

FGR Community - Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023

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Introduction

As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020 and with a resulting amendment to the Business Continuity Plan and Financial Plans, FGR Community have reviewed and revised its Plan to extend it from a three to a five-year Strategic Plan. The Board will continue to review this Strategy annually inline with FGR Community undertaking assessing the impact of its services and activities annually. The Business Plan, Business Continuity Plan, Growth Plan, and Implementation Plan will inform this process of strategic review and inform the direction of travel for FGR Community.

Our vision

Changing lives in our communities. "Inspiring Sustainable Change."

Our mission

Use the reach and unique appeal of Forest Green Rovers Football Club (FGRFC) to spread aspiration and make a difference to the lives of people within the Stroud district and beyond.

"We wish to take FGR to the Community and bring the community to FGR".

Our values

• At FGR Community, we each aim to use our resources efficiently in achieving measurable results, and be fully accountable to supporters, partners and most of all, our local community.



- We set high goals and we ask the best of ourselves and our colleagues and are always seeking way to improve the quality of the work that we do for our beneficiaries.
- We aim to work to the highest standards of personal integrity and behaviour, will never knowingly compromise the charities reputation and will always act in the best interest of our beneficiaries.
- We are open to new ideas, embrace change and take calculated risks to develop sustainable solutions, for and with our beneficiaries.
- As a team we thrive on qualities of mutual respect, values and diversity and apply the same values when working with partners to leverage our brand strength in making a difference for our local community.

Introduction to Forest Green Rovers Football Club

We are at the forefront of something new at Forest Green Rovers Football Club.

FIFA has described us as "the greenest football club in the world". That's quite an accolade, and it shows how we've been able to bring together football and environmental consciousness at the highest levels of the game.

No other football club in the world has put the environment at the heart of what it does, embedded it into its DNA. We were the only club in the world to have EMAS accreditation – the gold standard of environmental management and are now undergoing an ISO 14001 Audit an essential part of implementing the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System (EMS)– and we're the first and only vegan football club in the world.

In 2017, FGRFC were promoted to the Football League for the first time in our history, allowing us to spread our sustainability message to an even bigger audience.

FGRFC are an extremely ambitious club with an ultimate aim to be in the Championship within five years and with plans approved to move to a larger site they will be building a new wooden stadium to match those ambitions, too.

FGRFC is a club and has a Community team that looks to the future, and does things ~Another Way", but our identity is forged from a rich 131-year history founded in 1889.

Community outreach has always been an essential and valued part of the football club, and the mission of its charitable arm is crystal clear – to use the power and status of football to change lives.

Professional football clubs are well placed to engage people from all walks of life, allowing the Community Trust a unique position to address local priorities and national issues. As such, FGR Community delivers innovative and quality programmes across **5 main themes**:



- Sport and Recreation
- Health & Wellbeing
- Inclusion & Community Cohesion
- Education
- Environment & Sustainability

The EFL Trust released their new strategy for 2019-24. Their Vision is "Stronger, Healthier, More Active Communities."

The EFL Trust's Workstreams are: Community Engagement and participation, Health and Wellbeing, and Education and Employability. FGR Community's thematic priorities address these workstreams.

How FGR Community is addressing a local, regional. and national 'need'

At FGR Community we work with a range of organisations across the district and the county of Gloucestershire supporting them in their work to address local challenges. Working as both a lead and/or support partner, with schools & colleges, statutory agencies, community groups, sport clubs and other charities, FGR Community will use the backdrop of football and environment to educate, motivate and inspire.

This revised strategic plan for 2018 - 2023 paves the way for FGR Community to make a heightened difference within our communities, focussing our workstreams around our 5 main themes. The solid relationship we enjoy with our parent club will undoubtedly enable us to achieve these outcomes.

