

Super League Basketball (SLB) & British Basketball Federation (BBF)

Summary and Background

This document sets out Super League Basketball's (SLB) position in relation to recent developments involving the British Basketball Federation (BBF), the current governance landscape, and the recognition and regulation of professional basketball leagues in the UK.

At its core, the document explains:

1. Why SLB is seeking formal recognition from BBF under FIBA regulations rather than a BBF-imposed licence.	Pages 2 – 6
2. Why SLB did not engage with BBF's tender process to run a top-tier league, highlighting legal, procedural, and governance concerns.	Pages 7 – 10
3. How SLB plans to operate moving forward, with a commitment to transparency, player development, fan engagement, building infrastructure, and grassroots investment.	Pages 11 – 26
4. Extracts demonstrating BBF's actual remit	Pages 27 - 29

SLB believes this information is critical not just for stakeholders and fans, but for those charged with British sports governance and with providing funding and support to our governing bodies in ensuring the future of British basketball is built on lawful, sustainable, and collaborative foundations.

SLB cannot have our league – or any other professional sports league – face the situation where a National Governing Body is making unlawful decisions that impact people's livelihoods.

We are happy to answer any further questions. Please email integrity@superleaguebasketball.co.uk and someone will respond to you.

SECTION 1: SLB'S REQUEST: A RECOGNITION AGREEMENT (AND WITH GBES)

This section explains SLB's stance in the legal case - we have requested formal recognition under the FIBA rules.

BBF's response is that SLB can have:

Up to 5 year's recognition, but only on certain conditions, including having no Governing Body Endorsements (GBEs); which are required by the Home Office to issue visas to overseas players.

1-year license with GBEs, but only on certain conditions, for example providing BBF with a legal indemnity.

This section sets out why BBF's response is unlawful.

- ***What are the FIBA Regulations?***

Under the FIBA Regulations

- a. There are requirements for a league to be recognised
- b. There are requirements for players to be licensed

“Licence” is not referred to anywhere in the FIBA regulations in relation to leagues

According to the FIBA regulations therefore:

- c. National Member Federations (i.e. BBF) recognize leagues
- d. National Member Federations license players to compete in recognised leagues

- ***What was in place before BBF?***

Basketball England was incorporated on 15 June 1979.

Basketball Scotland was incorporated on 28 July 2005.

Basketball Wales was incorporated on 30 October 2012.

British Basketball Federation was incorporated on 7 March 2007.

Each of Basketball England, Scotland, and Wales were their respective Home Nation Federation.

- ***What was the impact of the FIBA 2012 agreement?***

On 13 March 2011, the FIBA Central Board decided, among other things, to grant automatic qualification to the British Men’s and Women’s teams to the 2012 Olympics, subject to the signing of an agreement between FIBA, BBF and the Home National Federations by 30 June 2012 which would provide that the BBF would become a member of FIBA, in lieu of the Home Nation Federations, by 30 June 2016.

On 30 June 2012, FIBA, the BBF and the Home Nation Federations signed the aforementioned agreement. An appendix in the FIBA 2012 agreement sets out the proposed roles and responsibilities of the BBF and the Home Nation Federations after 30 June 2016. There are 38 elements, one of which refers to BBF being “Responsible for licensing the BBL and the development of an elite British women’s league.” Notably, although FIBA acknowledged the proposed roles and responsibilities, it did not agree to be bound by them.

The FIBA 2012 agreement expired on 31 December 2020.

- ***What did BBF change their own objects to?***

On 17 July 2015, BBF amended its articles to include the following object:

“to license domestic professional competitions and leagues in Great Britain as are from time to time created, to work towards the development of an elite British women’s league...”

While the FIBA agreement was live at this point it is irrelevant

- a. The wording in BBF’s articles had significantly expanded from the one line in the appendix in that agreement – in particular, BBF had given itself the power to license any domestic professional league and competition (even though the FIBA 2012 agreement only referred to the licensing of the BBL)
- b. There is no basis in the FIBA regulations for providing BBF with a power to license domestic professional leagues and competitions

Effectively, on 17 July 2015 BBF **gave itself** the power to **license all** professional competitions and leagues in Great Britain

- ***What did they do as a result?***

In 2017, BBF issued a licence to the BBL with the following two recitals:

- A. The BBL has been operating the premier men's basketball league under the terms of agreements with Basketball England (previously England Basketball and the EBBA) since an initial agreement dated 18 September 1987;
- B. FIBA has mandated that with effect from 1st October 2016, the BBF shall be the National Governing Body for basketball in Great Britain **and shall have the right to grant a licence to operate a professional men’s basketball league in Great Britain;**

The terms of this licence were far more onerous and restrictive than the previous agreements BBL had held. The corresponding licence fee increased from circa £10k to circa £60k in year one.

- ***How did BBF get from agreements to a licence?***

At this point it is clear that BBL had been operating under a **recognition agreement** with Basketball England since 1987.

In 2017, BBF informed BBL that it had a mandate from FIBA to grant a licence to operate a professional men’s basketball league in Great Britain.

The FIBA 2012 agreement did not state that they have that right.

Nothing exists in FIBA regulations that states they have that right.

It is unclear why BBF told BBL this was the case.

- ***What has the impact been?***

BBF has subsequently acted as though it has the right to issue and withdraw licences; but without explaining where this power comes from.

When BBF withdrew the licence from BBL, the legal advice¹ was that they could not actually prevent BBL from operating.

It is notable that as recently as May 2025, BBF did not understand what recognition meant. None of the directors were involved pre 2017, and have likely assumed that they do have the power to issue licences without realising that this power has been 'self-appointed.'

It is established law that, BBF (like other sports governing bodies) is required to have, transparent, precise, non-discriminatory and objective criteria for granting recognition to leagues.

A country can have multiple recognised leagues if it can sustain them.

- ***What are BBF's ACTUAL powers in relation to licensing?***

Nothing in FIBA's regulations gives BBF the right to grant exclusive licences to operate leagues; this would be unlawful as it is anticompetitive.

What BBF CAN do is:

- Decide whether it wants to operate its own leagues alongside any of the existing leagues
- Issue a tender for a third-party to operate those leagues on its behalf
- Create a compelling proposition to attract clubs to compete in its leagues
- Decide it wants material control over its own leagues

What BBF CANNOT do is:

- Issue an exclusive licence for a professional league
- Force clubs to compete in its leagues
- Favour its own league over another league

¹ Nothing in this document waives, or is intended to waive, any privilege in any communication.

- Control the operations of leagues that aren't its own (other than as prescribed in the FIBA regulations); they must be free to operate in their own best interests
- ***What is the problem with BBF's current approach?***

BBF would like to operate its own two-tier league system but it:

- Does not have the infrastructure to operate a league
- Does not have any clubs who wish to compete in its league

BBF has therefore issued a licence to GBBL to operate its 'top-tier' league, for which GBBL will have to pay BBF handsomely, yet it has no clubs wanting to compete in that league so it is attempting to force SLB clubs to compete.

It has announced BCB (the clubs who formerly competed in Basketball England's Division 1 league) will be a 'second-tier' league – and is therefore relying on BCB clubs to accept being its 'second-tier' league.

Crucially, as neither BBF nor BCB has the infrastructure to operate a league, BBF is actually reliant on SLB to support BCB.

- ***What is the situation with governing body endorsements?***

It is unlawful for BBF to state that GBEs are only available to 'licensed' leagues.

- 'Licensing' is an invention of the BBF; see 14-18 above.
- It is discriminatory and anticompetitive
- It is a breach of the Home Office's Code for Governing Bodies (in relation to International Sportspeople)

To bring International Sportspeople into the country requires:

1. A club to be endorsed as a bona fide club to receive a sponsor licence.
2. Individual players to be endorsed

These are not 'services' that an NGB can arbitrarily provide. They are duties and the government has specific rules, including that they cannot advantage or disadvantage one group of sponsors.

Once a club has its Sponsor Licence, they can apply for players to be endorsed as long as their Licence has not been revoked by the Home Office.

A National Governing Body should fully consult with any interested party when setting its criteria for both sponsor status, and migrants. They

should not be unilaterally deciding which leagues can have sponsor status.

There is no requirement that the sportspeople must play in a specific league, or that the club must compete in a specific league.

SECTION 2: WHY SLB DIDN'T ENGAGE WITH THE ITT PROCESS

This section explains the reasons SLB did not submit a bid.

