

# **The *Vote*...**



**Lewes F.C. Women, Mercury 13,  
and the future of Equality F.C.**

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## **Introduction**

Lewes Community Football Club (LCFC) is arguably one of the world's most important football clubs. What makes it special?

LCFC is a 100% supporter-owned enterprise. The Dripping Pan, where LCFC's teams play matches is Britain's best football ground, according to author Mike Bayly, in his 2020 book "British Football's Greatest Grounds." The Rooks were founded in 1885.

These are accomplishments to be proud of, but not why LCFC stands out.

It is the one and only sports club in the world that supports its men's and women's teams equally. In every way, from payroll, staff support, marketing to working conditions. It sets an example it hopes other clubs will emulate.

LCFC is a gender equality evangelist. Equality FC (EFC) is the club's global gender equality initiative.

*"It's impossible" they said. So we did it. In 2017, we equalised the playing budgets and resources we allocate to our men's and women's teams. Equality FC was born. Same budgets, same marketing, same facilities, same stadium, you get the idea. And it feels really good. And guess what? Since making this move, our attendances have increased, Owner numbers have increased, sponsorships have increased and media coverage has sky-rocketed. Turns out that 'different' works. And this kind of different will work in other clubs and other industries. That's the power of equality." Source: Lewes FC's website.*

Mostly due to its gender equality stance, advocacy and impact, the Lewes, England-based club has never been more relevant and influential globally. It has attracted the attention of football regulators, governments, fans, equality advocates, and sponsors. Revenue, stock share sales and annual renewals are at record levels.

Lewes FC Men is seeking promotion from the Premier Division of the Isthmian League. It's a top 250 men's club in England.

The Women's Championship is the domain of Lewes FC Women. It competes against Crystal Palace and other professional squads in the second highest level of English women's football.

Lewes FC Women, originally named Lewes Ladies FC, ascended from the South East Counties football league to the fourth tier, the FA Women's Premier League in 2012. It applied for and was accepted to the Championship in 2018.

## **There Are Challenges**

Women's football in England is transitioning from near nascency to elite professional. This evolution is attracting better athletes who are paid more, facility improvements, top flight front

office operators, and better marketing. It's led to additional media exposure, more sponsors and revenue, fairer prize money distributions - championed by LCFC, and big increases in fan engagement.

What's the matter with that? Nothing.

Despite big balance sheet gains, good fiscal management, fan passion, media relations savvy, and significant board member donations, LCFC sources say it will struggle to raise enough revenue to maintain its place. Today, some peer clubs and lower-tier teams spend more on their squads.

Keeping up may become even more difficult. The Football Association (FA) in England is likely to increase membership requirements for Women's Championship and Women's Super League clubs. This will add to the cost of doing business.

Eventually, England's top two women's football leagues may include the teams with the most funding, enabling them to attract the best player, coaches and staff, while offering elite training, locker room facilities, travel and more, plus premium fan amenities.

Why does this matter? Football clubs occupy pyramid tiers that usually mirror the equilibrium between squad talent and effort, coaching success, staff and fan support and financial strength, versus peer performance.

If Lewes FC Women is relegated to amateur community club status its gender equality activist voice will likely diminish, from a bull horn to something akin to a shout. It may be less appealing to sponsors. Fewer people may purchase LCFC ownership shares. League revenue would decline.

### **Changing Its Game Plan**

In a move that blindsided shareholders, LCFC announced it was in negotiations to sell a majority stake (51%) of Lewes FC Women (Lewes FC Women's Limited) to a startup investment company called Mercury 13 (M13), recently incorporated in Delaware, USA.

Shareholders and supporters found out about M13's intentions from news media reports on August 24th.

M13 says it plans to raise \$100 million to buy or own majority stakes in as many as 10 women's football clubs. On the lookout for clubs with potential in Europe and South America, Lewes FC Women would be its first acquisition and "sit side-by-side its other clubs."

It says it hopes to market and cross-promote its network of teams to share best-practices, innovations, leverage opportunities and sponsorships.