FGR Community's Strategic Plan was initially informed by a lengthy consultation (6 months) with key Stakeholders and is continually being evaluated. We consult and review the impact we deliver, and community 'need' through dialogue with key funders, FGR Community staff, our partner parent club, local authorities, and health and wellbeing services, using their local health data. Key organisations from the charitable and voluntary sector, fans, Supporter's Club representatives, the Club's young Ambassadors and the education sector, including our Ambassador school's network have also been consulted.

Specific references to consultation are embedded in this plan. In 2019, after a county-wide consultation, the Gloucestershire Health & Wellbeing Board agreed seven priorities: Physical activity, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Mental wellbeing, Social isolation/loneliness, Healthy lifestyles, Early years / Best Start in Life and Housing. The Health and Wellbeing Board's priorities largely compliment Stroud District Council's health and wellbeing priorities. Good mental health underpins all health and wellbeing. Stroud District Council has signed up to the Gloucestershire Wellbeing Commitment 'GloW'

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FGR Community is committed to addressing the priority needs of Physical Activity, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Mental Wellbeing, Social Isolation/Loneliness and Healthy Lifestyles.

Theme 1 – Sport & Recreation: Engaging people of differing ages and abilities in sport and physical recreation.

FGRFC prides itself as being a family-friendly club providing a positive match day experience. FGR Community delivers a diverse range of sports and other engaging activities to a broad age range. Our approach is to ensure that all our sporting and recreational activities are inclusive and provide each participant with a positive, memorable experience, enabling individuals to fulfil their personal goals from grassroots to competition. Where there is a need, FGR Community will signpost participants to appropriate pathways and exit routes.

Evidence shows that there is a higher proportion of people aged under 18 and over 65 in Stroud than the county as a whole ¹. Stroud district's population is continuing to grow based on this trend. Data also shows that there is a significant number of older people at risk of loneliness in the Stroud District. As a result, under 18's and their families and the over 65's, will predominantly be FGR Community's target population.

One of our strategic partners is Stroud District Council. As a Community Trust we work closely with their Sports Development and Health & Wellbeing teams to build on their successful community programmes, which have been delivered over many years. Examples include the 'Generations Games' and 'Active for life' programmes that encourage multi-generational participants to try out new and accessible sports and FGR Community's more recent partnership with the GFA, girl's recreational football to deliver the Wildcats programme, linking us with local, grassroots clubs.

Objectives:

To support individuals in reaching their highest level that they can achieve, FGR Community will work with:

- Local, regional, and national organisations including governing bodies and funding partners to link with national initiatives and utilise proven resources and existing programmes.
- Local County FA (Gloucestershire), FGR Academy, Charter Standard Clubs, local authorities, and charitable organisations to build a network of exit opportunities. These partnerships will strengthen the grassroots football network, providing a platform for schools, organisations, and individuals to feed into.



- Partner organisations such as schools, uniformed clubs, sports clubs, sheltered housing schemes and charities as well as individuals of all ages and families to access, enjoy and enhance the match day experience, and
- Utilise funding for core programme delivery to compliment and support SDC, Active Gloucestershire and the School Sports Organisers to deliver tournaments, festivals and events for school-aged children, and help deliver fitness, wellbeing and activity sessions for the older population within the district.

Expected impact by 2023:

- FGR Community will have established strong working relationships with FGR Academy, the GFA, local Charter Standard Clubs and the network will be able to access a programme of activities including and not excluding: EFL Community Day of Action, Premier League Primary Stars Programme, EFL Kids Cup and U13 Girl's Cup, family fun days, community stand ticket offers and other match day opportunities.
- FGR Community will deliver inclusive programmes, tournaments, festivals, activities, and events to encourage participation in sport both recreationally and competitively for children and adults.
- Social media, website, and programme notes, press releases and reports will promote and celebrate the relationship with those clubs, schools, and groups.
- FGR Community will have strong partnerships with local authorities and school associations to support locally driven directives.

Theme 2 – Health & Wellbeing – Promoting healthy behaviours, encouraging people to take responsibility for their own physical health & mental wellbeing.