In short, this is because BBF has misunderstood their role as a governing body seemingly believing it can issue exclusive licences, and created an unlawful tender process.

- ***Why are the clubs and BBF in dispute?***

As everyone is aware, the BBF, in June 2024, removed the licence of BBL due to the actions and/ or inactions of BBL's investor, 777 Partners. That is well known. What is less well known is that it was BBL clubs who brought the many deficiencies of 777 Partners to the attention of BBF in August 2023. In fact, BBF were slow to act.

A new licence was granted to the Clubs by BBF in July 2024, and SLB was established in July 2024, at great credit to all organisations. SLB agreed to pay BBF, at BBF's request, a fee of £275k, all up front, on 1st August 2024, notwithstanding that, in the prior year, BBL had paid a fee of £130k in two tranches (and less than that in prior years).

A three-year licence was agreed in short order. Both BBF and SLB understood well that a 3-year licence was insufficient to build a sustainable league, and a longer-term licence was agreed as required by both parties in writing. Thus, both parties agreed that they would work together to put in place a long-term licence. BBF set an objective **in writing** to complete the process for a long-term licence by September 2024. BBF also stated they wished to follow-up on interest from third parties, but it was the clear understanding of all clubs involved in those discussions (which were many) that BBF would only do so, if discussions/ agreement with SLB did not progress.

The BBF did not progress with SLB on the timescale promised by BBF and instead proposed launching a process to 'all interested parties', which was confidential and opaque.

SLB immediately identified their concerns at this proposed action by BBF at a meeting with BBF and in correspondence in October 2024.

The BBF process was without precedent in British or European team sport, and evidenced a complete lack of respect for the SLB Clubs and all they had achieved in: building bespoke basketball venues (also without precedent in British indoor team sport), in building the best and most successful basketball Events in the UK, in underwriting most of the GB internationals over the previous decade and in developing enviable community programmes.

This was all notwithstanding the fact that, unlike in other British professional team sports, the Clubs were provided with no, or almost no, funding from basketball NGBs. To the contrary: the Clubs provided very significant amounts of funds annually to the NGBs to sustain their operations.

- ***Why did SLB submit an Expression of Interest to BBF in November 2024?***

SLB held discussions with BBF and the Home Nations and, in the interest of working in partnership with the NGBs, submitted an EOI that demonstrated that SLB and its Clubs were without equal in terms of knowledge and experience in the UK in terms of what is possible with investment to drive the commerciality of British basketball at the Club and League level. It is noted that relevant, commercial, basketball, British related experience in SLB and the Clubs comprises hundreds of years, and dwarfs the relevant experience of the BBF (which, as noted above, was only set up in 2007).

It also noted SLB had, through its new Club owners, access to all the funds required to invest and drive the sport forward.

- ***Why did SLB not respond to BBF's Invitation to Tender document in December 2024?***

Upon reviewing the ITT, the SLB understood the following:

- a. The ITT was based on a wholly unrealistic set of assumptions at odds with the well understood commercial realities of British club basketball
 - b. The ITT evidenced that the BBF's tender process was illegal
 - c. The ITT sought to increase BBF's licence fees to a degree that the sport could not afford, and were thus utterly unrealistic: from £275,000 per year to £1.5 million for each of the first three years of the licence term and £2 million for the fourth year, with the fee to rise by 5% for every year thereafter
 - d. The ITT required the league to pay a share of its profits to BBF, on top of these licensing fees.
 - e. The ITT required the SLB to pay a nonrefundable fee of £25k
 - f. The ITT had a number of objectively unreasonable provisions that allowed BBF to strike out any tender if the bid was determined by them to be non-compliant
 - g. The ITT falsely claimed the **Clubs were stakeholders in the ITT process**, when, in fact, the Clubs played no part and were not consulted in any way
 - h. The selection process employed by BBF could not properly assess any submissions because of the inherent lack of relevant experience
- *What efforts did SLB make to engage with BBF and their designated preferred licensee when BBF made their announcement on 29th January 2025*

When Marshall Glickman Group (MG) was announced, this raised immediate red flags, because SLB had engaged in writing with MG and his colleagues in August 2024 and it was evident they did not have access to the funds.

