

# THE FINAL WHISTLE BULLETIN



THE HOME OF  
**FEMALE  
FOOTBALL**  
IN NORTH HERTS

## A message from The Chairman.....

Welcome everyone to our Newsletter issue #4. Here we are back in a COVID enforced football hiatus. It's been great to see the girls back and enjoying their football over the last few months, and we are as disappointed as anyone to have to put a pause on things.

The club took a huge stride forward on our return to football in September, as we were finally able to move into our new home at the Priory School. It has been fantastic to see so many Belles matches going on side by side on a Saturday morning, bringing a central focus to our Belles community. It's also meant the debut of our match day photographers, who you may have seen from time to time capturing the girls in action – many thanks to Lindsay Cook and Zoe McCarthy who volunteered for this role.

Much else has changed too as the club continues to grow – new teams, a clearer development pathway, better facilities and a charity link up. Read on to find out more! In this edition we also have our normal slots from the committee, meet the volunteer, and some snippets from how some of teams has fared this season so far.

Thanks for your support and patience complying with all our COVID guidelines, including track and trace, it has really helped us keep the environments as safe as possible for the girls. Hopefully we are all back training again very soon.



Stay safe and keep practising – Simon White, Hitchin Belles Chairman.

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## Development Pathway

Over the last five years, the club has grown hugely. We've gone from just trying to get teams at each age group, to now having multiple teams in most age groups. With this growth in terms of number of players we now need to look at how we as a club grow. This is now the right time to put into place a clear structure throughout the club to enable each and every 'Belle' to learn, grow and most importantly enjoy their football!

This means there may be a few changes to the structure of the club and how we run:

- Appointment of a football development committee led by our 2 football development officers.
- Appointment of age group leads - these will be the main point of contact for the coaches within each age group.
- Age group ahead of team focus - Age groups will operate as a larger squad. Regularly training together and moving freely between the league teams. This could mean your daughter plays for the Reds, Whites and Blues in any given season.
- The creation of an U18 and open age development team to aid those wishing to continue past our current U16's into Ladies football

Each age group has been working through what this means for them, but the focus will be getting the ethos right at the younger age groups, so that these girls grow up through the club within this structure, rather than a big change being enforced on the girls.

Thank you all for your continued support of the Belles and we hope you are as excited as us about the future!

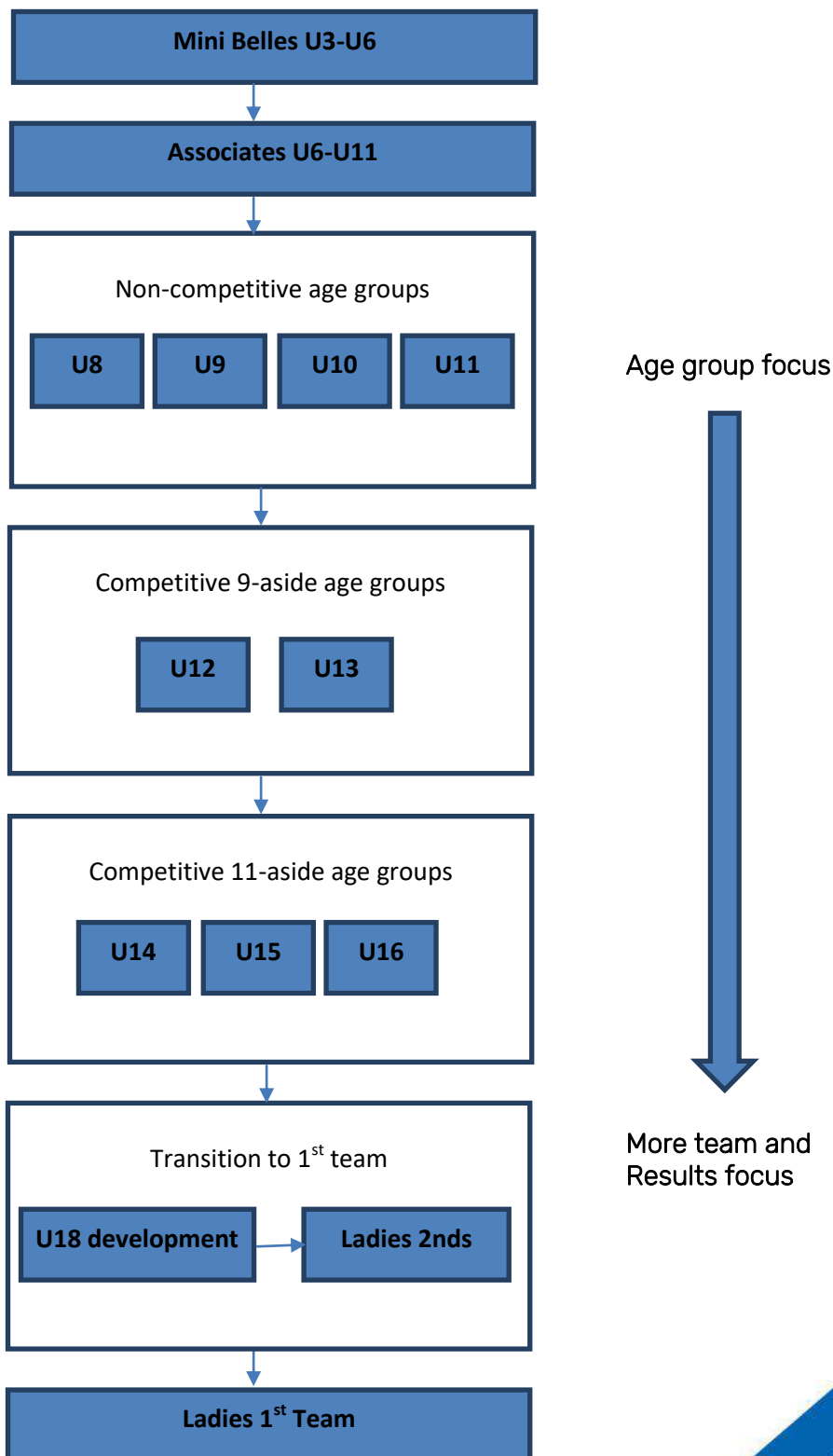
The full club development plan will be distributed to team managers in the next couple of weeks.