The EFL will work with the charity MIND for the 2018/2020 seasons. MIND is a mental health charity, one of their programmes, "Get set to go" is a programme based around getting active to support mental health. The Bishop of Gloucester, Rachel Treweek has brought to the fore the issues surrounding poor self-esteem more specifically amongst girls.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, mental, as well as physical, health for both children, families and the older population has been brought to the fore. The issue of social isolation is another growing concern. ¹³ The voluntary and community sector (VCS) and the Statutory bodies have been working closely to address the growing concerns around mental health. ¹⁴

As a football club with an environmental conscience, set in a rural backdrop, the club is in a good position to offer the benefits of the outdoor and natural environment to support peoples' health & wellbeing. FGRFC is at the heart of its local community and the spectator experience of watching football provides individuals, with a range of emotional experiences supporting mental health.



FGR Community and the club are working together to adapt and respond to the changes enforced on matchdays and non-matchday activities due to social distancing measures, testing and vaccination, as a result of the impact of Covid-19 during the 2019-2020 and 2020-21 seasons.

It has been well documented, both nationally and internationally, that FGRFC is a vegan club. Hence, we are in the unique position of our food being as well-known as our football! This platform enables FGRFC to reach new audiences promoting the benefits of healthy eating and its positive impact on lifestyle and overall wellbeing.

The health of people living in Gloucestershire has not been improving over time, as seen in other parts of the country ².

Research shows that physical activity plays an important role in building resilience, enabling, and supporting mental health recovery and tackling stigma and discrimination ³.

According to research by the YMCA more than a third of 11 to 16 year olds said they were willing to do 'whatever it takes to look good' and The Children's Society statistics demonstrate that a third of girls are unhappy with their appearance. These views can be extremely damaging to the mental health, self-esteem and the wellbeing of a whole generation who are growing up deeply immersed in social media ⁴.

Nationally there is concern around obesity levels. In Gloucestershire there is a rising trend in early childhood obesity ⁵.



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FGRC players take up a vegan diet whilst on club duties. Some of the club's players have been made the conscious decision to adopt a vegan diet ⁷



Objectives:

- To work with partner organisations to deliver programmes that promote life-skills, build resilience, and support positive self-esteem, through participation in sport and recreation - and health and wellbeing, as well as promoting access to paid employment and volunteering programmes.
- To work with key local organisations and funders to identify 'need', provide initial preventative support or recovery activities, and/or provide referral routes in and out of provision.
- To utilise our unique status as an environmental club as a catalyst for positive change in health & wellbeing.

Expected impact by 2023:

- FGRFC to have an increased attendance and diversity amongst the supporter base.
- FGR Community to be delivering programmes that tackle isolation and mental health, with partner organisations confidently working alongside the club to support referrals into activity programmes and FGR Community signposting participants to other opportunities.
- FGR Community's social media, website, matchday events and match day programme being regularly utilised to raise the profile and social consciousness of key messages around health and well-being.
- FGRFC and FGR Community to be demonstrating increased uptake in food-specific and physical activity related sessions.

Theme 3 – Inclusion & Community Cohesion – Providing opportunities for people and communities that face common barriers.

FGR Community is committed to providing opportunities to a wide range of communities in the local area. We will work with participants from a range of backgrounds and ages who would not normally be afforded the opportunity to access activities including sport, recreational, fan and educational experiences. Through our existing Community Stand programme, we hope to grow our fan base to include harder to reach communities.

As a community club it is our wish to extend our welcome to the wider population and for 'The New Lawn' to become a community hub where groups can meet, engage and develop an understanding of the clubs work and values.



Stroud district's population has increased by 4,881 people (4.5%) since 2001 (Data from 2015). The proportion of people aged U18, and 65 and over was higher in Stroud that in the county as a whole ⁸.