SLB commissioned a due diligence report which confirmed the MG Group was an inappropriate partner, with no relevant knowledge of the UK market and, at an individual level, with chequered histories.

SLB immediately sought from BBF:

- a. The due diligence by BBF on the bidders
- b. Who bid (it was evident there had been only one bidder)
- c. The individuals who undertook the due diligence
- d. The funders
- e. The source of funds

Information on all these matters was denied by BBF on the basis of purported confidentiality.

SLB shared its due diligence with key BBF and Home Nations Directors. None of the information provided by SLB which is publicly available has been refuted.

It was also evident from discussions with key BBF Directors there was even a lack of transparency within the BBF Board and with its Members (the Home Nations).

It was evident to SLB clubs that not only was the BBF process illegal, but the lack of transparency also made it evident that the Clubs were being misled.

Finally, it is noted that a BBF Director approached two SLB Clubs and sought to use the promise of very large financial inducements to break ranks with the other Clubs and fracture the sport. This was followed up by a legal firm that represents MG seeking to induce those clubs to sell their franchises to their client.

None of these actions are those of a reputable NGB or one compliant with the Codes imposed by UK sports body funders such as Sport England or UK Sport.

SECTION 3: FAN Q AND A

This supplementary section addresses some of the other questions that have been raised by those in the basketball community.

Our fans are concerned and SLB has taken steps to dispel myths and rumours in order to protect the sport's reputation.

Future of the League & Operation Without BBF Sanctioning

- *How do you plan to continue operating without a BBF licence?*

At the heart of the recent discussions with BBF has been us trying to make BBF understand and acknowledge, what their powers truly are.

We have focused their attention on the requirements in the FIBA regulations that govern how National Governing Bodies should **recognise** leagues.

It is quite clear, and BBF now accepts, that SLB doesn't need (and have actually never needed) a licence in order to operate. It is noteworthy BBF have claimed they had no knowledge of recognition, and BBF needed SLB advice on it, which SLB duly provided at a meeting with BBF that SLB instigated.

So, the good news is that we can absolutely operate without a BBF licence!

We are confident BBF now understands that we meet the requirements to be a FIBA recognised league and as such are actively promoting the second SLB season for 2025/26 and our clubs are already selling season tickets and preparing for next year.

- *Do you expect to run a league next season without BBF or FIBA recognition?*

No, we requested recognition in line with FIBA regulations on 19 February 2025.

It is important to note that, we are, of course, currently a FIBA recognised league, and the majority of our clubs have played in the now defunct BBL which was also a FIBA recognised league. So it follows that being granted recognition should be very straightforward.

Having said that, the latest communication from BBF indicates that while they are prepared to provide us with multi-year recognition, they will refuse to provide Governing Body Endorsements. They have stated they will provide Governing Body Endorsements if we accept a 1-year license.

A Governing Body Endorsement is what allows us to bring International Sportspeople into the country.

This is obviously not a position SLB can accept, not least because this action would constitute a restraint of trade. It is also clearly anti-competitive that clubs in GBBL's league (if it ever happens) would be permitted to bring International Sportspeople into the country, whereas clubs in SLB would not (even when they have been allowed to for, in

some cases, decades and have built their businesses and livelihoods on this!).

This is clearly not a legal position for BBF to hold and is quite a shocking stance for a sports governing body to hold (providing preferred status to one league over another). It also is a flagrant breach of the Code of Practice for Sports Governing Bodies [Code of practice for sports governing bodies \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK](#)

We do understand that as a volunteer-led organisation BBF may not always have sufficient capacity and capability to understand the commercial implications of their positions and are confident that once they understand the illegality of this action BBF will remove this restriction and provide us with multi-year recognition without any restraints of trade.

Additionally, SLB is very keen to address the situation that has existed in this country as the status quo, where the professional, commercial leagues have no input into decisions made by the National Governing Body.

- *What are the implications for clubs, players, and fans of operating independently?*

We have no desire to operate independently. Our clubs and SLB are a part of the basketball ecosystem in this country and this will not change.

In fact, we would welcome the opportunity to have more communication and collaboration with BBF and directly with the HCAs in particular.

We consider that as the professional, commercial clubs who have been operating our clubs for decades (and some of our clubs are still the same as the ones who originally formed the BBL all the way back in 1987!), that we have unparalleled knowledge of the basketball environment in this country.