M13 says its primary purpose is to support and advance women's football. To profit too.

What irks some people who love LCFC is that none of this was explicitly communicated to shareholders and supporters in advance. Exploring alternative funding options started not long after last year's annual general meeting. Talks with M13 LCFC says started more recently.

LCFC has consulted with independent financial and legal advisors regarding the market value of Lewes FC Women and M13's offer. It says it has incorporated safeguards, "red lines," into the transaction that protects its interests.

The idea that LCFC might sell any of its assets to a third party contradicts a goal stated in its "Lewes FC 2022-2023 Strategy" report.

*"Becoming the most-owned football club in England." This "...would put us on a path to sustainability via our ownership structure and move us away from reliance on businesses or individuals for funding."*

Why the 180 degree turn? Likely, a reality check.

In the past, Board members have donated over £1 million to help balance its books. That no longer seems sustainable. However, two Board members who were term limited in 2022, Messrs. Charlie Dobres and Ed Ramsden, created an endowment fund upon their departures to help sustain the club's positive momentum.

Largely due to its gender equality message, sponsorship revenue has increased and is on an upward trajectory. But it can't carry the club, currently. LCFC could make a better effort to leverage the passion and expertise of its shareholder network to generate more corporate sponsorship leads, overcome challenges and seize opportunities.

## **Ownership / Membership**

Could shareholder revenue negate the need for an outside investor? LCFC has almost 2,500 shareholder (shares outstanding), subject to annual renewal. Share sales are on a slow upward move and retention is said to be above 90%.

Supporters who live in and around Lewes buy shares to support their hometown club and its gender equality stance. They also want to do their part to sustain an important community anchor institution. LCFC's Support and Save program, that offers discounts from mostly Lewes-area merchants, effectively reduces the membership cost. LCFC's gender equality advocacy is a primary reason why people outside the UK buy shares.

Passionately marketing its stock ownership program has not been in LCFC's playbook. Millions of people around the world care about gender equality and equity. It is a huge market.

If LCFC could grow and sustain its shareholder base to 10,000, at £50 per share which is today's cost, it would ring the cash register to the tune of £500,000, year after year. It charges £1,000

for lifetime “Granders.” A LCFC source says it would likely need about 50,000 annual owners to sustain its game plan.

Why not sweeten the deal? Merchant discounts from more international companies that sell popular goods could help entice more people to join up and be a means to onramp new cash sponsors. Add cool features. Exeter City Supporters Trust offers its members the chance to be “Director of the Day,” a Family Room on its ground, and discounts.

Is LCFC’s share price too high? FC United of Manchester’s annual memberships fee is £3 for children and £25 for adults. AFC Wimbledon’s The Dons Trust charges £10 for seniors, youth and students, £25 for adults and £500 for Life members. Exeter City, £24.

How would an M13 purchase affect share sales and renewals, and current and potential sponsors if LCFC transitions from an equality to hybrid equity-equality model?

What about sponsor loyalty? LCFC says its current sponsors are supportive of its plan to grow.

## **Venue**

The Dripping Pan can typically accommodate up to 3,000 fans. Eight of the 12 teams in the Women’s Championship stadiums have a capacity of 5,000 or less. In the Women’s Super League only one team, Everton, plays at a smaller venue than the Rooks.

Clubs that optimize the potential of larger venues can raise more money via ticket, food concession and merchandise sales. Since The Dripping Pan rarely sells out, there is a significant opportunity to increase venue-related revenue between 200 to 500 percent...without increasing its current seating capacity.

Moving matches to a larger venue has been ruled out 100% by LCFC. No one wants to move from The Dripping Pan. It’s been LCFC’s home starting in 1885.

Considered empirically, the forecast for LCFC’s combined revenue going forward is less than what it will be required to support its aspirations.

## **Mercury 13’s Offer**

Lewes Community Football Club says it has already considered a variety of options to raise additional revenue, from selling bonds, bank loans, grants and more. But LCFC says, “They were not the best options.”

After conducting its due diligence, LCFC says its board unanimously favors what it initially described as a “multi-million dollar” no-debt acquisition by Mercury 13. A source says the Board calls it “a perfect match.” LCFC was still negotiating the sale price and terms as of October 2nd.

M13 says it is ready to invest [REDACTED] over three years. “We already have the funds secured,” says Mercury 13’s leader, Victoire Cogevina Reynal. In addition to money, Reynal says the M13 team has the know-how needed to “fulfill its incredible potential.” LCFC’s board and M13 want to commit to a partnership lasting at least five years.

More funding would help Lewes FC Women sustain its league position and possibly enable it to achieve promotion to the Women’s Super League.

A bulk of M13’s investment would go towards player acquisitions and development. Club sources say some revenue would be allocated for infrastructure improvements and general operating needs.

In the future and if market conditions warrant, a source says M13 would consider investing more money into the partnership with LCFC, on a cost share basis to seize opportunities.

If a sale is consummated, LCFC says it will allocate more club-generated funds to its Lewes FC Men, community and youth teams.

A casual observer might ask, “What’s the worst that could happen?” If the venture with M13 occurs and fails LCFC will continue to field teams, like it has done for the past 138 years.

### **There Are Sincere Concerns**

Shareholders and supporters have submitted almost 400 questions to LCFC’s board of directors about the possible sale and Equality FC’s future. Some have expressed strong objections.

Bound by a non-disclosure agreement, LCFC hasn’t shared many details. Initially, M13 did not want to name all of its investors. It has not publicly unveiled its strategy or indicated annual budgeting and community support priorities. However, since the purchase offer was announced, M13 has agreed to share its investors’ names with LCFC’s board for vetting purposes.

M13’s Reynal’s says its investment team includes people with extensive football-related experience. While her public remarks align with LCFC’s mission, values and purpose, M13 has no experience owning or managing a football club.

Common LCFC shareholders will not profit financially from the purchase or club’s success. However, if a dividend is declared by M13, LCFC via Lewes FC Women’s Limited would receive 49% of the proceeds.

If M13 were to sell its stake in Lewes FC Women, it might make a profit or loss. A safeguard incorporated into the sale agreement is LCFC’s right to repurchase outstanding shares or the ability to veto a sale to a potential third-party. These terms have not been disclosed.

## **Community Benefits Agreement**

LCFC is negotiating a community benefits agreement with M13. The CBA should include guaranteed performance by M13. However, it is believed that some CBA support might be contingent upon the Lewes FC Women meeting or exceeding sponsorship and revenue goals.

The CBA should include three broad initiatives.

- Increase youth football participation, like Rookie Kickers and Lewes FC Juniors. Boost support of Elite Pathway squads and considered transitioning them to academies. M13's Reynal says, "The future of football lies in the next generation of players."
- Fund Equality FC, or whatever it might be renamed, via direct support or earmarked corporate sponsorships. EFC is key to LCFC's financial success. It is a sponsorship magnet and the prime reason people outside of Lewes buy and renew ownership shares.
- Improve The Human Condition in and around Lewes by funding community efforts like food drives, anti-domestic violence organizations, sisterships and Bonfire groups.

CBA funding should be at least 3% of M13's combined annual operating and capital budgets, averaging [REDACTED] or more every year its controls Lewes FC Women.

## **Equality FC Makeover**

A sale to M13 would mean LCFC's 100% equality declaration and actions would no longer be accurate. Its women players will earn more money than its men's players.

A sale would require LCFC to rework its Equity FC message. It might need to rename the campaign. It can't ask people to, "Do as I say, not as I do." What direction should LCFC take?

## **Fan Ownership of Clubs**

Many supporter-owned clubs are not 100% owned by members or shareholders, like LCFC (2,400+ owners) and FC United of Manchester (2,230 members - 1797 adults and 333 youth).

The Dons Trust, a supporter's group of AFC Wimbledon retains 75% control of the club. Exeter City F.C., with approximately 3,700 members, is 57.9% owned by AFC Supporters' Society Limited. Trust chairperson Nick Hawker told BBC Sports recently, "We own it. We don't run it."

