



Statement Regarding England Hockey Competition Framework and the concerns of Independent Schools:

England Hockey has recently been passed the minutes of an Independent Schools Hockey Association meeting by a number of parties who are clearly concerned about the future unity of Independent Schools' hockey. England Hockey is keen to enter into further dialogue with the independent sector to listen to those concerns.

We are therefore holding a meeting at Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre on Wednesday June 24th 2009 starting at 5.30pm to discuss the implementation of the Schools' competition structure in 2009/10. We hope that the meeting will provide us the opportunity to share the principles and rationale behind the proposals and also to allow for an open and frank discussion on challenges for the independent school sector.

The introduction of the Single System was agreed and approved by the England Hockey Board in July 2006 and highlighted the need for a structured season, to support player development and also to help combat overplaying and the unreasonable pressures being placed on some young players.

The junior competition framework was approved by the England Hockey Board in May 2008 following a period of consultation at the beginning of that year. This was based on two years' work by a Youth Competitions Group, which comprised of individuals, volunteers and staff, with a wide experience of schools' and clubs' competitions. At the beginning of the consultation period David Faulkner (Performance Director) and Sally Munday (then Development Director) presented the Single System to the HMC GSA conference in February 2008. At this presentation, Independent Schools were specifically asked to take part in the consultation. The outcome of that work, and specifically the new schools competition programme, was published in June 2008. The Centralised Calendar for 2009/10 was then published in September 2008 specifically to give schools a twelve month period to plan and prepare for the introduction of the new competitions and formats. It is also true that the publishing of specific dates for these competitions were confirmed very recently but they were **published** in September last year to meet the commitment of providing twelve months 'lead in' to the new structure.

The scheduling of the schools competitions reflect the principles of the Single System, allowing for appropriate length of games and the use of round robin competition rather than knock out competitions or shortened games on one day. It also reflects the decisions to allow two teams from each county to qualify for the later part of any competition.

David Faulkner Performance Director has been consulting with HMC over the last two years regarding ways that England Hockey can work more closely with the Independent Schools and a further meeting is planned at the end of June. It is not true that England Hockey has been putting this meeting back. The focus of these meetings have not just been concerned with the competition structure but to discuss the relationship between the independent sector and England Hockey, to provide the best possible experience for the players and their individual development and welfare.

It appears that there are a number of concerns that will be addressed at the meeting; including two term hockey, the extended competition structure, midweek finals and England Hockey's perceived commitment to schools' hockey.

Further information will be published following the meeting on the 24th June 2009 at Bisham Abbey.