The FIBA regulations require that a league should be represented at national level in order to have better communication, and this is something that BBF seems to understand.

So rather than a situation where (a) BBF governs, controls and dictates to us under a licence, or (b) complete independence from the BBF; SLB sees the way forward as a middle path. A path where BBF recognises our right to exist but also seeks feedback and input where our experience can add value to their decision-making and processes.

In terms of what this means for our fans, players, clubs (and officials, commentators, staff) etc., as we have often pointed out to BBF; operating a well-governed league with the highest levels of integrity of our competitions and an environment where there are pathways and

development for every single person connected to our sport isn't something that needs governing through process and exertion of control and power.

It is in our best interests to do this, and we will continue to do so.

- *Without a licence, how will clubs participate in European competitions?*

Hopefully the above responses clarify that both BBF and SLB understand that we don't need a licence to operate and are merely requesting recognition .

Once the issue of the refusal to provide Governing Body Endorsements is resolved (it would currently be virtually impossible to compete at European level without being able to attract International Sportspeople), then this will not be an issue at all.

We note that not all European club competitions are FIBA recognised or endorsed.

Last year we saw the incredible achievement of Newcastle Eagles representing Britain in a high-level European competition and reaching a final, which was a proud moment for the entire basketball community.

Our clubs were equally proud and further galvanised to pursue their own European ambitions. Many of them are currently exploring their options for European competition for the 2025/26 season and will have exciting news in due course!

We note London Lions have already been accepted into the EuroCup and expect more announcements to come.

We believe BBF has damaged the reputation of British Basketball and the BBF by refusing to endorse Manchester Basketball's participation in the FIBA Basketball Champions League (BCL).

- *How are you working to avoid further conflict with the BBF?*

It's worth addressing where the source of this conflict arose.

BBF is perfectly within their rights to issue a tender for a licence to operate a league in this country.

What it cannot do is:

- (a) Include in that tender documentation that the clubs who operate in a different league are major stakeholders without their knowledge or approval
- (b) Mandate that the clubs who operate in a different league compete in the league who wins the tender

- (c) Provide exclusivity to whoever wins the tender which restricts other leagues from operating
- (d) Fail to be transparent about their tender processes

Further, once this has been made clear to them, BBF should not be slowing down or refusing to provide recognition to a league which has a right to exist. It should certainly not be attempting to use Governing Body Endorsements as a bargaining tool to force our clubs to cease trading unless they move to a different league.

While we regret the at times public nature of this conflict, the league and clubs have felt powerless to address the unfairness, non-transparency and illegality with which BBF has conducted their affairs with seemingly no oversight. Our clubs and their owners have invested millions of pounds of their own money, and worked tirelessly to attempt to reason with BBF, all the while, of course, while operating our clubs, and producing what we feel was a great season of SLB action. Yet we are being dictated to by volunteers who will serve their terms and then move on.

What this situation has done is shine a light on what the powers of the BBF actually are. Indeed, it is revealing that they admitted to SLB that they didn't know what recognition meant revealing they don't seem to be aware of the FIBA regulations themselves.

We believe the path forward out of this conflict will see a reset and hopefully prompt BBF to review its processes in how it recruits and trains its volunteers. We have sympathy that an organisation that has had 53 directors since its formation, and has no full-time staff, is being tasked with making decisions that affect the livelihoods of over 500 individuals in the SLB clubs and league and would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with BBF in future.

However, this is not the first time that a basketball governing body has erroneously attempted to force our professional clubs to participate in a new league based on the promise of millions of pounds by investors, but it is the first time it has been so public and has not stopped when the illegality of the situation has been made clear to them.

Our sincere hope is that it will be the last time.

- *Do you believe a deal with GBBL is possible, and what would that look like?*

Not only is a deal with GBBL not necessary, but the SLB clubs have consistently maintained and communicated that they are not interested in a deal with GBBL.

Marshall Glickman did not pass our due diligence review and there was a complete lack of transparency surrounding every aspect of BBF's due diligence, including the source of funds. On that basis SLB could proceed no further.

We have also made it repeatedly clear that our clubs do not wish to compete in a league in which they don't have a material amount of ownership.

The key professional leagues in the country are majority or wholly owned by their clubs; The English Premier League, The Scottish Premier League and The Scottish Professional Leagues, The EFL, The WSL and the Gallagher Rugby Premiership.

We have learnt the lessons from the failure of the BBL/777-owned league and are determined not to repeat those mistakes.

We have our own strategy and business plan and simply wish to be permitted to operate our league without harm being committed to our business, or indeed our fans or the sport in general.

SLB want what's best for the sport in the UK and will continue to explore what any other interested party can bring to the sport in order to build upon what we have already achieved, rather than accept being cast aside. We have a proud history and a strong fanbase and its building this and not destroying it, that should be the objective of all interested parties, especially our governing body.

Governance, Rules & Accountability

- *Why is there no published constitution or rulebook?*

Our Articles of Association (which are publicly available at Companies House - [SUPER LEAGUE BASKETBALL LIMITED overview - Find and update company information - GOV.UK](#)) govern the SLB company operations.

The honest answer is that we didn't consider publishing our Operating Rules! This is not due to an attempt to hide them, but simply a gap in our awareness that people beyond our clubs would be interested in them.

The preparations for the 2024/25 season were also subject to time constraints as we had to create a league from scratch. We will ensure the Operating Rules are published on the SLB website before the start of the forthcoming season.

- *Will you commit to publishing full league rules before each season (e.g. imports, salary cap, formats)?*
Yes.

- *Will you guarantee that rules will not change mid-season again?*

As a principle we endeavour to ensure that rules are not changed during the season. However, providing a guarantee would restrict us from addressing something which requires immediate attention. For example, the league might identify something that compromises health and safety which would necessitate an immediate rule-change.

We will guarantee that if we do need to make a mid-season rule change, we will better communicate the reasons for the change, and the due diligence we have undertaken to ensure that the integrity of our competitions remains unaffected.

- *What mechanisms are in place to hold league leadership accountable?*

We have a code of conduct for all basketball parties – including directors, an Integrity unit, and a separate, independent Disciplinary panel.

We are reviewing our governance and will be restructuring our board to include an independent Chairperson and potentially non-affiliated non-executives. This process has been delayed due to the failure of BBF to respond to our request for a recognition agreement (this was requested in February) and the period of uncertainty between October and January when the tender process was introduced.

- *How will governance be improved to prevent issues like the crowded schedule or leadership controversies?*

The crowded schedule this season was an operational issue and is in large part due to the speed at which we had to work to set up the league. This will be addressed as we are able to commence planning much earlier this season. Again, the recognition agreement is a vital part of this planning as the schedule is connected to our commercial partnership agreements.

As above, we have plans to significantly alter our governing structure to reduce leadership controversies, and to hold our stakeholders accountable.

League Structure & Expansion

- *What is your long-term plan for league expansion?*

We are currently finalising the details of our 5-year business plan which builds on the heritage, deep knowledge, and networks of our long-established clubs, combined with the infusion of energy, contacts and experience from our new investors.

Ultimately, we believe that what the sport needs is for stable expansion of our league. No longer do we want to see investors who believe there is a quick buck to be made, nor do we want to see clubs who only last for a season.

We want to introduce new franchises into key areas of the country, backed by people who are invested in developing basketball within their region.

Our long-term vision is to see the League grow in a way that continues to raise the profile of the sport and creates new opportunities for players, new clubs and fans, whilst remaining competitive and exciting.

- *How many teams will participate next season, and what will the format look like?*

We will have at least the nine existing teams competing in the 2025/26 season.

Whilst our plans for new franchisees have been materially slowed down by the BBF recognition position (and BBF is aware that we have received interest in new franchises over the past year and haven't been able to act on them) we have not ruled out additional franchises for next season.

Planning is currently under way, with all clubs involved, to determine the competition formats for the 2025/26 season.

- *What criteria must aspiring teams meet to join the league?*

We currently consider each potential franchisee based on the strength of its application. There are minimum requirements for venues and we consider the local cultural context of each club. We have a franchise committee which includes qualified, experienced professionals who review each application and determines the viability and sustainability of a potential club.

During the application process we undertake a lengthy due diligence process which includes financial status and club ownership.

As part of their franchise agreement clubs must subscribe to governance benchmarks (which have been reviewed by Sport England) including governance standards, financial compliance, fit and proper declarations. They must also comply with the operating rules which includes various standards, player eligibility and a code of conduct.

