



Insights from Campbell Tickell

A collection of insights on: football governance, board diversity, women in sport, and more.



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Campbell Tickell



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CAMPBELL TICKELL

About us



CT is a multi-disciplinary management consultancy, focusing primarily on the statutory and non-profit sectors. We have expertise in housing, regeneration, social care and health, sports and leisure, social enterprise, and charities and operate throughout the UK, Ireland and beyond.

Our services

Our services extend across: governance; strategic and business planning; financial and risk analysis; regulation; business transformation and improvement; mergers and partnerships; development and growth; procurement; service user involvement; communications and public relations; human resources and recruitment. Alongside our core team of 47 staff, we have a network of over 100 experienced specialist associate consultants.

We have operated for 25 years and during that time worked with more than 1000 organisations.

Clients

- **Government regulators** in housing, charities, health, social care, sport, legal services, utilities and other sectors in all UK jurisdictions and the Republic of Ireland;
- **Government agencies** and departments;
- **Charity Commission** for England and Wales;
- **NHS England** and other health bodies, and social care providers;
- **Trade bodies and umbrella organisations** in housing, health and social care, agriculture and farming;
- **Sports and leisure bodies**, both national and local;

- Over **80 local authorities** across England and Ireland;
- **Housing associations** of all sizes and types, including the 50 largest in the UK, and most of the large associations in Ireland;
- **Higher education bodies** such as Oxford and Cambridge Universities and Imperial College;
- **Social enterprises**; international, national and local charities;
- **Commercial organisations** such as housebuilders and developers, investors and institutional funders, maintenance contractors, and legal firms.

Our values

We are a commercial organisation but we're particularly proud of being values-driven. Our values, developed by our staff team and shown below, are reflected in everything we do and the way we conduct our business.



Certified



Corporation

Campbell Tickell was recently ranked by Consultancy UK as one of the top housing consultancies in the UK, with a 'Diamond' rating, as well as being ranked 'Gold' for local government and for non-profits consulting.

We also recently became a certified B Corporation, assessed as meeting high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability.

CT and sport

We have delivered a considerable number of assignments in the sports sector, particularly relating to governance and regulation, as well as finance and business planning, executive and non-executive recruitment. The sports in which we have worked include:

- Angling;
- Cycling;
- Football;
- Goalball;
- Mountaineering;
- Netball;
- Snowsports;
- Taekwondo;
- Tennis;
- Multi-sports (i.e. cross-sector).



CT, Fair Game and football regulation

CT has been involved with Fair Game (FG) since 2021. We contributed to FG's submission to the Tracey Crouch Review, as well as contributing to the submission from the Football Supporters Association and making a submission in our own right.

We co-wrote Fair Game's Code of Governance for Football Clubs, and the FG discussion document on effective football regulation.

Our involvement with FG has been led by CT Partners Greg Campbell and Radojka Miljevic.

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Football needs proper governance

This article was featured in CT Brief 70, February 2024



Greg Campbell

Partner,
Campbell Tickell

As the wider environment in which housing providers operate has become more challenging, the expectations placed on boards and executives have increased. The demands of housing regulation are not getting any easier either.

Everton docked 10 points for breaching financial sustainability rules in 2021/22.

Everton face further charges, alongside Nottingham Forest, for breaching the Premier League's profit and sustainability rules in 2022/23.

Manchester City facing 115 charges for alleged financial wrongdoing between 2009 and 2018.

Chelsea facing allegations of secret payments in breach of financial fair play rules when Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich owned the club.

Football's governance problems are not confined to the Premiership. A string of clubs at other levels of the football pyramid have experienced difficulties, the latest of which is Reading, where **fans invaded the pitch** and forced the abandonment of their League One game against Port Vale on 13 January.

This was in protest at the behaviour of owner Dai Yongge, whose mismanagement of the club – including failure to pay club staff – has led to points deductions and financial penalties. 120 year old Southend FC narrowly escaped being wound up in October, owing £2.5m to HMRC and others, while Sheffield Wednesday also avoided similar with late payment of a £2m debt to HMRC.

