



Annual Review 2021-22

ABOUT BASEBALLSOFTBALLUK

BaseballSoftballUK (BSUK) is the national development agency for British Baseball and Softball, formed in 2000 to help the sports to take gain popularity by securing government investment, establishing cross-sport partnerships and achieving operational efficiencies.

Our job – getting the nation active through baseball and softball, defined by our object to increase the number of people playing our sports and to improve the quality of their experience. To achieve this, we have centred our work programme on increasing regular participation in the sports. We believe that the most important measure of the health of the sports in the UK is the number of people who play them regularly, on fully formed teams or in a well-organised group. These key measures determine where we focus resources, time and effort.

We employ sixteen part- and full-time staff, who are responsible for the organisation, communication, promotion and development of the sports. Since the pandemic, we have been working remotely and hotdesking at the House of Sport in Borough, London.

The organisation provides several development initiatives tailored to increasing participation (including programmes like Hit the Pitch), improving the level of play (through the Academy and High-Performance Academy), educating and supporting the workforce (through our Coach Education Programme and Coach Summit event), improving the standard of playing facilities and developing the standard of club operations.

In addition to our long-standing partnership with Sport England, we have also been in receipt of investment from UK Sport since 2019 for both GB Baseball and GB Fastpitch Softball, pursuing their hopes of qualifying for LA 2028.

The organisation provides several development programmes and initiatives that offer tailored solutions to getting people playing (such as our Hit the Pitch programme), improving the level of play (through our Academy and High-Performance Academy), educating and supporting the workforce (through our Coach Education Programme and Coach Summit event), improving the standard of playing facilities and developing the standard of club and league operations.

At the start of our participation drive, just 10,000 people played baseball and softball in the UK. Prior to the pandemic, the number of people playing regularly had more than doubled to 26,500.

Behind the scenes, our administration continues to offer professional support to the British Baseball and Softball Federations, particularly providing appropriate safeguards for young and vulnerable people.

For the first time in over a decade, we secured grant investment from UK Sport for both the GB Baseball and GB Fastpitch national teams, pursuing their Olympic qualification campaigns.

This year, BSUK completed the assurance framework for UK Anti-Doping on behalf of the sports.

Message from the Chair



Phil Veasey

Chair

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am delighted to present this Annual Review for 2021-22.

I was appointed to be the Chair in November, joining at an exciting time for the sports. For the first time, the trio of Sport England, UK Sport and MLB partnership is now in place, setting the sports up for future financial security and success.

In May, we were part of the pitch team presenting our plans for MLB to return regular season games to the London Stadium, working closely with the Mayor of London's Office, the stadium and CSM, the promoters. Together, we have set out clear legacy plans for a lasting impact from the future Series, in London and nationwide.

March saw confirmation of a £2.3 million Sport England grant for 2022-27 to co-deliver the ambitions of its Uniting the Movement strategy. The award is a resounding vote of confidence in our work, assuring ongoing development, systemic and governance services for the next five years.

2021-22 was the first year of operational involvement in the Olympic programmes for baseball and fastpitch softball, funded by UK Sport. In January we appointed Gary Anderson as Head of Performance. He brings a wealth of experience and an Olympic medal-winning track record. We were also able to land funding for UK Sport's International Relations Fund for the work of the British Baseball Federation ("BBF"), British Softball Federation ("BSF") and BSUK on the international scene.

The start of the 2021 playing season was still affected by COVID-19. We saw an almost complete

return to play, allowing us to operate a near-normal year financially and operationally.

By year end, 2022 season preparations had begun, including capital investment into Farnham Park: building a new field, skinning the infield on field two and purchasing a mobile office for the site.

Our partnerships with the sports' National Governing Bodies (NGBs) are of vital importance to our service of the sports. In August, the BBF signed up to our Development Charter, marking the realignment of our safeguarding and development efforts. In November, the BBF elected new board members and President Tom Thornhill. Our work with the BSF has never been stronger, with active engagement from BSF President Ieuan Gale and past President Jenny Fromer on our Board.

This was the second year of our four-year rolling strategy: *Two Sports, One Ambition*. We delivered our 2021-22 Operational Plan, reviewing and updating the Strategy and plan for 2022-23. The Development Charter has provided vital support to clubs nationwide. In the first two years of the Facilities Fund, eleven clubs have upgraded facilities. The fund, which is self-funded by BSUK, has enabled a total investment into grassroots facilities of over £50,000.

We will look back on 2021-22 as a momentous first year on the British University and Colleges Sport (BUCS) programme.

We have a skilled Board of Directors of twelve, adding Kirsty Clarke, Paul Convoy, Peter Kim in October. Paul's appointment, following endorsement from baseball, addresses our desire to have baseball at the Board table. In September, we welcomed Erica Barrett as our new Head of Operations and Company Secretary.

I would like to pay tribute to outgoing Interim Chair Simon Winman for his stoic leadership through challenging times. Thank you to Board colleagues past and present, and the entire staff team for their relentless efforts to sustain and strengthen our sports in the UK.

Development

Baseball Development Plan

Throughout every part of the UK and including every type of participant and age group, British baseball started the process of collaborating on a national development plan for baseball in the UK.

Jointly supported, coordinated and led by BaseballSoftballUK and the BBF, this plan is intended to capture agreed priorities for the development of all areas of baseball, ranging from entry level through to elite, from a child's first experience to seasoned contributors in our sport.

Eight themed workshops were held with good attendance from across the sport. During 2022, the qualitative analysis will produce a draft Baseball Development Plan, which will be shared widely before publication before the 2023 season.

Participation

With pandemic restrictions easing, development work resumed in the summer. However, disruption continued. Most adult club and leagues resumed play with reduced teams and players.

Adult clubs had a continued return to some form of play. The schools and corporate softball programmes were hardest hit. Reinstating these will be a real challenge, for sport.

We continued to work on increasing the diversity of people playing our sports, despite the challenges. Our LGBTQ+ Panel continued to advocate and promote opportunity and our sixth LGBTQ+ tournament took place in Manchester in May 2021. Further events are being planned to add to the calendar in 2022 with a venue in Liverpool being added.

Delivery of the Major Events Engagement Fund restarted in East London. Working through Street Games, 25 pop up clubs were delivered to communities in some of the most deprived parts of East London. These will continue to be a focus for future MLB London Series Legacy plans.

A holistic review of participation will continue into 2022, tracking the impact of Covid-19 on participation levels. Work began on a Health Check to assess the resilience of the club and league infrastructure.

Universities



After two decades of advocacy and lobbying, we were incredibly excited to finally see secure a place for baseball and softball within the BUCS competition programme. BSUK continues to work in partnership with university clubs and BUCS to place baseball and slowpitch at the heart of university sport.

Following regional leagues from which 12 teams progressed, the Inaugural National Softball Championships took place in March. Competition was fierce across both competitions and Loughborough University pulled off the double in the inaugural year, winning both Championships.

Schools

With schools struggling to remain open and safe, physical education and school sport took a back seat. Most after-school clubs and school sport did not take place. This particularly affected the Fun at Bat and School Games programmes. Led by Fastpitch Development Manager Alyson Spinavainis, the new Secondary Schools Fastpitch programme took shape with the creation of a structure, resources and content that will be piloted in four areas in Summer 2022.

Clubs and Leagues

Based on eight pillars of support, the Development Charter was launched in August 2020 as a free service to our clubs and leagues. It provides a structured mechanism to access development and safeguarding services from BSUK. Most support has been provided through a dedicated relationship manager, enhanced by a series of workshops and webinars.

The eight pillars of support are relationship building and connectivity with local networks; club and league management; recruitment of players; facility and field development; coach education; youth development; fundraising and grant applications; and safeguarding – including a DBS checks.

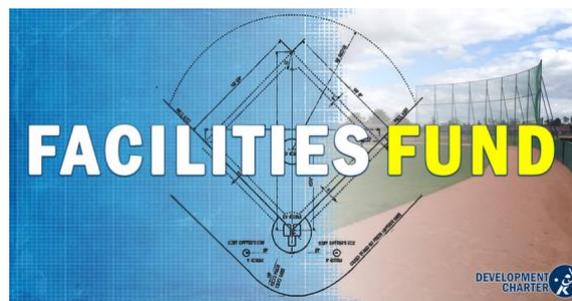
Our support for clubs and leagues through the Development Charter continued to be a priority. It focused on managing the impact of the pandemic, retaining members, accessing facilities and facility development, club and league management, financial management and coaching.

Engagement levels with the Development Charter increased and now >98% of clubs and leagues across the country are enrolled in its membership.

The Development Charter is free of charge and clubs affiliated to the British Softball Federation and British Baseball Federation are enrolled automatically through their NGB's membership. Sign-up requires clubs to commit to adhere to our nationally recognised and regulated baseball/softball safeguarding standards.

Facilities Fund

BSUK has dedicated £50,000 over five years (2021-2025) to enable clubs and leagues to build and upgrade local facilities across the UK through a new Facilities Fund. So far, BSUK has provided more than £22,000 in funding over the first two years of its existence. Creating and improving facilities at the grassroots level is vital to making baseball and softball more accessible around the UK. The Fund became available to any not-for-profit club, league or association that has signed up to the Development Charter.



Applicants were asked to show their commitment by providing match-funding. Joining five recipients from 2021, BSUK awarded £10,558 in 2022 to:

- Brighton Baseball Club - £2,000
- Herts Baseball Club - £2,852
- Leicester Diamonds & Leicester Blue Sox (joint application) - £2,250
- Norwich Icenis Baseball Club - £2,097
- Worcester Baseball Club - £360
- Wragby Warhammers Baseball Club - £1,000

The eleven recipients have benefitted from £50,000+ of facility improvements in two years.

Hough End

Throughout the year, we continued to work with Manchester City Council (MCC) to create the first dedicated baseball and softball fields in the region.

This was the culmination of seven years of efforts by BSUK to create a bespoke baseball and softball facility in the north of England, and specifically to support the sizeable Manchester playing community.

MCC undertook a consultation, seeking public feedback on the entire project which, as well as a dual baseball/softball field and a standalone softball field, included 3G pitches for football and rugby, Gaelic football pitches, a redeveloped leisure centre with a viewing gallery, café and expanded gym. The consultation returned a remarkably high volume of objections, particularly to the baseball/softball plans.

The baseball/softball aspects of the plan were removed from the project before the MCC resubmitted the planning application for the project. Discussions continue with MCC about baseball/softball facilities in Manchester.

Fastpitch Development

BSUK has worked with the BSF to create a hosting agreement at Farnham Park to welcome all ten national teams. These teams will be able to attend officially coordinated training sessions held on the purpose-built diamonds at Farnham Park, free of charge during the week, and will benefit from preferential Federation rates at peak times.

Academy Softball returned after a year's hiatus. The Academy is designed to help players of all skills turn the off-season into an opportunity to become better, stronger and fitter athletes. The programme featured both Regional and National training sessions, along with new elements and lessons added to the programme. The most notable of these additions is that all National Academy sessions at Coventry featured full scrimmages, putting the skills learned in other sessions to the test. All other sessions will follow the usual Academy layout of skill-work and games.

Coach Summit 2022



The Coach Summit was again held online on in January 2022, followed by a series of weeknight sessions running into April. It's theme was "Adaptation, Relevance, Resilience", with the goal of ensuring that baseball and softball coaches have the most up-to-date tools and techniques. It featured keynote speeches, workshops and seminars and was well attended by domestic and international coaches. It is a highlight of BSUK's Coach Education Programme.

Speakers included internationally acclaimed coach André Lachance, GB Head Coaches Drew Spencer and Rachael Watkeys, Head of Performance Gary Anderson, Gary McCoy, John Skaggs, Bobby Scales, Alyson Spina-Valainis, Josh Taylor Jonathon Cramman and Will Lintern.

2022 Coaching Awards



The online British Baseball and Softball Coaching Awards recognised the outstanding work of coaches and volunteers, highlighting the adaptive skills of the workforce required by the pandemic. Winners of the 2022 awards were as follows:

- **Young Coach of the Year:** Aged 25 or younger, who made the biggest contribution to coaching, managing and supporting baseball and/or softball in Britain. **Winner: Jess Vernon**
- **Baseball Youth Coach of the Year:** Outstanding contribution to coaching young people in baseball in Britain. **Winner: Will Zucker**
- **Softball Youth Coach of the Year:** Outstanding contribution to coaching young people in softball in Britain. **Winner: Holly Ireland**
- **Baseball Adult Coach of the Year:** Outstanding contribution to adult baseball coaching in Britain. **Winner: Martin Andrews**
- **Softball Adult Coach of the Year:** Outstanding contribution to adult softball coaching in Britain. **Winner: Trevor Sykes**
- **Volunteer of the Year:** A volunteer in a non-coaching role who has made a significant impact on the development of our sports. **Winner: Amanda 'Doris' Hocking**
- **Services to Coaching:** Best personifies what it means to be a coach, who can use the lessons learned on the pitch to motivate and engage others. They have probably played a great number of roles, and without whose services to coaching, their teams wouldn't be the same. **Winner: Ian Tomlin**

2022 BRITISH BASEBALL & SOFTBALL COACHING AWARDS



2022 SERVICES TO COACHING AWARD

IAN TOMLIN

GB SOFTBALL MEN'S U-18 & U-23 TEAMS

2022 BRITISH BASEBALL & SOFTBALL COACHING AWARDS



2022 BASEBALL ADULT COACH OF THE YEAR

MARTIN ANDREWS

LEICESTER DIAMONDS

2022 BRITISH BASEBALL & SOFTBALL COACHING AWARDS



2022 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

AMANDA 'DORIS' HOCKING

WOMEN'S BASEBALL UK

2022 BRITISH BASEBALL & SOFTBALL COACHING AWARDS



2022 YOUNG COACH OF THE YEAR

JESS VERNON

BELLES BASEBALL | GB BASEBALL | BRACKNELL BASEBALL & SOFTBALL CLUB | TEAM UK BASEBALL

2022 BRITISH BASEBALL & SOFTBALL COACHING AWARDS



2022 BASEBALL YOUTH COACH OF THE YEAR

WILL ZUCKER

HERTS BASEBALL CLUB

2022 BRITISH BASEBALL & SOFTBALL COACHING AWARDS



2022 SOFTBALL YOUTH COACH OF THE YEAR

HOLLY IRELAND

RBI WALES

2022 BRITISH BASEBALL & SOFTBALL COACHING AWARDS



2022 SOFTBALL ADULT COACH OF THE YEAR

TREVOR SYKES

COVENTRY BLITZ SOFTBALL CLUB

Communications

Our communications remit includes raising the sports' appeal to new and existing fans, communicating with the playing community, and getting more people into the game.

We developed a series of initiatives, such as a Player of the Week, blogs highlighting our sports podcasts and featuring content from across the community, photo competitions, videos curated from the community and staff for Mental Health Awareness Week and a social campaign for our UK Anti-Doping accreditation.

The pandemic created both opportunities and challenges for communications. The Return to Play guidance, led by Joëlle Watkins, drove a lot of traffic to BSUK's sites and channels, and helped establish BSUK's value as an intermediary between grassroots clubs and the various government agencies across the UK. The volatility of COVID-19 restrictions, and the constant changes to the regulations, presented challenges. Many projects were adapted to a shorter timeframe and more basic messaging.

BSUK grew our BSUK social media channels, streaming domestic and international games, including the 2021 European Baseball Championships in Turin, working with the WBSC.

Communications partnerships were created with You Can Play and Pride Tape to help augment and resource the LGBTQ+ Panel's work, amplifying BSUK's work in the area to a North American and global audience.

Website Refresh

With the BSUK website now more than 10 years old, and with the site lacking mobile functionality, the decision was made to replace the BSUK website. Tim Stride, formerly Head of Operations and now owner of Crayte, Inc, was engaged as the designer and tech support, with Erica Barrett leading the project for BSUK. The project is scheduled for launch in April 2022. The site will feature a mobile friendly interface, new content, and a new user experience.

Social Media

BSUK operates Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube profiles and administers the BSF's Facebook and Twitter accounts. BSUK launched a TikTok account, aimed at the 18-24 demographic. Content created with an emphasis on video when possible and on short term, quick wins, and high energy content when possible.

COVID Guidance

BSUK continued its work with the Game Ready campaign, sharing useful tips for clubs, leagues and players in lieu of on-field playing experience.

The Return to Play campaign, led by Joëlle Watkins, continued, and was one of the most valuable pieces to the community, with Return to Play updates frequently outperforming other social media and news stories.

Broadcast and Streaming

BSUK's Public Relations Officer and Sports Broadcaster Chris Knoblock was seconded to GB Baseball in September for the European Championships. He broadcast six GB games. The broadcasts, done through BSUK's coordination with WBSC Europe, were also shown at Home Run House in London, including the 5th/6th place game, as part of BSUK's relationship with Passyunk Avenue and MLB Europe.

GB games outperformed other broadcasts at the European Championships (not including host Italy, who televised games), peaking at 50,000 viewers during the final GB game.

The BSF renewed its commitment to broadcast the NSL championship and Co-Ed League Championships, with Bob Fromer and Niall Gray on the call and Chris Knoblock producing. This was the first full-scale test of the new mobile BSUK broadcast equipment. While the broadcasts were successful, each receiving more than 1,000 views, the equipment did not perform as expected. Upgrades are planned.

The independent Single-A Championships were also broadcast from Farnham Park, with Chris Knoblock and Sheffield Bruins' Tim French calling the final game on 18 September. The game received more than 1,000 views. It was well received by the baseball community, noting the rarity of lower division games being broadcast.

Websites

With the completion of the BSF website project in early 2021 led by BSUK's Tim Stride, the BSF's website numbers improved significantly from the previous year, thanks to new mobile-compatibility of the site. Both websites were consistently updated with events and news stories. In addition, the BSUK Team Finder was again the most popular feature between the two websites, with 18,800+ views.

- BSUK.com rebounded with 129k pageviews (108k the year prior).
- The BSF's new website traffic increased. 137k views (74k the previous year).
- The Team Finder was the most popular page across both sites. The BSF's most viewed was the Spawtz league page (6,877 views). Events were fourth and fifth most popular.
- 77% of people found BSUK.com from a web search, most searching for "batting cages". 75% of BSF traffic was via a web search. This suggests that SEO is working well for both sites.