Importantly, we monitor these benchmarks during the season to look for early warning signs of issues to see how the league can support or to see if actions need to be taken.

- *How will SLB support smaller or new clubs to ensure sustainability?*

Sustainability is a key requirement for our new clubs. As well as the assessment of new franchises we have a number of initiatives to provide continual support.

We have built an interactive franchise guide which is available to all existing and interested Franchisees. This provides bite-sized accessible information and covers all key areas of operating a franchise – from forming a company to creating game day experiences.

We also have a dedicated support portal which contains stacks of resources including best practice webinars covering key areas of franchise operations.

Within SLB as both a league and its member clubs, we have hundreds of years of combined experience and knowledge of running a successful professional British basketball team in the top tier of the sport. This best practice is shared amongst all clubs on a regular basis; while our clubs compete on the court, they are committed to helping each other thrive and grow off the court. You will have already seen the significant investment made in existing clubs, with four operating their own venues and long-term investment continues with Bristol Flyers and London Lions planning to build indoor arenas in the near future. There is a lot of work taking place to increase community participation, and across our clubs; annually over 50,000 children take part in programmes which in turn supports clubs' growth and sustainability.

- *What is your plan and timeline to grow the league to 12+ teams?*

There is strong current interest from credible investors who want to own a new SLB franchise. Once the recognition agreement is formally granted we will be able to move forward with the process outlined above where we assess their viability and sustainability. The timing of when they become involved is carefully considered, ensuring a team is competitive, on the court, but that the club is sustainable, has a strong community approach, player development pathway and has the best interest of the fans at the heart of everything they want to achieve.

Above and beyond that, the answer is as soon as possible! We believe we have a league that offers unique opportunities to its member clubs and we welcome credible applications.

Player Development & Talent Pathways

- *What are your plans to support over-18 and U23 development (e.g. reserve or academy teams)?*

Firstly, SLB and its clubs are committed to creating player development pathways and this is an integral part of our business plan. It is a

requirement of our governance benchmarks that any new or existing franchise has a player pathway plan.

Within our teams there are already many development programmes taking place, with many teams also entering teams into NBL Divisions to support these players alongside those playing in college or university leagues. For example, Newcastle Eagles have their Under-19 Academy, and Leicester Riders partner with Charnwood College, Loughborough College and Loughborough University, with a successful player development programme, with five men's and three women's teams. One of SLB's newest clubs, Surrey 89ers operate two academy programmes at Merrist Wood College and 3 Rivers Academy, as well as developing players within the University of Surrey basketball programme and Bristol Flyers have their SGS Basketball Academy, with players competing in the Elite Academy Basketball League. Caledonia Gladiators run an extensive pathway for both men and women and last year launched Caledonia Blues to bridge the gap between their performance pathway and their professional teams.

We will continue to work with our clubs to create pathways that provide young people with the best opportunities to develop and to join the professional league.

- *Will you introduce homegrown player requirements or development incentives?*

Within our Operating Rules there are already requirements for teams to register a minimum of six British nationals within their roster. Through club-run, or partner-affiliated academies, clubs are encouraged to incorporate homegrown players into their squads, so players can develop, and rosters are strengthened.

For example, Corey Samuels was born in Bristol and went through the Flyers pathway programme into the professional team. Nedas Cholevinskas is a 20-year-old GB junior international who plays for Surrey 89ers, and Jonny Bunyan went from youth team member to professional player and is now Head Coach for Caledonia Gladiators. In addition, Chantelle Handy, who has represented GB throughout her career is now head coach for Caledonia Gladiators women's team.

Of course, we also recognise that ex-club academy players like Tosan Evbuomwan will aspire to the very highest level in the NBA and the lure of college basketball and Name and Image Likeness contracts add a further layer of complexity for our academy players. This is not an issue specific to the UK.

As a league we are committed to supporting the growth of the Men's and Women's national teams through our player pathway programmes.

- *How will you support British coaches, referees, and officials?*

The answer to this lies in the ability of SLB to operate its league as part of a connected ecosystem. To support British coaches, referees and officials we need to have an environment where we attract, develop and retain those individuals starting at grassroots level.