Meanwhile, some of those involved in the European Super League fiasco in 2021 have clearly failed to learn the lessons of that proposition crashing and burning in the face of fan-led and political opposition. The proposed competition's sponsors, A22, plus two of the clubs initially involved, Real Madrid and Barcelona, are once again still trying to push it, even if the other clubs involved in the initial scheme **are showing no interest** in a resuscitation at this time.

And this is just some of what has been under the spotlight in recent months. Go back to 1983, and 53 clubs have been placed in administration since that time, on 70 separate occasions.

- **52% of clubs in the top 4 leagues have a negative net worth**
- **Since the Premier League was created in 1992, there have been 64 instances of clubs collapsing into administration in the top 4 divisions**
- **In the 21/22 season Championship clubs spent an average of 126% of their revenue on players' wages**
- **The Premier League gives more money to one parachute payment club than it does to all 120 clubs in Leagues 1 and 2 and the National League combined**

Source: Fair Game

Incoming legislation

The governance of football is in a mess. And it is the fans and local communities that suffer when a local club dies, as has happened to Bury, Macclesfield and others.

Of course, a cynic might say that a driver for the enhanced action by the existing governing bodies on issues like financial fair play, highlighted above, could be the prospect of legislation to introduce independent regulation of the game. Indeed, the King's Speech on 7 November contained a commitment to **introduce a bill** for an independent regulator for men's football.

This followed the commitment in the government's 2019 manifesto to a fan-led review of football governance, which was delivered in 2021 – the Crouch Review – and a White Paper in February 2023. The proposition is strongly supported by all the main parties at Westminster, and is expected to become a reality, whether in this parliament or the next.

It is worth noting that this reform is, for now, confined to men's football. Women's football is subject to a separate review process.

Proposed code of governance

It's against this backdrop that Fair Game – a network of 34 clubs at all levels of the football pyramid, from the National League to the Premiership – has developed its own proposed code of governance for football clubs, to give the new regulator, once established, a head start in this area.

The code, which has been developed with particular input from Campbell Tickell, draws from a number of other existing codes. It is based on the UK Corporate Governance Code, but includes elements from the Sport England Governance Code, the EFL Trust's Capability Code of Practice, the National Housing Federation Code, and the Wates Corporate Governance Code for large private companies. Set out in three bands with different levels of requirements according to clubs' capacity and financial turnover, the code can be found [here](#).

And that's not all. Fair Game has views too on how independent football regulation should operate. A paper setting out preliminary thinking has been developed, again with input from Campbell Tickell, and can be found at www.fairgameuk.org/press-releases/regulator.

It highlights nine pillars for effective regulation:

