

ICEC

Independent
Commission for
Equity in Cricket

**An open letter response from the ICEC Chair, Cindy Butts, to ECB
Chair, Richard Thompson**

Richard Thompson, Chair
England and Wales Cricket Board

17 July 2023

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter of 25 June 2023.

I appreciate your words about the work of the Commission and the Secretariat, and have passed on your thanks.

I am grateful for your candid public response to our report, 'Holding Up A Mirror To Cricket', in particular the apology to those in the game who have suffered discrimination and exclusion. It was welcome to see you accept that this is a critical first step on the road to ensuring greater equity for all. I appreciate your personal commitment to make cricket more equitable, diverse and inclusive, as well as the commitments you have made on behalf of the ECB.

It is clear that our report has touched a nerve within cricket and beyond, and we have been hugely encouraged by the supportive comments we have received. It is, of course, even more encouraging for the thousands of people who provided evidence to the Commission to know that their contributions have prompted a much-needed conversation – one that even the Prime Minister has joined.

However, the fact that people are talking about the issues does not mean that the much-needed improvements will now happen automatically. As I said in my foreword to the report, the hard work starts now.

I welcome the establishment of a high level group of senior people at the ECB to lead the consultation with the wider game about our recommendations. It will be critical that the consultation engages not only with cricketing organisations in the First Class and National

Counties, but also reaches out to people at local level in clubs, to those who play cricket outside the 'mainstream' and, specifically, to representatives of marginalised groups.

I have commended the ECB's bravery in establishing the Commission, and now I urge you to continue to be brave in engaging with those who have perhaps been the game's fiercest critics; it is through those conversations, difficult though they may be, that genuine and lasting change can be achieved.

When developing our recommendations, we were well aware that they would require significant resources, at a time when cricket in England and Wales is facing financial challenges - some common to other sectors and some unique to cricket.

But we believe that the issues we highlighted are too important to be put on the back burner for lack of money. As you and colleagues have recognised, discrimination and lack of inclusion in cricket represent an existential crisis for the game.

Cricket does have significant funds through its broadcast deals - it's a question of how the game chooses to spend them. If ever there was a time to use them to ensure cricket's survival, it must be now.

As a Commission, we have been ambitious for the game to take the bold steps needed to address barriers to equity in cricket. I hope that the ECB and the game will be equally bold to take what I acknowledge will be challenging decisions about its use of resources, with difficult choices to be made about priorities.

Some of our recommendations do not come with a price tag at all, or can be implemented at little cost. There are 'quick wins' to be made, as you have acknowledged, and I appreciate that some other changes are complex and will take longer to implement.

We also know that some changes are outside the ECB's control, in particular our recommendation to Government about increasing the amount of cricket in state schools. I very much hope that Government will listen, and I am encouraged by what has been said so far.

But there is also much that can be done by the game itself to increase the opportunities for state school children to play and succeed, including through working with private schools and clubs to open up their facilities to those who otherwise would be unable to play the game.

As you mentioned in your letter, there is already much good work being done, and many good people striving for greater equity in the game, which we were happy to acknowledge in our report. We believe that provides a platform for the further improvements that need to be made to achieve systemic change.

One key challenge is that there must be a fundamental shift in culture throughout cricket. People at every level of the game need to recognise that up to now, it has largely been run by, and for, the benefit of a small minority; instead, what's needed now is an open,

transparent and above all inclusive attitude, where everyone who wants to play, work in or watch the game is valued, respected and treated fairly.

I look forward to hearing more as the consultation progresses, and to the ECB's full response to our report in three months' time. But most importantly, I look forward to the achievement of our shared ambition for cricket to become the most inclusive sport in the country.

Finally, I am grateful for your support for our work, and would ask you to pass on my thanks to all your colleagues at the ECB who shared their knowledge and expertise so freely.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Butts', written in a cursive style.

Cindy Butts
Chair, the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket