

Hearts B team granted Lowland League entry following member clubs vote

Alongside Celtic and Rangers, Hearts have been granted permission to pay the £40,000 fee and admit a B team to compete in the Lowland League next season as 'guest clubs'.

Last season, the two Glasgow sides paid £25,000 to enter teams, but this season that fee has risen. Once again, the guest clubs will not be eligible for promotion should they win the league.

The arrival of the three guest clubs, who need to field a minimum of seven players that are eligible for the Scotland national team, will mean 19 sides will make up the Lowland League next season.

Hearts manager, Robbie Neilson previously explained why Hearts were so keen to enter the league. He said: "I support a platform for the young players to go and play.

"We have not had a reserve league for a number of years and it has really hindered the development of these players.

"We have had to find loan deals to put them out but we have no control over what happens there – how they play, how they train, the environment they are in."

The inclusion of the guest clubs last season infuriated many Scottish football fans and matters have intensified this time around as Lowland League clubs have performed a U-turn to admit the guest clubs to the league, when the deal previously looked to be dead.

Chairman of the Lowland League, Thomas Brown, said: "We were always open to the inclusion of guest clubs for a further season given the successful player development outcomes from last year's pilot. We want to be a modern and progressive league and we are excited to be playing our part in the eco system that develops Scotland's talent.

"Importantly, we now look forward to working with the Scottish FA, the SPFL and our friends in the pyramid to create some new solutions to some existing challenges which will provide a bright future at all levels of our game."