With few exceptions, majority ownership of Germany's Bundesliga clubs and second tier teams abide by the 50% plus one vote rule, assuring majority fan control. The fan is not a customer, is the sentiment of Borussia Dortmund CEO, Hans-Joachim Watzke.

If Lewes Community Football Club sells 51% interest in Lewes FC Women to Mercury 13, shareholders will retain 100% ownership of Lewes Community Football Club Limited (parent company), including Lewes FC Men, all physical assets, intellectual property, leases, contracts, and 49% of Lewes FC Women.

If 51% of Lewes FC Women is sold, LCFC will receive several million pounds over the next three years plus a partner who has meaningful professional football insights.

### **The VOTE!**

LCFC has scheduled a “yes” or “no” shareholder vote. “Should LCFC sell 51% of Lewes FC Women to Mercury 13?”

Initially, it was unclear if the vote’s outcome would be binding or advisory. Board members are elected by shareholders to make decisions for them that are in the best interest of the enterprise. But the possible sale of majority stake in Lewes FC Women does warrant a binding referendum.

If the Board were to take unilateral action and approve the sale, that could adversely affect supporter, shareholder and fan goodwill. It might lead to fewer shareholder renewals. Match attendance, concession and merchandise sales might suffer.

Recently, LCFC announced that the vote, running October 24 - October 31 will be binding!

If you support the transaction with M13 you aren’t alone. Lewes FC Men’s players, coaches and staff members approve of the sale 100%. Same goes for Lewes FC Women, which seems obvious. However, some current players probably won’t be with the club next season if the sale occurs.

### **My Vote**

As an LCFC shareholder, my vote will be informed by my research, objective analysis of all known facts and empirical observations.

I’ve reviewed all of Lewes Community Football Club Limited and Lewes 2000 F.C. Limited’s audited financial statements, from 2011-2022 since it transitioned to community ownership.

Participating in LCFC’s Equality Working Group and the Owner’s Mercury 13 Town Hall were insightful. Over the past few years, I have joined Town Halls and Annual General Meetings (Zoom) and tuned in to watch women’s and men’s matches and highlights.

Three things stand out. (1) Board members and staff are passionate about LCFC. They are dedicated and act in the Club’s best interest. (2) Several Board members have relevant business experience. (3) Without large financial contributions from Board members, LCFC would be

playing in lower tiers, encumbered with hundreds of thousands of pounds of debt or out of business.

So, should LCFC shareholders vote yes, or no? I will vote, yes.

## **Equality**

What's the first thing most people think of when gender equality is debated? Equal pay for equal work. Pay parity is an incomplete gauge of equality.

Who does this effect in football? Of the estimated 250-275 million football players around the world, less than 130,000 are professionals, according to Statista. Presuming professionals are paid money, pay disparities affect only .05% of all players. That's one in 2,000.

Having opportunities to join teams and play, equal access to safe grounds, good coaching and mentoring are best gauges of equality. These factors matter most to children and adult who want to have fun, stay in shape, achieve their potential, and make new friends.