Crown Jewel Events

A new concept for major events, called Crown Jewel Events, was trialled. Either Federation could call on BSUK to provide extra marketing, communications, social media, and broadcasting resources. The BSF made the NSL Championship and Co-Ed League Championships Crown Jewel Events, without the usual financial commitment, and the events were a success. The BSF has requested 16 Crown Jewel Events for the 2022 season.

Database Marketing

The team supported the publishing of the following e-newsletters through Mailchimp:

- *Hot Corner* (monthly), highlighting news, activities and opportunities.
- *Newsflash* (occasional), used for occasionally for standalone stories announcing important news, developments and campaigns.
- *The Clubhouse* (bi-monthly), highlighting development-related issues relevant to club administrators. The Clubhouse was suspended in 2021 due to a lack of content during the COVID-19 pandemic, and is under review as it becomes a Development Charter resource rather than an agnostic club-focused newsletter with case studies
- *Safeguarding Newsletter* (as needed)
- *Return to Play Newsflash* (as needed)

Visual Resources

BSUK maintains an extensive library of over 37k images on Flickr. Significant additions were made through commissioned photography and external contributions. The images are used to illustrate web stories and publications. Some are supplied externally for the sports' promotion.

Following the BSF's launch of their own Flickr account, research into an internal, server-based option for storing content is underway.

BSUK has started created a video library for stock video footage and specific event content for future years.

External Outlets

BSUK keeps a database of national and local media outlets. Several press releases were distributed to these outlets. The list was fully vetted and consolidated in March 2021. Further revisions to the list were made as needed throughout the year, along with bespoke lists for both GB Softball and GB Baseball.

Farnham Park



Farnham Park National Baseball & Softball Complex is the UK home of our sports.

Opened in 2013, with a long-term lease in place through 2041, the complex has six diamonds across four fields (two softball / youth baseball diamonds and two international grade baseball fields). The site boasts a dedicated clubhouse called Home Plate Bar and Kitchen.

Typically, the site welcomes over 20,000 domestic and international visitors a year. The site did not enjoy a full return to normal levels of use. However, COVID promoted individual or small group coaching sessions, hour-long training sessions and hire of the batting cage and bullpens which continued throughout the year.

Events and bookings at Farnham Park were almost back to normal levels. As a not-for-profit, Farnham Park income is reinvested directly into meeting the site's running costs and this year, contributed 40% of BSUK's non-Government or grant-based income.

BSUK began the process of Farnham Park becoming an accredited UK Sport Elite Training Centre, part of the network of facilities across the UK which include the National Sports Centres at Bisham Abbey and Lilleshall.

Site Developments

Work began in February to create a fifth permanent softball diamond at the facility. Due for completion in time for the 2022 outdoor playing season, this will bring the total number of dedicated fields at Farnham Park to seven, of which two are combined baseball/softball fields. Part of the upgrade programme also includes resurfacing one of the existing diamonds on one of the combination fields so that it is a fully dirt infield, creating a better playing experience. The new field will also be used for youth baseball.

We have also begun to scope out the purchase of a mobile site office to act as an administrative base for the sports.



Safeguarding

Development Charter

The Development Charter has enabled BSUK to communicate directly with leagues, clubs and teams in order to build a Safeguarding database with details of coaches of youth players, including a record of who have been DBS checked and what Safeguarding training coaches have completed. This makes our sports safer and brings Safeguarding into the 'normal' day to day operations. These are fundamental checks for Chartered members. BSUK can assist all clubs, teams and leagues with DBS checking and Safeguarding training.

DBS Checks

In 2021-2022, BSUK assisted with 211 DBS checks - up from 158 last year (in blue) - 74 new (81), 53 renewed (30), 84 using DBS update service (47). The update service enables a coach to be renewed without having to complete a new application, the recommended method.

Training

We continued to deliver the CPSU Time to Listen course virtually. This proved popular with coaches, training 44 new delegates (91 in total since launching virtual courses). A further six coaches completed online courses supplied by BSUK.

Microsite

An expanded microsite continued to provide clubs and coaches with all the safeguarding information, advice, policies and documents needed to operate safely. The planned new BSUK Website will encompass all safeguarding information for clubs.

Newsletters

Safeguarding Officers and club officials have been kept informed regularly through newsletters that

include news, updates on requirements and training course details. The Safeguarding Newsletter has been added to the promotional schedule of newsletters and digital marketing.