01 **Independence**

02 **Governance**

03 **Accountability, transparency, appeals and complaints handling**

04 **Professionalism and expertise**

05 **Representativeness**

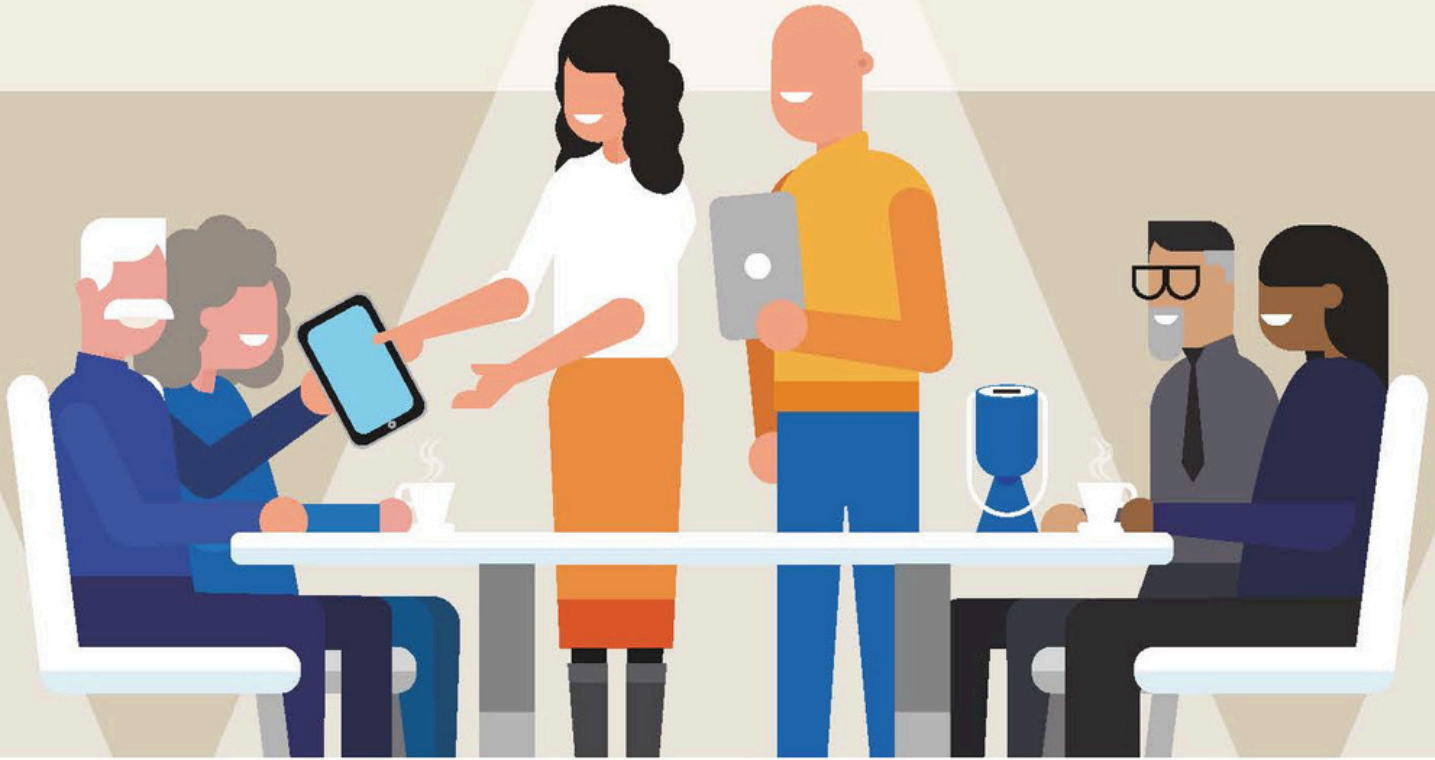
06 **Diversity and inclusion**

07 **Capability to act promptly**

08 **Authority and funding**

09 **Delegated authority**

The governance of the sport sorely needs to change, in the interests of fans and communities, but players and staff too. The prospects of delivering this are stronger now than ever.



Basics → Better → Beyond

The only constant in life is change. We believe that achieving good governance is a continual process of evolution and improvement in response to both internal and external contexts. Our goal is to support organisations of all kinds

and contexts, whether cementing the foundations of governance that the public, regulators and funders expect, to moving beyond compliance matters and building the reflective and learning practices that make governance sing.

FIND OUT HOW WE CAN HELP:

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The people's game?

Football clubs are nothing without their fans, so why do so many teams prioritise profit over passion?

This article was featured in CT Brief 67, September 2023



Martin Cloake

Former Chair at Tottenham
Hotspur Supporters' Trust

Last month in a market town on the River Irwell in Lancashire, football came home. Bury FC played its first competitive game at Gigg Lane for four years. The club was kicked out of the Football League after mismanagement by the previous owners, and it has taken four years on a very long and winding road to secure its rebirth.

In the run-up to the game, the Gigg Lane Steering Group said: "This has been achieved by genuine football supporters, who through help, hard work and perseverance have acquired the Gigg Lane stadium, created a successful and financially sustainable football team..."

