



AFC HENLEY

ANNUAL REPORT Town Meeting 1st April 2021

- *AFC Henley in its 47th year*
- *600+ members aged from U4 to adult*
- *60+ adult volunteers*
- *A 'not-for-profit' community club operating as an Unincorporated Association.*

Membership

We have seen a step jump in our membership numbers in the last couple of seasons. Just two years ago we had around 21 teams playing league football. We now have 28, including a newly formed Ladies' squad, which is likely to progress to two teams next season, and a new U10 Girls-only team, also expected to stimulate the creation of more girls' teams over the next few years. We could easily be looking at a total of 30 teams within the next 12-18 months.

We are in the top six clubs by number of teams in the East Berks Football Alliance League, whose area stretches from Reading to Windsor. We now have around 400 players in competitive teams from U9 upwards. Our Saturday Mini-Soccer Centre for U4s to U8s now regularly exceeds attendance figures of 100, while we are fielding four teams every year at U9 and U10. The cumulative effect of the increased participation at the younger end of the spectrum is that all age groups up to U18 are attracting more members and fielding more teams.

Extra-curricular activities

We run extra-curricular coaching modules from Mon-Frid, including a Junior Soccer Centre, Midweek Mini-Soccer and various Player Development Centres (including for goalkeepers), which we estimate attract a further 100+ participants. Football Camps are held during school holidays. We are also active in state primary and private schools, offering Tiny Tots Clubs, Breakfast Clubs, Lunch Clubs and After School Clubs. We also run an annual inter-schools competition. At least 1800 adults and children are connected with the club, around 15% of Henley's local population.

Twining links with Leichlingen

We also run two exchanges every year with our partner club in Henley's twin town of Leichlingen. Sadly, Covid-19 has prevented us from offering the exchange to our members over the last 12 months. The first football exchange took place in 1983, since when we have continued to keep the tradition alive. An U13 squad from Leichlingen visits Henley every October and our U13s pay a return visit the following spring.





Facilities

We have recently signed a Service Level Agreement to manage the YMCA 11v11 pitch. This means we now look after and play on three grounds: Jubilee Park, Harpsden and YMCA. The good news in this context is that the Football Association has recently made a policy decision to prioritise improvements in grass pitches, the rationale being that football skills cannot be well honed on poor surfaces. We have therefore received a long-term grant from the Football Foundation to help us improve our grounds, although the funding is limited and will not be available in perpetuity. More investment is required if we are to achieve the quality we aspire to. So we have appointed a top FA-recommended grounds maintenance specialist on a monthly contract to dramatically upgrade the playing surfaces at all three grounds. Already, results exceed expectations. We will continue to look for additional funding to contribute to the ongoing costs, which will total at least £30K per annum, almost double the amount we have spent historically.

New clubhouse and 3G pitch

Regarding other developments, Henley Town Council's plans for our new clubhouse and an all-weather 3G pitch continue to progress, albeit extremely slowly. More discussions are to be held to explore how AFC Henley and Henley Hockey Club might be able to share a more modestly priced facility. More news soon, we hope.

Link with Reading Football Club

Thanks to our close links with Reading Football Club, we are extremely fortunate to have the services of Reading FC Community Trust and other freelance coaches to lead our specialist coaching activities on Saturday mornings and midweek. Promising young players are referred to Reading FC Academy.

Child safeguarding

We take safeguarding extremely seriously. All our managers, coaches and assistants have in-date CRCs, as required by the Football Association. Most of our team managers are also qualified FA L1 coaches, with some at L2. External paid coaches are mainly L2 and L3. Our supervision policy is to have two adults at all coaching sessions and matches (see safeguarding policies www.afchenley.com).

Financial Support

We are indebted to Henley Town Council for their commitment to improving our facilities at Jubilee Park. In addition to the award of a Football Foundation grant towards pitch improvements we also thank Invesco Perpetual, SODC District Councillors and a number of local businesses for contributing to the purchase of equipment and playing kit. Financial support has also come from Sport England.

Thanks

We are eternally grateful to our many volunteers and non-parent helpers who help to make AFC Henley such a successful football club.

Trevor Howell
Chairman