Child Protection in Sport Unit

BSUK maintained our ongoing relationship with the CPSU, who formally review and assesses our safeguarding effectiveness annually. They consider our action, policies, procedures and processes. Once again, BSUK passed the assessment and continues to work with CPSU to keep our safeguarding support up to date.

Year Ahead

Priorities for the year ahead:

- Continue to help and support for coaches and Safeguarding Officers with training, DBS checks, information and advice to ensure they can operate safely.
- Continue to build and enhance the Safeguarding Database to enable effective communication directly to the clubs and teams.
- Work alongside the BBF and BSF to develop a Safeguarding Representative role to reach the membership to assist with training, administration and to ensure compliance from the clubs and teams within the leagues.
- Promote Club Code of Conduct to assist clubs with establishing suggested rules of behaviour and disciplinary processes, allowing a better playing experience for all.

Diversity

Our focus on increasing the playing and workforce diversity spans several areas: LGBTQ+, Women and Girls, those from a lower socio-economic demographic, people from diverse ethnic communities and those with a disability.

We continued to work with our national and delivery partners, like Disability Sports Coach and Pride Sports to prepare for delivery and evaluate our approaches. We continued to be unable to collect demographic playing data due to the limited amount of play.

LGBTQ+



BaseballSoftballUK has a dedicated LGBTQ+ Panel to oversee the development of the sports for LGBTQ+ participants.

The Panel has created a page on our website, set up a Facebook group called Out on the Bases, defined its ethos and connected with Sport England, Stonewall, Pride Sports, Pride Tape and You Can Play. Its highlights to date include:

- Creating Inclusive Slowpitch Softball rules and linked to the LGBT page.
- Supporting the running of an annually run BSUK LGBT Tournament in Manchester.
- Publishing website blogs on various topics, like what it is like being an LGBTQ+ player in the sport.
- Creation of “Including Non-binary People” resources for clubs on our website.



In May, we announced a new partnership with Pride Tape, under the name Strike Out Hate UK. The campaign had the goal of driving positive social change by making baseball and softball a more welcoming and inclusive environment for players, coaches, administrators, volunteers and fans. The programme builds off the successful Strike Out Hate campaign run by Pride Tape with the support of Minor League Baseball (MiLB) in the United States and Canada.

September saw the addition of a second venue for our LGBTQ+ tournament. A misty morning on Saturday, 18 September turned into blazing sunshine at Birmingham Baseball Club’s ground for the inaugural Pride in Softball Birmingham tournament. The backstop was decorated with colourful bunting and rainbow flags galore, and music blasting gleefully all day – even home plate was given a multicoloured makeover. The tournament, organised by BaseballSoftballUK’s development staff with the support of Pride Sports, was a showcase in support of Pride House Birmingham, a new destination that is “creating a safe space and welcoming, inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ supporters, athletes, staff, volunteers and organisations at the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.”

Staffing

Head of Operations

After seventeen years with the company, Tim Stride decided to step down as Head of Operations to concentrate on his web development skills. He will continue to work with us to develop a website refresh.

In September, Erica Barrett joined the Senior Leadership Team as Head of Operations. A Johannesburg native, she spent 13 years working in hospitality, events and sports travel logistics, while also having heavy involvement with baseball and softball in Johannesburg and nationally. Her experience includes team management and logistics, event marketing, with a focus on operations. She was also the First Vice President of the Johannesburg Sports Federation, where she was responsible for increasing the involvement and participation of women and girls in sport and with key involvement in the writing and execution of sporting grants.

Head of Performance

In January, BSUK welcomed Gary Anderson to our Senior Leadership Team as our inaugural Head of Performance. The role was necessitated by our expanded remit over the GB Women's Fastpitch and Men's Baseball programmes. Gary will lead BSUK's performance department, implementing systems for talent identification and development, and working towards the goal of qualification for the GB Baseball and GB Softball teams at the 2028 LA Olympic Games.

Gary brings more than 45 years' experience in Olympic and professional sport to BaseballSoftballUK, as an athlete, coach, scientist and Performance Director. A native of Watford, he has worked across multiple Olympic sports, including football, where he won the 1996 FIFA Fair Play award, and bobsleigh, where he assisted the British Bobsleigh team to a bronze medal in 2014.

Facility Operations and Events Manager

After two years of tireless service, Sam Haslam left his role overseeing Farnham Park. In July, Liz Knight was promoted to the role of Facility Operations and Events Manager.

Liz's work will primarily focus on the day-to-day management of BSUK's National Baseball & Softball Complex at Farnham Park in Buckinghamshire, the UK's only fully purpose-built baseball and softball facility with four diamonds and more than 20,000 visitors per season. Liz will also play an integral role in scoping and driving expansion to other locations, such as the Hough End facility project in Manchester. In addition to her facility work, Liz will also focus on the creation, scheduling, and delivery of events, both at Farnham Park and across the UK.

