

THE ECB UNVEILS £61MILLION INTERIM SUPPORT PACKAGE FOR PROFESSIONAL AND RECREATIONAL CRICKET

- *Financial assistance made available at every level of the game; across counties, boards and clubs*
- *Package includes early release of £40m to support immediate cash flow challenges*
- *More than £20m available in interest-free loans and grants to recreational clubs*

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) today announced a £61million package to help cricket withstand the financial impact of COVID-19.

The plans detail a number of measures for the whole sport from elite to grassroots, including the MCC, the First-Class Counties (FCCs) and their County Cricket Boards (CCBs). Local cricket clubs will also be offered support to see them through the coming months.

In accordance with Government advice the start of the cricket season has been delayed until at least May 28th. A range of options for cricket to begin in June, July or August are currently being modelled.

With revenues impacted across the game – from both cricket and non-cricket activities, the ECB Board today approved plans to expedite payments from a number of areas within its 2020-2021 planned distribution budgets.

Around £40m will be made immediately available through:

- Early release of three months' (May-July) county partnership distributions to FCCs and CCBs
- The immediate availability of two years' facilities maintenance distribution*
 - Funds available unfettered and not restricted to facilities maintenance expenditure
 - A further £5.5million to be made available for counties who are not eligible for 2020-2021 ordinary facilities maintenance distributions
- Suspension of international staging fees for four months and waiving of international staging fees payable in 2020 if the match is not played as scheduled due to COVID-19

An extra budget of just over £20m will become available to the recreational game through a cricket club support loan scheme, grants through the "Return to Cricket" scheme and a 12-month holiday on loan repayments for recreational clubs.

Tom Harrison, chief executive officer of the ECB, said: “ We would like to thank everyone within the cricket network who is working tirelessly to protect the game during this period of uncertainty. ”

“We understand these are challenging times and it has been our priority to provide swift and immediate support to all members of the cricket family at every level in England and Wales.

“We are fully aware that the situation with COVID-19 will continue to develop, and it will be months before the full financial fallout is made clear. We will continue work with all of our partners to protect the ongoing health of the entire game in the short term and beyond. ”

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Q&A

Why has the ECB taken this measure?	<p>We are acutely aware of the concern felt throughout the game about the financial implications of the suspension of cricket because of the spread of COVID-19.</p> <p>It is appropriate, in these unprecedented and challenging times, that the ECB moves swiftly to allay the financial concerns that people throughout cricket are experiencing during a period of ongoing uncertainty.</p>
How can the ECB afford to finance this package?	<p>The money available to FCCs and CBBs was already budgeted for distribution through the new County Partnership Agreements.</p> <p>What we are doing is bringing that distribution forward to bolster clubs’ and counties’ finances in the short term while we all assess the impact of the virus on the 2020 season.</p>
Does this mean the ECB is having to deplete its reserves?	<p>No. The majority of the money being made available was already allocated to clubs – all we have done is change the timescale to bring the payments forward to ensure their immediate financial security.</p>
Will the ECB be helping to pay the salary of employees?	<p>We may be able to assist CCBs with salary support of 20% for workers who have been put on furlough.</p>

	<p>We will have certainty on this situation once we understand the parameters through which Government assistance for furloughed workers will operate?</p>
<p>Will more support be available if the crisis continues for longer than expected?</p>	<p>We will continue our extensive liaison with cricketing bodies at all levels of the game to assess the financial stability of cricket at all levels in England and Wales.</p> <p>If the suspension of cricket carries on throughout the summer, we will be seeking ways in which we can continue to support the game for as long as possible.</p>
<p>Will ticket prices go up as a result to pay for these measures?</p>	<p>We do not anticipate that this will be the case. For the county game, this is money that clubs would have received in due course anyway.</p> <p>It should not be necessary for them to ramp up prices in the aftermath when cricket resumes.</p>
<p>What about First-Class Counties who are not eligible for facilities maintenance distributions in 2020 or 2021?</p>	<p>There is provision within the package for counties who are not eligible. They will receive separate distributions.</p>
<p>How soon will recreational clubs have to pay back support loans?</p>	<p>There will be a loan repayment holiday of 12 months.</p>
<p>When will the ECB know when the cricket season can begin?</p>	<p>Throughout this situation, we have followed the latest medical advice and Government guidelines.</p> <p>While we share the eagerness of cricket lovers everywhere to see the game played as soon as possible, we have to be guided by latest advice – and our first priority has to be the health and safety of players, officials and spectators.</p>
<p>Will clubs and counties continue to be eligible for support from the Government and Sport England?</p>	<p>Yes. We expect that FCCs and CCBs exhaust all available Government, Sport England and primary/secondary lender support options before needing our assistance.</p> <p>We will liaise closely with FCCs and CCBs to ensure they are receiving all the support to which they are entitled.</p>