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## Overview of development pathway





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## Update from the Committee

### Link up with Refuge:

National charity Refuge have become a club sponsor for the next year. All teams will display the charities logo on their kits with the U8 and U10s having as their main kit sponsor. Hitchin Belles have become the first football team to wear this logo and we have plans to work collaboratively throughout the year to help to raise funds for this fantastic charity.

### Subs Payments:

The club have postponed second half of season subs from the regular November deadline due to the uncertainty around Covid-19 and the affect this may have on training and matchdays. This will be reviewed after Christmas and emails sent out accordingly.

### Committee member news:

Gemma Smith has taken on additional roles within the committee and will become our Charter Standard Coordinator and CWO assistant.

Our facilities coordinator has also changed hands, with Anne-Marie stepping down after a number of years. Many thanks to Louise Bennett, one of the parents from our U11 Whites team, who has stepped forward and volunteered for the role which involves managing our pitch bookings at the Priory School each week.

Stuart Nellis had also taken on the role as our fundraising co-ordinator and I'm sure we will be hearing much from him when we have more flexibility about the events we can run.

Many thanks to those that have stepped forward to fill these roles - without you, and all our volunteers, there would be no Hitchin Belles!

### Committee Roles and Vacancies:

The club continues to welcome anyone who has some spare time to help out and has the following roles still vacant:

- Kit and Equipment Coordinator

If you are interested in this role and wish to find out further details, then please speak to Simon White or Jason Slade.



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## Refreshments Van

The club has found a catering company who has a mobile refreshments van available to provide refreshments during home matches at TPS on Saturdays. The van is called "The Toast Office" and will be providing delicious toasties, hot and cold drinks and snacks.

Paul and Kirsty Foster, who run the company, are both former pupils of the Priory School and have a number of other catering outlets. They have provided refreshments to other local football venues like Hitchin Town FC, and also larger events like Twickenham, Silverstone, Wembley, music festivals and even the Ryder Cup in Paris (a personal highlight for Paul and Kirsty).

They have a five star hygiene rating with all staff coming from Hitchin and holding a minimum level 2 food hygiene certificate. They are also eco-friendly, recycling everything and only using biodegradable packaging.

A PDF Menu will follow shortly, for all teams to send out with matchday confirmations!





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## The season so far ...

After a delayed start our teams got into action back in September and the story of how some of them have got on follows...

We're also pleased to announce 3 new teams will be joining the league in January, so a big good luck to the girls and a big thank you and welcome to the new managers for stepping forward:

- U8s – Bob Chohan
- U10s – Dean White
- U11 Reds – Lawrence Foster



## U8s

Our newly created U8s team consists a few members who have come up through the minnies and associates, and several new to football entirely. The squad is progressing well with some fantastic adaption to training programmes and great performances in the few friendly matches we've played.

It's already evident this group is forming a good friendship with enthusiasm for the game which will only strengthen teamwork.

We will register for the league shortly with matches to commence from January.

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## U9s

The U9s have found the start to the season quite challenging but have shown great character in keeping their enthusiasm levels high despite a number of defeats. Their approach to training has been excellent with all players showing good development in both their skill levels and their match play. This led to the team winning their first league game of the season away against Wheathampstead the weekend before our enforced break. This win was particularly pleasing as the team had lost by five goals to the same team just a few weeks before. Well done to all the girls so far and hopefully we will pick up where we left off when we resume in December.