Fans value

Just as the market economy so often privatises profit but socialises loss, football falls back on the passion and application of fans when trouble blows up. The reasons are eloquently set out by Grimsby Town chair Jason Stockwood in The Guardian, whose consideration of "what is the enduring nature of a football club" serves as a timely reminder of what football was, is, and may be.

But while it is obvious that fans value their clubs, it is not as obvious that clubs value their fans. Some, especially at the top level, see the bonds of loyalty and community as a hinderance to achieving greater commercial success. If clubs continue to chip away at those bonds, what will it mean in future when they run into trouble and need their fans?

Need for reform

The reason the reforms proposed in the football governance White Paper matter is because of stories like the one at Bury. Stockwood concludes by writing:

“The inherited loyalty, the constancy of our club colours, the match-day rituals we share, the performances, good and bad, all create the sense of a common life and help anchor our identity in communities and, ultimately, remind us of our love for a place and for one another.” What football means runs deep.

Nothing can compare to losing your club. But there are different ways to do so. In the Premier League especially, fans are being priced out of the game at a time when club income has never been higher. Some assume that fans of Premier League teams are as rich as the clubs they support. But those fans are the same as fans everywhere, struggling with a cost-of-living crisis.

Priced out

Fans who have followed their club for years are being priced out, with young people and those who are pensionable age hardest hit as clubs erode concessions by stealth. Our sense of community used to mean we saw no problem with people who had contributed all their lives being given discounted rates, but too many decision makers in the game see pensioners as an inconvenience that reduces income per seat.

When I co-chaired a supporters trust, some of the most moving letters we got were from pensioners who could no longer afford to see their team, or who had to move away from the friends they had shared the match-day experience with for years. Breaking that link has profound effects on people. And those who make the decisions are often too detached to realise what they mean. Once, after I challenged the pricing policy on pensioners at Spurs, a club executive responded: “But aren’t all pensioners well off?”. “No”, I said, “Just the ones you know.”

Families, too, are finding it difficult to attend the match. Football clubs like to talk about diversity and inclusion, about being ‘family friendly’. But when a day out at the football for a family of four can cost more than £200 before the cost of travel or food and drink is factored in, the rhetoric rings hollow.

Ticket costs

There is growing disquiet over ticket pricing at Premier League clubs, with campaigns at Spurs, Fulham, Wolves, Aston Villa, Newcastle United and West Ham United. In the run up to the Premier League's introduction of a £30 cap on away tickets, then chief executive Richard Scudamore said this to the member clubs: "No amount of charity giving or the deployment of slick PR can make up for the reputation we have garnered, fairly or unfairly, in the court of public opinion of being greedy bastards and not giving two hoots for the fans."

He understood that less can be more, and that the argument about money in the game was not about sentiment versus business, but about what kind of business sentiment can be the most beneficial.

Football at the top level is awash with money. The word 'sustainable' is very much in vogue, and the key to a more sustainable future for football clubs is for those who run them to take a longer-term view of value. The trouble with riding roughshod over the things that gave your brand value is that it is difficult to rebuild in a few months what took decades to create.

Martin Cloake writes regularly on the business and culture of football at The Football Fan.

CT Brief

Check out Campbell Tickell's regular online policy and practice publication written by experts working across charitable, not-for-profit and public sector organisations.

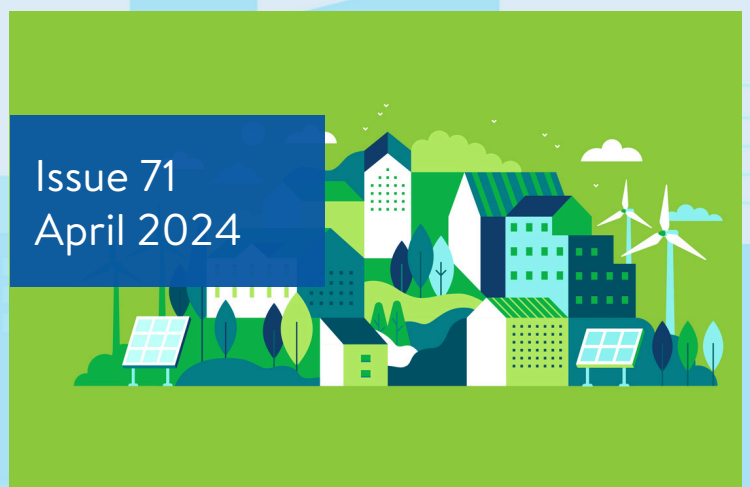
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Issue 71
April 2024