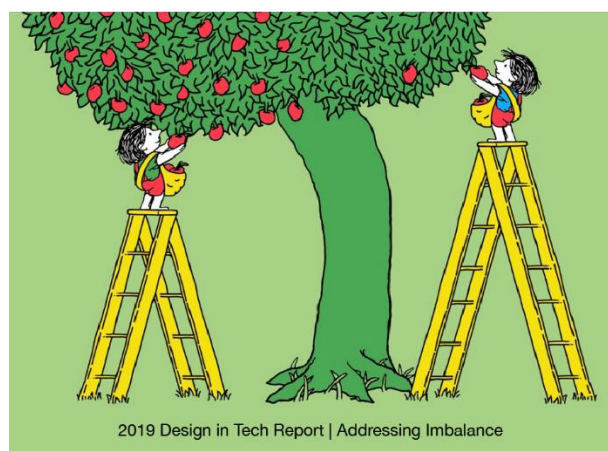
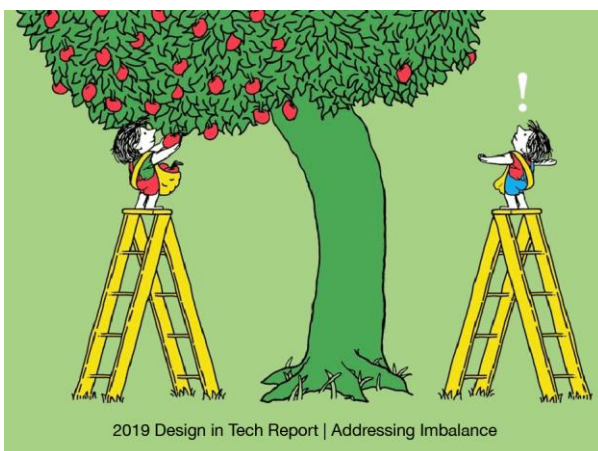
LCFC will transition from an equality to a blended equity/equality model if the sale to Mercury 13 occurs.

## **Comparing "Equality" to "Equity"**

Equality is a simple concept to understand. Equal treatment. Equity assures fair access to opportunities.

The images below show the difference between equality (left) and equity (right).

With equality, both characters have access to the same size ladders and identically-sized bags to pick and collect apples. The character using the shorter ladder can't reach any apples.



Images courtesy of the Milken Institute School of Public Health, The George Washington University.

Equity means the character who can't reach the apples has access to a longer ladder to pick and collect fruit.

If both characters collect apples for 15 minutes, the number of apples collected will probably differ. Notice the shape of the apple tree, number and location of apples. The outcome will also be influenced by factors like effort, determination, even luck.

In the sport of professional bowling the player with the highest score wins (equality). In golf if men and women compete against each other, tee boxes are positioned at different distances to holes (equity). All shoppers park in the store's parking lot (equality); shoppers with disabilities have reserved parking spaces, closer to the store's front door (equity).

A female's access to play football, join a club, practice and compete can be quite limited, even non-existent compared to her male counterpart. If she joins a team (equality) she may receive less of everything needed to compete, have fun and reach her potential (inequity.) In some instances "equality" attainment is like taking a half-step in the right direction.

How did it get this way? Discrimination against females persists because of ignorance, sexism, prejudice, traditions, patrilineal customs, some religions and other factors. It's been that way for generations.

In 1921, England's Football Association proclaimed "...the game of football is quite unsuitable for women and ought not to be encouraged." This effectively banned organized women's football and access to good quality pitches in England...for 50 years!

Sports play helps people hone important skills like self-esteem and confidence. It sparks problem-solving and leadership development, instills teamwork and a sense of fair play.

Many people credit sports participation for their success in life. Promoting equality and equity will cause more people to be happier, healthier and wealthier for their lifetimes.

### **Equity Plus Equality**

There are many ways equality and equity can be integrated into a football club's strategic plan.

- Player recruitment and tryouts.
- Kit cost.
- Participation fees.
- Financial aid.
- Policies, procedures, safety protocols.
- Supervised practice and training time.
- Coaching experience.
- Staff support.

- Accommodations (locker room, meeting space).
- Away match support (travel, food, etc.).
- Advertising, marketing and publicity.
- Ticket, concession and merchandise availability and pricing.
- Awards and/or prize money.

Lewes FC Women initiated the Equal FA Cup Campaign that is wholeheartedly endorsed by Lewes FC Men and LCFC. It is a good example of equality advocacy with incremental equitable actions. It's comparable to walking up a flight of stairs to get where you want to go.

For all intents and purposes LCFC wants The Football Association in England to do two things.

- Increase the prize money pool for women. "The 2022-23 women's prize money [pool] did increase, from about £430,000 to just short of £3m - a £2.5m rise. Good start. However...the men's prize fund shot up by nearly £4m, so the gap got BIGGER!"

The Cup's winning men's and women's teams for 2023-2024 will receive £2,000,000 and £100,000, respectively (up from £25,000 when Chelsea Women won the Cup last year.)