Age	Cheltenham	Cotswolds	Forest of Dean	Gloucester	Stroud	Tewkesbury	Gloucestershire
	117,530	85,756	85,385	128,488	117,381	88,589	623,129
0-19	26,517	17,648	18,379	32,148	26,245	19,729	140,666
20-64	69,230	46,626	46,797	75,497	65,350	49,340	352,840
65 and over	21,783	21,482	20,209	20,843	25,786	19,520	129,623

Gloucestershire population estimates by broad age group and gender, mid-2016 ⁹

Stroud District's Health & Wellbeing Plan 2016/17 Progress Report states that by 2035 that the district will probably have the oldest population in Gloucestershire. And the 2019-2021 plan states by 2036 over 30% will be over 65 years of age. ¹⁵ Several of the actions in this plan link to supporting people living with long-term conditions and tackling social isolation.

According to the Stroud District's Local Plan (adopted in 2015, in line with population growth estimates) numerous sites have been earmarked for future development, including the 'canal corridor' regeneration. The most sustainable options have been identified across the 4 'preferred' locations below ¹⁰, providing FGRFC with an opportunity to expand its potential fan base.

Development area	Number of homes	Target number of jobs
Stroud Valley (various sites)	600 - 1000	1200 - 2000
North East of Cam	750 - 1250	1500 – 2500
West of Stonehouse	1000 - 1500	2000 - 3000
Hunts Grove extension	500 - 750	N/A

Objectives:

• To utilise commercial & charitable opportunities to bring new visitors and encourage returning fans to 'The New Lawn' and the new stadium as it is developed.



- To work with local organisations, fans and local Stakeholders to inform plans for the new stadium to be inclusive and community focussed.
- To engage with our growing network of local partners and funders to provide targeted inclusive opportunities to further personal development and support health and wellbeing.
- To work with Club personnel and the dedicated Supporter and Disability Liaison Officers and bank of volunteers to promote the community stand to local groups and clubs to provide a match day experience to celebrate the unique aspects of FGRFC.

Expected Impact by 2023:

- FGR Community and FGRFC to be recognised as being welcoming, inclusive and family-friendly organisations across the region, including the most underrepresented members of our community.
- Regular matchday and non-matchday activities are available for members of the public that would not ordinarily attend a football match, including those with disabilities and the over 65's.
- Plans for the new stadium are inclusive and cater for the needs of our diverse fan base.
- There is greater diversity and representation amongst the fan base. Both young and old are regularly welcomed to matches as are persons with disabilities and special educational needs.

Theme 4 – Education - Educating, motivating & inspiring through the power of sport.

FGRFC is affectionately known as the "village club on the top of the hill". It is, actually, a club at the centre of its town and community. Historically football clubs have played a pivotal role in education, both clubs and stadium can be a great way to engage people of all ages in learning activities whether through promoting formal education sessions such as FGR Community's Fit2Last and Premier League Primary Stars programmes, or more informal visits, for example our eco-tours and cooking sessions. All our programmes, events, and activities are aimed at helping people fulfil their potential and consider their impact on their wider community and environment.

FGR Community Ambassador programme

The Ambassador programme is an integral part of our educational offer, it includes a wide range of benefits for the child, their family, schools, and the club. In addition to the perks of being an ambassador (a free season ticket, FGR shirt, meeting the players, and more) parents testify to this responsibility as helping their child grow as a person. It helps them try



out different activities and interact with a range of new and different people and enables them to practice skills such as talking in public, report writing, and taking part in promotional activities.

Ambassadors learn about the club's values (putting the environment at the heart of all that it does) on sustainability, veganism, and a huge number of eco-initiatives. Growth of this programme is continuing year on year, with the catchment area now spreading and a good cross representation across state and private sector schools, and primary and secondary, as well as special schools, home schooling and colleges.

Ambassador schools can also take up the benefit of player and club personnel visits to their schools, to inspire the pupils.