Development Managers

In October, Jayde Ellis joined the team in the role of Development Manager after four and a half years at Marylebone Cricket Club, where she was both a coach and Youth Development Manager. A native of Sydney, New South Wales, Ellis has spent much of her career in sports and education, with a particular focus on using sports as a force for good in the community. Ellis also has an extensive charity background, with several her previous roles focusing on inclusion and diversity.

In July, Colin Barrett was appointed initially as an interim Development Manager to fill the role vacated by Liz Knight, who was promoted to Facility Operations and Events Manager. Colin joins, having been an international baseball and softball coach in South Africa.

In January, Leah Holmes was promoted to Deputy Head of Development, with a concentration on the Development Charter services to clubs and leagues.

The Board

National Governing Bodies

In August, the BBF signed up to our Development Charter, marking the realignment of our safeguarding and development efforts. In November, the BBF elected new board members and President Tom Thornhill. We continued to work collaboratively with the BBF on GB Baseball's pursuit of qualification to LA 2028 and World Baseball Classic success.

The relationships with our member, the BSF, has never been stronger. BSF President Ieuan Gale and past President Jenny Fromer sit on our Board. The BSF Board continued to invite our senior leadership to attend their meetings. Towards year end, discussions progressed about BSUK taking on the delivery of several BSF events, including the National Softball League (slowpitch) and some of the National Championships.

Following the financial pressures faced by the BSF during the pandemic, we agreed to suspend the BSF contribution to a shared role for fastpitch development and Service Level Agreement charges.

Major League Baseball

In 1999, MLB was a formative force in the creation of BSUK. Over the next two decades, MLB has provided close partnership support to BSUK to become what it is today. This year was no different and we continue to enjoy close partnership.

In May, BSUK was part of the pitch team presenting our plans for MLB to return regular season games to the London Stadium, working closely with the Mayor of London's Office, the stadium and CSM, the promoters. Together, we have set out clear legacy plans for a lasting impact from the future Series, in London and nationwide.

Sport England

Following an extensive application process, Sport England confirmed funding for BSUK over the

2022-27 period. The grant is worth £2.3 million over this period, providing governing, systemic and delivery funds to co-deliver the ambitions of Sport England's Uniting the Movement strategy. The award focuses on addressing inherent inequalities within sports provision, perfectly aligned to our priorities of increasing the number of people who are disabled, female, LGBTQ+, from lower socio-economic backgrounds or from diverse communities. The award also includes an increase in the funding available to be used on the development of the talent pathway

The award is a resounding vote of confidence in BSUK, assuring ongoing development, systemic and governance services for the next five years.

UK Sport

2021-22 was the first year of operational involvement in the Olympic programmes for baseball and fastpitch softball, funded by UK Sport. In January Gary Anderson was appointed as our new Head of Performance for baseball and softball. Gary brings a wealth of experience and an Olympic medal-winning track record.

We were also able to land funding for UK Sport's International Relations Fund for the work of the BBF, BSF and BSUK on the international scene. CEO John Boyd sat on an Olympic and Paralympic project board for GB Sport Media.

British Olympic Association

BSUK is the member of the BOA for baseball and softball. While the BBF removed themselves from engagement with the BOA through BSUK, we continued our role, continuing to represent with the BSF, attending National Olympic Committee meetings throughout the year.

UK Anti-Doping

In December, we completed the assurance framework for UK Anti-Doping on behalf of both sports.

Governance Statement

BaseballSoftballUK is committed to conducting business responsibly. By maintaining high standards of corporate governance, underpinned by our business model, we will enhance performance. Our approach to governance is set by the Board, and effective and robust governance remains central to our ongoing success.

Our key governance document is The Articles, which define how we operate. These are supplemented by our policies and contractual obligations, which together determine how we conduct our business, setting out the standards that drive performance.

Board oversight, reviews, management and financial audits form part of the monitoring and supervision process. Risk management processes are embedded and reviewed on an ongoing basis across the business.

Board composition is of vital concern to the business. It is the organisation's firm belief that an appropriately skilled, experienced and diverse Board is an essential component of effective governance. The Board continues to ensure that effective succession plans are in place.



Code for Sports Governance

A Code for Sports Governance came into effect in 2017. All organisations funded by the National Lottery and Exchequer are required to comply with

it as a condition of grant. Throughout the year, the Board continued to monitor and refresh the policies that keep us Code compliant.

Financial Audit

Once again, the Barcant Beardon Partnership conducted a financial audit of the year's accounts, which will be published online in late 2022.