LCFC wants The FA to redistribute its prize money pool. To increase winner and loser prize money in early men's rounds and reduce later round payouts. To boost prize money throughout the 11 round women's tournament for winners and losers, with each round escalating in value. This advocacy is a form of equity restitution.

- Allocate prize money to many more men's and women's clubs, "across the whole football ecosystem." This money would be "...transformational" for clubs and grow greater interest and participation in the game.

All women's clubs and most men's teams in England owe Lewes FC Women a debt of gratitude for inspiring The FA to enact positive changes.

### **Should LCFC Change Equality FC's Name?**

Should "Equality FC" be renamed "Equity FC" or something else if Mercury 13 buys control of Lewes FC Women? Female players will earn more than their male counterparts. That's equity, not equality. Other key benchmarks, like working conditions, will remain equal between the squads.

Some of the world's most successful companies have changed their names.

Today, Blue Ribbon Sports is Nike. PepsiCo was named Brad's Drink. AuctionWeb is eBay. Subway started as Super Submarines. Best Buy was Sound of Music. PC's Limited is now Dell. Target was initially named Goodfellow's Dry Goods Company.

Equality FC does have some name recognition. Many LCFC supporters can connect (1) LCFC with (2) EFC and (3) gender equality advocacy. Some media reporters in the UK and European Union know of it, mostly from talking head interviews and press statements. Government officials are becoming more aware. But Equality FC is mostly unknown to the global football/soccer community and general public.

Like Nike and eBay, it's not too late to change names. Before dismissing a name change out of hand, consider "Equity FC" from perspectives other than your own.

Could Equity FC be registered as a corporation and trademarked? Are Internet domain name and social media handles available - EquityFC.org and @EquityFC? The .org suffix would reflect Equity FC's not-for-profit social purpose.

I own "EquityFC.org" and @EquityFC" on X, formerly Twitter, and Instagram. Will give them to LCFC if it wants to make the change. I acquired these assets during the research phase of this report for safeguarding purposes.

Equality FC (2.0) may be the best name to use? Most people understand what "equality" means without looking the word up in a dictionary.

### **Launch EFC 2.0**

Because EFC is not a club it will be more appealing to more people and companies. Not pulling for a team, but a cause.

Today, LCFC's primary external tool to promote equality and equity is advocacy. As EFC evolves, tangible programs should be added that produce positive outcomes that are replicable by clubs on a global scale.

A whole new ballgame. Imagine Revlon, Mattel, The Walt Disney Company, Adobe, Google, Ben & Jerry's, Amazon and many more companies taking strong interest in EFC and its programs? Not because they love football; they want to support gender equity and equality in society.

Coach Up, Join Up, Team Up, and What's Up are four program that could constitute an EFC 2.0. Managed by a small team of employees, with help from volunteers, the enterprise would leverage low-cost mobile and desktop technologies and free social media to impact the world.

### **Coach Up** (Starts 2024)

Coach Up eliminates a barrier to employment. Many clubs require coaches to be accredited.

Based upon financial need, personal passion and recommendations, Coach Up pays up to 100% of the cost for women to attain coaching licenses.

Women apply on the EFC website and are selected by EFC. Awards are made on a funds-available basis and sent directly to accrediting organizations in the names of recipients.

### **Join Up** (Starts 2024)

Join Up is EFC's grassroots membership program. It includes people, teams and clubs.

#### **Ally**

An Ally is a person who makes a one-time, annually renewable £35 contribution to EFC.

A thank you/welcome message is sent to each Ally via email. Their names (anonymous) appear on the EFC website as Allies. They may opt-in to receive EFC's quarterly electronic newsletters, "The Huddle," via email link.

#### **Advocate**

An Advocate is a person or amateur football team or club that makes a one-time, annually renewable contribution to EFC of £50. Professional teams/clubs pay £500.

Advocates receive Ally-level benefits. Their names are listed on EFC's website as Advocates. If an Advocate is a team or club, it may add the EFC logo to player jerseys and website with link back to EFC's website, free of charge.