From 2020, FGR Community aim to establish an Ambassador's Alumni where older children that have progressed to Secondary school, or who have stepped down from their day to day Ambassador responsibilities, can develop, inform and influence the Trust's and Club's community decision-making. This will be similar to a local, Youth forum, to help children and young people be heard – as is determined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Chil

Year	Number of Ambassadors	Number of schools/colleges
2012-13	8	8
13-14	18	14
14-15	31	25
15-16	41	34
16-17	61	50
17-18	80	63
19-20	91	67
20-21* Target	100	70

Fit2Last

Following Ecotricity getting involved with FGRFC (in 2010), a Fit2Last programme was developed to support, with the backing of the Green Britain Foundation (Ecotricity's registered charity), the dissemination of the company's sustainability values within an



educational environment. The programme teaches the benefit of sport, health and sustainability through tailored lessons, tours, and school visits to FGRFC. The day is fun and interactive and can be delivered both in the school classroom or at the club's base, 'The New Lawn'.

Premier League Primary Stars

Following the Club's promotion to League Two in 2017, FGR Community was awarded Tier 4 funding in 2019 to run the Premier League Primary Stars programme. Premier League Primary Stars uses the inspiration of sport to connect pupils' learning to the world around them and the appeal of the Premier League and professional football clubs to inspire children to learn, be active and develop important life skills. Professional football club staff work with teachers, to deliver fun, educational sessions in a range of subjects within local partner schools.

The project aims to inspire girls and boys aged 5 - 11 in the classroom, the playground and on the sports field. Teaching materials cover subjects such as PE, PSHE, English and Maths, and focus on areas including teamwork and problem-solving. Students also have opportunity to participate in competitions ranging from national football tournaments, to creative writing and reading interventions for reluctant readers.

In line with FGR Community's Vision, Mission, Behaviours and Values, Premier League Primary Stars values underpin everything our educational offer provides, encouraging children to:

- Be ambitious work hard and never give up on their goals
- Be inspiring set a great example to others
- Be connected work well with others and in a team
- Be fair treat people equally and think of others

FGR Community has progressed the implementation of this programme in local schools (starting September 2019) but it has been hampered by current Covid-19 issues, meaning school interactions had to more to being online in March 2020.

Year 3 School shirt offer

2020 will be the 7th year of promoting our first shirt giveaway to approximately 400 Year 3 primary school children within the Stroud district. This promotion has raised the profile of the club with the local community. Chairman, Dale Vince recently responded when asked by a young fan at a 'fans forum, 'Meet the Manager' session' that, "I love this free shirt thing



we're doing, I think we've done it for four years now and you do see a lot of kids wearing shirts around Stroud. It doesn't cost a fortune and is a great thing to do".

Education is not restricted to the young. We use the Club as a platform to enlighten new groups and interested parties about FGRFC's vision and mission. We host, for example, Intergenerational activities, inviting local football teams, uniformed groups, and community luncheon clubs so they can spend time with us on both a match day and non-match day. One attendee from a luncheon club said, "It's really opened my eyes to the club. We had a wonderful lunch, what a wonderful experience! I have never really had anything to do with the club, it has really grown and transformed. Everyone is benefitting from it. You are involving the children and that is so important as they are our future".

Objective

We are endeavouring to:

- Cultivate interest in other schools to expand and develop our Ambassadors programme and have expressions of interest from more schools across Gloucestershire (including special schools and colleges) as well as beyond the county boundaries.
- Work with our network of schools and colleges to deliver educational programmes and evolve bespoke activities to suit the needs of these organisations and target groups.
- Explore the opportunities to roll out the free shirt offer to broaden our reach and further promote the club.
- Use the unique status of the club to promote the club's values and eco-initiatives.
- Host cooking activities, events and intergenerational days that bring together young and old, tackling social isolation and promoting wellbeing as well as educating others about sustainable and environmental practices.

Expected impact by 2023:

- For the FGR Community Ambassador programme to continue to raise the profile of the club within Gloucestershire schools and colleges and in some circumstances, beyond county boundaries. The Alumni will represent the Youth Voice and will engage in positive and impactful Social Action.
- Through accessing Premier League & EFL funding and accessing local and national funding through the likes of EFL Trust programmes, we aim to expand our educational offer and demonstrate measurable impacts, including educational attainment, while also adding significant value to the curriculum offer.



