of competitive Sport:
  - Roadmap to the Nation being allowed to undertake no limit competitive Sport
- Mass Gatherings:
  - Return of Mass Gatherings key to NLS – currently Gatherings limited to 6
  - Will Gatherings be capped? Will they be reduced? Or wait to return with no limit?
- Hospitality industry:
  - Clubhouses, bars and food outlets will most likely follow the industry
  - Vital to secondary spend for all NLS clubs
- Local Lock Downs through Test, Track and Trace
  - What would this mean to NLS Competitions?
- Second Wave... and a Second Lock Down.

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# NLS SCENARIO PLANNING

## Principles to our planning...

- We must consider starting at any point & to the extreme (ie. Jan 21)
- We are planning to achieve as full a season as is possible
- We want to achieve as much inclusion in FA Competitions as possible
- If a full season isn't possible, then consistent alternatives key

### **Alongside this, we understand:**

- Clubs in the NLS cannot resume their Season 'behind closed doors'
- Clubs need bars and food outlets and may want flexibility
- We need to be mindful of the impact on Volunteers on managing 'a COVID-19 environment'
- Players and officials other commitments post lock down?

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# NLS SCENARIO PLANNING

## Mapping of potential fixture programmes & key assumptions

- **Commence in August** – this would equate to a usual season
- **Commence in September** – it would appear that Steps 1 to 6 could complete a full season (particularly if consideration to County and League Cups are revised for a year)
- **Commence in October** – if the start date was in the first half of October Step 1 could just about complete a full season, although an extension into May could be required. Steps 2 to 6 (particularly Steps 4-6) appear to be able to complete. Clearly this is more difficult in the higher echelons due to the team count per division.
- **Commence in November** – whilst there are enough physical dates in the calendar, this would appear to be unsuitable due to the lack of fall-back dates and tight schedule (i.e.lack of breaks for players).

SEPTEMBER	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5/6
Teams per Div	24	22	22	20	20 (max)
Fixtures per Team	46	42	42	38	38
Total weekend slots	34	34	34	34	34
Allocated weekend slots	33 (4 for FA Comps)	34 (4 for FA Comps)	34 (4 for FA Comps)	34 (3 for FA Comps)	34 (3 for FA Comps)
Spare weekend slots	1	0	0	0	0
Total weekday slots	33	33	33	33	33
Allocated weekday slots	17	12 (1 for FA Comps)	14 (2 for FA Comps)	9 (2 for FA Comps)	5
Spare weekday slots	16	21	19	24	28

# NLS SCENARIO PLANNING

## FA Competitions

We know the importance of FA Competitions to Clubs in the NLS  
? Would front loading FA Comps help ?

**FA Cup:** Must remember Competition Contractual obligations. This income is vital to FA investment into the game. 1<sup>st</sup> Round must be played by the first/second Saturday in November and 3<sup>rd</sup> Round must start on time. This does inevitably cause an impact.

**FA Vase:** Working to include as many clubs as possible and less impacted. Wembley final constrained by EURO 2021.

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# NLS SCENARIO PLANNING

## Post November

**Reducing the number of games within a season to attempt to complete on time**

- Play the league by half, playing home or away once by draw
- Split the league into two geographical divisions
- Split the divisions based on a 'draw'
- Geographical divisions provide simple solution supports travel for clubs.
- Geographical divisions could inadvertently provide varied divisional strengths in certain geographical areas, despite being the same Step level.
  - Playing home or away once provides potential sporting integrity issues.
  - Divisions by draw provides a solution to negate human process of dividing leagues.
- To draw divisions may provide unnecessary travel at this time. Some clubs may be more adversely affected by travel.

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CUT OFF DATE: NO 2020-21 TRADITIONAL SEASON ACHIEVABLE

PERMITTED TO PLAY

CREATE AN INCOME / RESTART TOURNAMENT

OR

CREATE AN NLS GEOGRAPHICAL BASED TOURNAMENT, MIX OF STEPS

OR

DOUBLE THE AMOUNT OF DIVISIONS AT EACH STEP/HALVE AMOUNT OF FIXTURES AND TRAVEL

NOT PERMITTED TO PLAY

RECYCLE 2020-21 PLANNING

PLAN FOR 2021-22 TRADITIONAL START



# NLS SCENARIO PLANNING

## Other Options

### Playing behind closed doors:

- Agreement it appears that this is not viable
- Consideration could be given to 'streaming' but costs could be prohibitive, especially at Steps 5 & 6.

### Playing with restricted crowds

- Could there be an ability for restricted capacity – DCMS leading
- Managing this; advance tickets, season tickets etc
- Could NLS run at (for example) 30% of Ground Grading capacity??

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# NLS SCENARIO PLANNING

## Other Considerations

### Sporting Integrity:

- Need to ensure consideration given to how Clubs interact with the new era of Football
- If regional splits, ensure P&R is 'normalised'

### Local Lock Down / Second Spike Considerations:

- There may be local issues i.e. South West, if possible, fall into League specific planning
- Local lock down –if likely, could consider League splits on Geography
- Consider a pre determined policy if we achieve 25% 50% 75% of season – *currently in planning.*

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# NLS COVID-19 CLUB GUIDANCE

## Assisting Clubs Prepare for a return...

### The Intention:

Considering the previous statement that we only have 'Elite' and 'Recreational' Government guidance, neither is 'wholly' applicable to NLS Clubs

Government guidance is not 'granular' – equally, Granular guidance to Clubs would not work – no one club is the same

Guidance to give 'direction' to Clubs of what and how they should consider how to modify their club accordingly



# NLS CLUB GUIDANCE

- **Football Activity Guidance**
  - A return to competitive football
  - A return to training
- **Player Welfare – lets talk Testing!**
  - Travel
  - Welfare
  - Equipment
  - Medical/physiotherapy – being driven by our FA Medical Team
- **Facilities**
  - Players – training facilities/changing rooms
  - Clubhouses/bars
  - Spectators/gatherings
- **Volunteer workforce**
- **Furloughed staff**
- **Youth sections**
- **A draft Risk Assessment**

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# NLS COVID-19 CLUB GUIDANCE

## The role of Leagues / Club expectations

### The Club:

The Club **MUST** undertake a Risk Assessment and or Action Plan on how it has modified and considered the implications of COVID-19 on their club

The Club **MUST** publish this on their Club Website (Gov Guidance) to give reassurance to other Clubs that they have made their Club 'safe'

### The League

Clubs should notify the League that they have published their Guidance to ensure Members have complied. We do not recommend Leagues taking copies of any RA – it is for a Club to consider its own Club position

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# NLS COVID-19 CLUB GUIDANCE

## Timescales

- Grassroots guidance released via TheFA.com covers actual current Government guidance – this will support initial thoughts
- NLS club guidance will go beyond specific Government Sport guidance i.e. balancing what we learn from the Elite guidance
- Cross departmental approval – Medical, Legal, DCMS etc
- Aiming to get to clubs by end of June to start preparing for potential new season

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# NLS COVID-19

## Funding

- We know how impactful this has been on Finances.
- We undertook a large scale piece of work to understand ‘no games’ impact
- Government Support and Sport England
- The FA is continuing to explore ways to support Clubs.
- The most delicate time for a club will be when they return from COVID-19 ‘hibernation’
  - Lack of income from remaining matches
  - Lack of summer activity
  - Cost to modify their grounds.

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