### **Team Up** (Starts 2024)

Team Up helps amateur teams, clubs and leagues (organizations) fast track equity and equality that lack know how and/or funds to make it happen. EFC shares actionable ideas via its downloadable Team Up guide (English and Spanish language versions).

This helps organizations (1) expedite equity/equality, (2) shape their marketing messages and (3) boost fundraising. Here's a fictional example.

*The Comiski Kickers (CK) wanted to add a girls' football team, citing the popularity of its boys' team.*

*Its effort failed because parents could not afford registration and uniform fees. CK didn't have enough money to subsidize the cost.*

*Comiski asks EFC for help. EFC sent the Comiski Kickers its Team Up guide. CK worked diligently to raise community awareness and funds.*

*The following season the Comiski Kickers fielded a girls' team. It subsidized the cost of participation for all girls and boys from lower-income families.*

How can EFC do this for almost no cost? It composes its Team Up guide and adds to it from time to time, making it more comprehensive and helpful.

To help organizations achieve a higher level of gender equity and equality, EFC's website will also include two free evergreen user guides.

- Gender Equity 101. A guide to gender equality and equity best practices.
- Checklist. A guide to player recruitment and support.

What will motivate teams, clubs, leagues to embrace equity and equality? Three good reasons.

- Attract and involve more like-minded supporters.
- Be more successful at fundraising.
- Recruit better players.

A monetary beneficiary of EFC's Team Up program could be LCFC. It is football's gender equality and equity innovation incubator and lead practitioner. LCFC is EFC's proof of concept.

### **What's Up** (Ongoing)

Utilizing news, events, research, its contacts and original ideas, the What's Up team pitches news stories to traditional and social media outlets that inform public opinion about gender equity and equality.

EFC enlists and expands its corps of subject matter experts and newsmakers as volunteer spokespeople. These people are interesting, possess first-hand experiences or expertise, and are good story tellers.

### **EFC Funding Sources**

Corporate sponsorships of EFC and/or its programs, plus revenue from its Join Up program would provide significant operational funding.

If Mercury 13 were to buy a controlling interest in Lewes FC Women, it should help EFC by providing annual funding. LCFC and M13 should incorporate an EFC pitch as an option to capture more diverse corporate sponsorship funding.

### **The EFC 2.0 Team**

- Executive Director
- Community Engagement Director
- Interns
- Volunteer Teams
  - EFC Coalition
  - EFC Advisory Board

- Social Media Team
- Speed Merchants

### **Executive Director (Starts Early 2024)**

The Executive Director (ED) is responsible for implementing EFC's strategic plan and accounting for funds. Also leads the collaborative conceptualization of EFC's programs, campaigns and media messaging. Primary liaison to LCFC. Lead recruiter of the EFC Advisory Board.

The ED is a skilled leader who has mastered the art of selling intangibles. Oversees and responsible for EFC fundraising. The chief spokesperson of EFC, however many media appearances will involve Advisory Board members and others. Authentically makes people feel welcome, needed and valued.

### **Community Engagement Director (Starts Mid-2024)**

The Community Engagement Director (CED) coordinates, leads and manages EFC's programs, interns and volunteer teams. The public's primary point of contact is the CED. Responsible for overseeing and updating EFC's website content and online merchandise store.

### **Intern (Starts Early-2025)**

Interns primarily support the work of the Community Engagement Director. Assists the Executive Director on special projects. Interns are college or university credit and degree-seeking students. Interns are paid a stipend by EFC by semester.

### **Volunteer Teams**

**EFC Coalition** is composed of globally-based "Join Up" members. They are the primary voice of EFC on the local level. They help inform the public about gender equity news and best-practices in their communities. (Starts 2025.)

**EFC Advisory Board** members are known and respected influencers from football, non-profit organizations, government, business and entertainment sectors who care about gender equity and equality and want to speak up and share their viewpoints. (Starts 2024.)

**Social Media Team** is composed of media-savvy volunteers who creatively keep EFC's objectives, activities and goals in the media spotlight on free social media platforms and interview programs. (Starts 2024.)