- Develop a reputation and legacy for handing on the baton within educational establishments, as groups continue to return to the club both on match days and non-match days.
- Strengthen links and reputation within the local community, nationally and internationally through the supporter's network, with the potential to grow the fan base.

Theme 5 – Environment & sustainability – Increase awareness of sustainable practice by means of education and action.

FGRFC and FGR Community are in an enviable position where we work with charitable organisations, Foundations, and environmental projects, as a result of the football club's ownership structure under Ecotricity. An example of this was the setting up of The Green Britain Foundation, which was an initiative of Ecotricity. This charity was set up in August 2012 by Dale Vince, Founder of Ecotricity & Chairman of FGR, to realise his vision for a greener Britain.

The vision of a Green Britain is simply one where we all live far more sustainably focussing on energy, transport, and food (a philosophy that the football club has naturally adopted). The original Green Britain Centre (based in Norfolk and funded by the Green Britain Foundation) and FGRFC worked closely together to develop the Fit2last programme, which has since developed and is now central to our education offer.

FGRFC were awarded the first ever 'Green Heart Hero' Sustainability in Sport Award, by the Climate Coalition at a ceremony in Parliament, in 2017. The award recognised the club's ambitious approach of putting the environment and sustainability at the core of the football club. Dale Vince, chairman of Forest Green Rovers, said: "Sustainability and sport are two words that aren't often seen together, but at FGR we're bridging that gap and are demonstrating that there is another way. We're really delighted to have our work recognised by the Climate Coalition – it's another big achievement for the club in what is proving to be a momentous year for us, as we've been promoted to the Football League, been named by FIFA as the world's greenest football club and I've spoken at the UN Climate Summit". FGRFC was also recognised by United Nations receiving a "Momentum for Change" climate action award in 2018, after going carbon neutral. It became the world's first United Nations certified carbon neutral football club, after signing up to the *UNFCCC Climate Neutral Now* initiative.

Since taking over the club in 2010, FGRFC Chairman and owner Dale Vince has introduced a host of environmental initiatives - including launching a fully vegan menu, installing solar panels, creating an organic pitch, and using a solar powered robot lawnmower to tend to its organic pitch. Such initiatives are an integral part of the Fit2Last programme and FGR Community's Eco Tours.



FGRFC were awarded the Gold standard in environmental performance by implementing the Eco-management and audit school (EMAS qualification), a first in the world of football and are now working to the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System (EMS)

Objectives:

- Align ourselves with environmental charities and organisations to further the sustainable message, for example working with Sea Shepherd ¹¹and the RSPB ¹².
- To use the FGR Ambassador's programme and Alumni to take the sustainable message into schools and colleges and to support sustainable initiatives within the club.
- To build on the existing Fit2Last programme, Eco-tours and Intergenerational days to educate to encourage young people and older adults to consider their impact on the environment.
- To use club initiatives to uphold awards and contribute to future honours.

Expected impact by 2023:

- The Ambassadors programme will continue to raise the profile of the sustainable message of the club within Gloucestershire schools and colleges and in some circumstances, beyond county boundaries.
- FGR Community will be working with specialised organisations and groups to implement further environmental projects to maximise these shared outcomes across the club and in the community.
- Build on existing partnership and extend our network of education and environmental partners.
- Uphold the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System (EMS) standard.

Strategic Review

The vision, mission & values of FGR Community should be reviewed as part of a Strategy Development Review at an annual Board meeting – with the Trust's progress to be assessed against its Strategic Aims & Objectives. Updates are to be provided by the most Senior Manager of the Trust attending these meetings. The Head of Community is responsible for conducting regular reviews and revising the plan in line with Risk Management, Financial Management, Business Continuity and Growth and Implementation Plans.



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