“We’ve come to a realisation around equality and social justice, and we won’t put up with the status quo anymore”

This interview was featured in CT Brief 59, May 2022

To mark International Women’s Day and Fair Game’s conference on women’s football, I caught up with Sue Anstiss, the author of an inspiring examination and celebration of women in sport, *Game On: The Unstoppable Rise of Women’s Sport*.

Sue is someone whose life-long love of sport is infectious, reflected in her career in sports marketing and sponsorship, and in a range of initiatives she commits to. This includes her podcast, The Game Changers, on women who break down barriers and battle for equality, and the network for women who work in sport she founded with Kate Hannon, the Women’s Sport Collective, of which I’m a member.

Sue and I first met in the world of Active Partnerships (a network of local partnerships aimed at getting people active) and then again most recently at Lewes Football Club, where she is on the board of directors. We caught up one morning to mull over women in sport, and most particularly in football.

1. Why does women's sport matter?

Sport is a source of joy in physical movement, and everyone deserves to have that in their lives. But there's also the question of equality and parity: women should have fair access to sport and to all that comes with playing at the highest level, including decent financial contracts and the same level of support as men.

More broadly, it's about what we communicate to wider society about women's place and positioning. What does it mean when young women and girls don't get mentioned, or are somehow seen as 'less than' men in how they are depicted? It makes us feel we are second-class citizens.

In my early sports marketing career I didn't particularly question the sponsorship deals that were primarily in men's sport and not women's. Writing the book made me look back at my own history and I now see so clearly how women's sport has been belittled in society.

2. How do you see the key gains for women's sport in recent years?

External money coming into women's sport, via sponsorship from big brands like Barclays and Vitality, makes a huge difference. The media coverage for women's sport from broadcasters like the BBC and Sky has also been momentous.

Having free-to-air coverage on the BBC for the FA Women's Super League (WSL) takes it to a completely new audience, and we're seeing the huge impact of this with [recent research from the Women's Sport Trust](#).

More sports governing bodies agreeing that we should be paying women as professionals has helped women to realise their talent and skills, and attract an audience.

I think the gains are also about a change in society. We've come to a realisation around equality and social justice, and we won't put up with the status quo anymore.



3. Tell me about the game changers we should all know more about?

There is the story of Constance Applebee who, in 1901, went from England to Harvard College to study and was shocked to discover physical activity and sport for young women included little more than musical chairs and 'drop the handkerchief'. Constance became a champion for field hockey, spreading the word across US colleges.

She reminds us that women have been fighting the battle for equality for more than 100 years. Their stories haven't been told but they did have an impact and they caused a shift, not just in men's attitudes but also in what women thought possible. The view at the time was that women should be frail and weak and feminine. How must women like Constance have had to fight to be different to others around them?

4. What do you say to people who think there isn't an audience for women's football?

They need to remember that at the time of the First World War women had to take up traditional men's work and that gave them time to play sport. This developed into football matches in large stadiums, which were hugely popular and there were more than 150 teams across the country.



On Boxing Day 1920, 53,000 people were inside Everton's Goodison Park stadium to watch Dick Kerr Ladies and St Helens Ladies play, and another 14,000 had to wait outside.

On 5 December 1921, the Football Association banned women's football because of its lack of suitability for women and because they were getting paid.

There was a desire to expand the leagues for men when they came back from the war. This ban spread across the world. Even now, we still haven't got away from this view of what is suitable for 'frail and weak' women to do, whether that's shorter matches or shorter distances.