Board Composition and Turnover

In October, three new Board Director appointments were made. Following an endorsement process that solicited votes from across British baseball, Paul Convoy was appointed. This filled the Board's desire to have grassroots baseball familiarity at the Board table. Following open recruitment, two further Independent Non Executive Directors (INEDs) were appointed: Kirsty Clarke and Peter Kim. Similarly through open recruitment, in November Phil Veasey was appointed Chair.

Independence of Directors

Independent Directors are defined as those who are recruited via an open, publicly-advertised recruitment process; and are free from any close connection to the organisation and, from the perspective of an objective outsider, would be viewed as independent.

A person may still be deemed to be 'independent' even if they are a member of the organisation and/or play the sports.

'Close connection' includes that:

- They are or have within the last four years been actively involved in the organisation's affairs, e.g. as a representative of a specific interest group within the organisation such as a sporting discipline, or Member.
- They are or have within the last four years been an employee of the organisation.

- They have close family ties with any of the organisation's Directors or senior employees.

At close of year, there were eight Directors deemed 'independent': Fiona Breeden, Kirsty Clarke, Prashant Dave, Gary Henderson, Peter Kim, Matthew Knowles, Jayne McLernon, Phil Veasey. Remaining Non-Executive Directors were: Paul Convoy, Jenny Fromer and Ieuan Gale. The CEO, John Boyd, is also an Ex-Officio Director.

After a four year tender on the Board, including two stints as interim Chair, Simon Winman stepped down in November.

Membership

The member of BSUK is the BSF.

Board Diversity

Equality of opportunity and diversity is one of the fundamental values that BSUK holds. It is part of our vision, and we have put policies, procedures and good practice in place to ensure we work in a positive and proactive manner.

The Board is committed to making appointments on the basis that no less than 30% of its total membership be female, with the aspiration of achieving gender parity. We will also seek to achieve greater diversity on the Board. The Board has also adopted a Diversity Action Plan.

At year end, the Board is:

- 33% female (4 out of 12)
- 11% LGBTQ+ (2)
- 25% from diverse ethnic backgrounds (3)

Roles are advertised using an extensive and regularly reviewed list of appropriate online avenues, ensuring that opportunities target a range of demographics.

The Board lead for DEI is the Chair.

Board Evaluation

Governance United were appointed to conduct an external Board Evaluation, presenting their findings in July. The evaluation found:

- That BSUK currently has a skilled, cohesive and generally respectful Board which governs the organisation well and is supported by committed and capable staff.
- The functioning and effectiveness of the Board have improved significantly in recent times and optimism that progress will continue with recruitment now underway for a permanent Chair and more Board members in the coming months. The Interim Chair, current Board members and staff deserve considerable credit for leading the organisation through what has undoubtedly been an extremely challenging time with the issue of the membership of BSUK and then Covid-19.
- Board members are generally satisfied with many aspects of the functioning of the Board, including the chairing of meetings, reporting by the executive and the work of sub-committees.
- Balancing the benefits that enthusiastic newcomers can bring with a degree of continuity will be a priority in the months ahead.

They identified several areas for the BSUK Board to address to meet its full potential, being:

1. Need to progress with baseball representation
2. Restructure of Board agenda and papers
3. Adjust approach to risk management
4. Refresh sub-committee membership
5. Adjust balance of Board focus to strategic objectives
6. Balancing benefits of remote working with need for interaction and building relationships.

Corporate Partnerships

The financial sustainability remit includes the diversification income sources, reducing reliance on Sport England grants and increasing turnover.

2021-22 saw the return of several of our non-grant income streams.

A new three-year partnership was launched in April for Playing Equipment, expanding the existing relationship with the Baseball Outlet, our current Official Wearable Kit Supplier, to make them BSUK's Official Supplier. A partnership with Corporate Games UK was renewed for 2022.

Financial Summary 2021-22

Income

Sport England	£525,750
UK Sport: Softball	£23,207
UK Sport: Baseball	£0
Farnham Park Operations	£91,590
Federation Service Fees	£21,925
Development Services and Grants	£86,208
Commercial Income	£17,243
Events Income	£42,069
Other grants	£12,709
Other Income	£180
TOTAL	£820,882

Expenditure

Baseball and Softball Development Staff and Activities	£330,708
UK Sport: Softball	£18,723
UK Sport: Baseball	£88
Baseball and Softball Academies	£8,042
Baseball and Softball Events	£48,334
Commercial, Marketing and Events Staff and Activities	£120,562
Communications, News and Event Coverage	£2,683
Operations, HR, Infrastructure and Governance	£177,458
Farnham Park Operating Expenditure	£130,146
TOTAL	£836,744

Full company accounts are available at www.baseballsoftballuk.com/company.



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