

SFA respond to criticism from Rangers MD Stewart Robertson of Lowland League plan

The Scottish FA has responded to criticism in an interview by Rangers Managing Director Stewart Robertson concerning the proposal to integrate 'B' teams into the Lowland League.

The Scottish FA President, Rod Petrie, issued the following statement.



Rod Petrie

"The Scottish FA seeks to clarify inaccuracies contained in an interview undertaken by the Rangers Managing Director, Stewart Robertson, on the subject of the proposed introduction of B teams.

"The Professional Game Board agreed to a request from Stewart, as a member, to convene a working group to provide an innovation paper identifying ways in which Scottish football can improve its talent pipeline at elite end.

"Part of their proposal was the concept of B teams and their potential integration within the lower leagues of the Scottish Professional Football League. While the Scottish FA is supportive of any innovation that enhances the prospect of elite talent development, ultimately a decision on the introduction of B teams would need to be taken under the auspices of the SPFL rules relating to league competitions.

"At a virtual meeting on April 9, hosted by Stewart, and

including a representative from Celtic FC, the SPFL and Scottish FA, there was general consensus on the call that given the adverse publicity and temperature among clubs, the proposal was unlikely to garner the support of enough clubs to enable the SPFL rule change to progress further.

“It was therefore agreed by both Stewart, on behalf of Rangers, and Celtic’s representative that pausing any detail being distributed to clubs would give the proposals the best chance of success. To repeat, the introduction of B teams as part of the innovation paper would require an SPFL vote, and after a season in which clubs have had to contend with the ongoing impact of COVID-19, a rushed decision would likely end in failure.

“It was unanimously agreed by the group, including Stewart, that the distribution any paper should take place once the 2020/21 season has ended, to give clubs an opportunity to fully consider the potential benefits without the pressures of implications of a season impacted by COVID-19. We are therefore surprised that Stewart is quoted on Rangers TV saying “the biggest frustration is that [the] paper has still never gone to the clubs. You’d need to ask Scottish FA and SPFL why”.

“This agreement also came with the additional recommendation that any discussion on improving elite talent development would require the support of all SPFL members, not least those clubs in the lower leagues who would require to accommodate any B teams.

“The perception that this paper would be to the benefit of two clubs in particular would likely present a challenge to those leading on the innovation paper and in any final vote.

“On Stewart’s comments regarding being “frustrated at the lack of transition pathway for our young players”, it should be noted that the Scottish FA has over many years worked with

clubs to establish the optimum model for elite talent development and transition. This has included removal of the reserve league, creation of an under-20 league, creation of an under-21 league and then re-establishment of a reserve league, which was cancelled at the request of the clubs due to the challenges faced by COVID-19.

“These have all been done in conjunction with the Scottish FA’s Performance Department, with the input and agreement of the clubs and their respective heads of academy. Indeed, Rangers have been heavily involved in the SPFL Competitions Working Group that has discussed and amended the elite player pathway in recent years.

“In summary, the Scottish FA believes the innovation paper to have many benefits beyond the ‘headline’ area of B Teams or Colt teams. The governing body will lead, support or facilitate any innovations that improves the game in consultation with its members but to achieve success requires mutual respect, a common purpose and, ultimately, consensus.”