## U11s Whites

The U11 Whites had a strong start to the season with goals aplenty and a buoyant team delighted to be back playing matches once again. Their first four matches saw them undefeated. The girls love being back together and the difference confidence and skill between this autumn and last (when they were a brand new team) is beyond measure. New signing Jess, who joined us in July, is a real asset to the team scoring her first goal at the first league match of the season.

A tougher few fixtures post lockdown await following a move to a higher division, but coaches Chris & Simon are in no doubt that the girls will rise to the challenge!





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**FEMALE  
FOOTBALL**  
IN NORTH HERTS



## U11s Blues

The U11 Blues have gone from strength to strength at the start of the new league season. All of their hard work in training has transferred over to matchday making them a joy to watch this season. Player and team targets ticked off each week with a fantastic attitude and commitment from everyone at training. Great start and much more to come I'm sure! Well done Alethea, Ava K, Ava T, Bea, Caitlyn, Charlotte, Elsie, Esme, Imogen, Izzy, Romey and Serena.



## U12s Blues

The team were originally selected to enter Division 3 but after a request to move up we were offered Division 1. Although we knew it would be a challenge, it was one we knew the girls would rise to. Although we've only played a handful of games it's fantastic to see them back and enjoying their football after the long lockdown. The girls have played very well with some impressive football and all the games have been extremely close. In this short time they have improved so much as they are facing very talented oppositions and we have no regrets about playing division 1 football. Well done Girls, keep up the great work!

We look forward to returning soon.





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## U12s Whites

This season has been a real change from last, having been moved from the bottom of 4 divisions to the middle of 5. However, a solitary draw from 5 league games doesn't do justice to the skill and effort the girls have shown. The girls have risen to the challenge of a step up in level, and feel like we've dominated many passages of games and created at least as many chances as our opponents – it's just a matter of a few shots going the other side the woodwork! Bring on the return to football!



## U12s Reds

It was great to get back to football since having a lot time off. The girls have adapted well to their first season has a team I couldn't be any more proud.

We have had a 100% record so far, and on the return to football I hope we'll continue that run of form once we get back playing and come out on top of division 5!



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## U13s Blues

Over the summer we said bon voyage to Bonnie our goal keeper who has moved to live in France. A difficult position to replace but Ella who deputised for Bonnie last season has stepped up, and has had a confident start to the season.

We also signed two fantastic new players; Lily and Erin, with both players at the Bedfordshire Advanced Coaching Centre. Both have had a superb start to the season.

We set up some difficult friendlies over the summer to challenge the girls in preparation for the tough Division 1 schedule ahead.

The league season has started well with 4 wins out of 4 and are currently top of the division. We look forward to the restart soon.



## U15s Blues

The U15 Blues returned to the season with renewed enthusiasm, boosted by two new players who started training prior to the first lockdown and formally joined after the re-start. The squad looks strong for the coming season and the Belles have a real chance to make the top two in the Division. The team trained hard in pre-season but had the two toughest games they could imagine in the League. First, the girls lost 4-1 to a newly combined Potters Bar who had been unfairly demoted a Division, then lost 4-3 in a thriller against Ruislip with a goal disallowed in the final minute.

Since then, they have been unbeaten in four games and got their third win in a row against Harpenden, winning 3-0. The new break came at the wrong time as the Blues were starting to get their fitness back, their control of games was getting better and they were scoring goals for fun after the tough start. A real highlight was beating St Albans 6-1 who were in the Division above last season. I hope that they can restart with the same skill when football comes back.





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## U15s Whites

It has been a very strange start to the season for the U15s Whites, in a very competitive Division 2. The players have been in great spirits, since their return from lock down, and have showed great application and commitment.

The first 6 games of the campaign ended with 5 losses and 1 win, leaving us bottom of the league. But this doesn't tell the whole story. At half time in the 6 games, we have been winning 4 and drawing 2, so promotion form rather than relegation. We have learned some harsh lessons, and will be stronger for it.

In the final game before lock down 2.0, we faced a resurgent Belstone team who in the previous week had won away to Harpenden Colts. The Belles started the game quickly and grabbed an early lead. There was a period of 15 minutes when the game could swing either way. Then something clicked for the first time this season. The team went on to record an incredible 12-0 win.

We can't wait to get back to football, and will do our best never to take for granted this wonderful club and opportunity to play the best game in the world!

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## Meet the volunteer

**Name:** Sarah White

**Club Role:** Registration officer and Mini Belles manager

**Why did you volunteer?** It has become a family business!

**Favourite football moment:** seeing my daughter score her first goal

**Worst footballing moment:** Don't think I have one!

**What are you outside of the Belles?**  
Childminder and carer to the elderly



## Club contacts

Contact details for all the committee members and team managers are on our website (along with lots of other useful documents including our club ethos, safeguarding policy and code of conduct).

Some of the contacts are also set out below:

Simon White

Jason Slade

Chair

Secretary

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Lisa Tollervey

John Martin

Welfare Officer

Newsletter Editor

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