The ban was in place for 50 years. Just imagine all that lost time – all that investment, structures and the rewards when football was becoming hugely commercial. It's not just about equality and parity, it's about equity.

There is so much still to do around the practical experience of the sport for girls playing today. Just think about what we see in schools. This then moves into the clubs, whether there is equality in terms of access to female coaches, the best pitches, changing rooms, etc.

5. We know men's football has a poor financial model. What about the women's game?

Will the women's game be as profitable as the men's, and do we even really want that? I believe women's football should aspire to be a better version than men's. Can it reinvent itself?

As women's teams align themselves to men's teams, does it just mean we fall, perhaps unthinkingly, into the same model? Is there a different moral compass for women's sport? Does it have to be subsumed into male ways of doing things?

We are trying to do things differently at Lewes FC. They invest equally in their men and women's teams, which is not just the right thing to do, but has already had a positive return with the gates having increased, more sponsors and increased ownership (the club is 100% fan owned).

It's wonderful to see these ethics have turned out to be good business.

But having said all that, we still need to win games because the more success we have the higher the profile of the club and the more impact we can have on the world of football and beyond.

6. So what would you do with your magic wand if you were granted your wishes?

It's really about more investment. Brands are waking up and seeing the impact of women's sport and how it also aligns with social change and can make a real difference. Visibility and spectator numbers matter, but we need the right quality of coverage and consistent visibility. Elite sport is entertainment after all, and that means getting the right product in the right places.



Football boards and diversity

Despite increasing awareness of the need for diversity, women are still left on the sidelines when it comes to representation on football club boards

This article was featured in CT Brief 59, May 2022



Christina Philippou

Director of policy, Fair Game, and principal lecturer, University of Portsmouth

Much has been made of the need for diverse boards – reflecting the population that you are. For International Women’s Day, Fair Game published a report on the state of play (pun intended) of gender diversity in English football. Penned by a number of academics (including myself), the report was based on existing and new research, and looked at governance and boards. While the results were, unfortunately, not wholly unexpected, some of the findings felt out of place in 2022.

Diversity own goal

Representation of women on boards was far below the 30% mark, with League 2 showing the highest representation (11.3%) and the Championship the lowest levels of representation (4.2%) in the top four leagues. The Premier League saw 11.1% female board representation, bolstered by the likes of Brentford, whose focus on diversity and inclusion has been widely noted in the industry.

The even more shocking figure was the number of all-male boards found: two thirds of clubs in the top four leagues had all-male boards. The Premier League had the lowest proportion of all-male boards (40%), while 83% of Championship clubs had all-male boards. This in 2022.

Calls for change

But why? Football’s diversity problem has been widely noted over the years, and not just at club level. The Football Association (FA) – which looks after the England national team and grassroots – has been repeatedly criticised in Parliament for poor governance (including lack of diversity), and the previous FA Chairman resigned after using offensive language that was anything but inclusive.

The calls for better diversity and inclusion in football continue from the government.

But sport is being forced to change by stakeholders too. We have seen protests from fans against lack of inclusion (for example, the Chelsea sale build-up saw a trending hashtag #NoToRicketts against one of the bids following leaked Islamophobic emails).

We have seen loss of sponsors where boards disregarded issues linked to diversity and inclusion. For example, Raith Rovers recently lost sponsors, fans, and teams following signing of a player ruled to be a rapist in a civil court case in 2017.

So, where to next?

We have seen diversity and inclusion as part of the governance requirements set out in the latest edition of A Code for Sports Governance for sports organisations wishing to access public finance from the likes of UK Sport. And even the independent Fan Led Review of Football Governance and subsequent Government response suggested that diversity and inclusion form part of the remit of the proposed new football regulator, given football's poor track record on the subject to date.

Good governance of organisations in which the public has an interest or emotional stake is increasingly expected. And so, despite being behind other industries, football will eventually follow. Clearly, on the diversity side, more needs to be done.



HONEST CONVERSATIONS

 **Episode 3**

**Football
Regulation:
It's time to
take action!**



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