**Speed Merchants** are globally based volunteers who keep EFC's online store shoppers happy. Store-to-door shipping time is cut from up to 21 days to two or three, reducing overall shipping costs. EFC supplies merchandise in bulk to Speed Merchants who ship directly to buyers in their home countries. Starts where LCFC has its largest number of

shareholders outside the UK: Japan, United States, Australia, Spain and France. (Starts 2025.)

### **EFC's Website**

Lewes Community Football Club should create an EFC website with mobile and desktop versions. Its webpage header should feature the EFC logo with the tagline, "Stands for Opportunity!" or "Stands for a Level Playing Field!" An app can come later.

Building and updating an attractive and easy to create, feature-rich, user-friendly and secure website can be done using WIX, an off-the-shelf program. Building and hosting fees will cost less than £1,000 per year.

The EFC website could eventually include a wide array of content and functionality, enabling EFC to grow its voice in the global equality and equity arenas. Here's what it could do:

- Spotlight EFC's programs, purpose, mission and vision.
- Recruit, onboard and recognize "Join Up" members.
- Enable people and organizations to apply for EFC program support.
- Inform the public about gender equity and equality news and LCFC. Link to videos, blogs, vlogs, and social media feeds to keep people engaged.
- Share EFC and LCFC-generated news, opinions and commentaries.
- Enable businesses to express interest in sponsoring EFC and LCFC.
- Recruit global volunteers.
- Recognize and thank sponsors and volunteers.
- Host EFC's online store.

### **EFC Budgeting**

Budget estimates, that included projections and calculations, was included in the more comprehensive "Girl Power" report I wrote for LCFC in May 2022. Developing a consensus to move forward, programmatic enhancements, and budget development would require collaboration between LCFC and its stakeholders.

### **Could EFC 2.0 Harm LCFC?**

EFC will accentuate LCFC. Lewes Community Football Club would be EFC's poster child and vice versa. Both can be global role models.

There is enough mission and brand differentiation for EFC to appeal to individual supporters and corporate advertisers who transcend football.

LCFC's shareholder growth momentum will increase. Image all the people who care about gender equality and equity but never linked the cause to a football club they can support.

Funding from EFC to LCFC could occur if EFC earmarks funding for its flagship club's benefit.

If LCFC were a piece of cake, EFC is the entire cake with ice cream, whipped cream swirls, multi-color sprinkles and cherries on top. That's the scale of its appealing potential!

### **EFC's Legal Structure?**

Common sense suggests EFC should be registered as a company in England and Wales for liability purposes and be a wholly owned subsidiary of Lewes Community Football Club Limited.

If it were incorporated as a nonprofit and achieved 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service in the United States, it could fundraise plus apply for millions of dollars in grants from private and corporate foundations, philanthropists and donors, and more. To avoid a conflict of interest it would be required to operate independent of LCFC if it received any EFC funding.

### **About the Author**

Chris Allen is one of 2,400+ Lewes Community Football Club shareholders, a two-time women's team player sponsor, and Lewes FC Supporters Club member, from Orlando, Florida.

He owns Volunteer Orlando Inc. that plans, manages and leads corporate social responsibility projects. Chris' work has helped 300+ nonprofits, schools and parks and engaged over 200,000 volunteers from all 50 States and 60 countries. Clients have included Pfizer, GE, National Basketball Association, HP, Rockwell, Marriott, Nike, Orange, Merck, Verizon, Hyundai, Deloitte, Siemens, FIS, Apple and others.

Chris captains lending teams on Kiva that support disadvantaged people, mostly women, in 94 countries. To date, 25,000+ team members have lent over \$66 million in interest-free loans.

A former television news reporter in Baltimore, Maryland (ABC-2), Chris is a recipient of the "Service to Children Award," from the National Association of Broadcasters, "National Journalism Award," from Scripps Howard Foundation, among others. President Bill Clinton named Chris a "President's Service Award Citationist" (no longer conferred), The United States' highest honor for volunteer service.