A coach or referee needs to develop their skills within an environment created by the Home Countries, and where there is a clear alignment of a pathway that means that those individuals are ready to coach or referee at professional level.

SLB have experienced homegrown coaches, for example, Ben Thomas, Marc Steutel, Jonny Bunyan, Chantelle Handy and Lloyd Gardener have all worked their way up to coaching professional teams and provide support to up and coming British coaches.

We would love to create more opportunities for homegrown coaches, and could do so by providing access to training, mentorship, and professional development programmes.

This is an area where all our clubs would welcome the input of the National Governing Body and the Home Countries.

Similarly with referees, SLB is committed to continuing to provide support and training. We currently underwrite the BBF/SLB joint referee observation programme, have created a dedicated training portal for referees and referee coaches, and provide other resources. We have a team responsible for training referees, and since the start of the season have been actively engaging with our referees to form a closer connection and understand how SLB can provide them with more support.

Whilst supporting our current referees, we have an eye on the future and have also approached BBF about their plans to ensure that there are sufficient qualified referees being made available to us to operate in our leagues, both now and with the addition of new franchises.

We also asked at the start of the season that they address the demographics of our current pool (we are particularly keen on the socioeconomic demographics); we would like to understand how to help the Home Countries attract officials who are representative of those playing the sport, and to understand how they are ensuring that young people know there is a pathway to becoming a referee at the professional level.

Referees are integral to quality basketball and a great fan experience. SLB is committed to providing pathways for training and development to support refereeing as a key career pathway. We want all of our officials to be proud to be SLB officials.

We also value the other match officials (table officials and statisticians) without whom the game could not go ahead. We implemented a measure at the start of the season for clubs to become actively involved in developing elite level table officials and statisticians. Clubs highlighted that with their previous arrangement while competing in the BBL, and due to a series of illogical BBL policies, the pathway for officials was blocked and it wasn't clear how to progress to officiating at professional level. As a result, younger officials were leaving the sport. So we are highly aware of this and have already developed a 3-year plan to help increase officiating pathways.

As part of our governance benchmarks, all clubs must have an officials' development pathway, and we are looking forward to being able to strengthen our relationships with the Home Country Associations to create an aligned pathway.

- *Are you working with local leagues and grassroots to develop domestic talent instead of relying on imports?*

Yes, all SLB clubs work to ensure the growth of basketball at grassroots levels. As well as the aforementioned academies and university partnerships, other examples of clubs working with junior players include the Cheshire Phoenix pre-game clinics, that can have hundreds of primary school aged children on court before a home game, the Caledonia Gladiators High Performance programme for U16 and U20 age groups, the B. Braun Sheffield Sharks Development pathway, for children aged six upwards and London Lions support the charity London Sport on the 'More Ball Games' campaign aimed at providing more spaces for young people to play games outside.

Our clubs also work with local leagues and non-SLB-affiliated junior clubs to identify young domestic talent and give them opportunities to grow and reach their potential within SLB programmes.

In Newcastle, the club and foundation has created the entire local league network for juniors as it simply didn't exist, a failing of our NGBs over decades. The club's foundation operate 13 junior clubs for 6 to 18 year olds, with 2,300 members and 175 teams playing weekly competition at the Vertu Motors Arena. This could be the blueprint for the rest of country but in 20 years the HCA has only visited twice. This system also makes the club the largest single sports club of any sport in the North East of England. This participation project links directly into the clubs academy programme from Under 14 to Under 18/19 for boys and girls.

- *Will you improve and publish a clear player development pathway across all SLB clubs?*

Presently we have a requirement that each club has a player development pathway which allows them to adapt the pathway to their local context.

One of the lessons clubs learnt from the BBL/777 collapse was that the importance of the location of a club should not be overlooked. It is very easy for people outside of Britain to treat us as though we are homogenous, or as though we are a smaller version of the United States, but our clubs know that there are quite significant regional differences across the UK when it comes to basketball and these differences and demographics have a huge impact on pathways and development.

Working together with the clubs, we will ensure that we improve visibility of these programmes and signpost coaches and young players to the SLB pathways, as well as continuing to highlight success stories from all SLB clubs.

Fan Access, Media & Matchday Experience

- *Will you continue to provide consistent game streaming access for fans?*

As we finalise our plans for 2025/26 we're fully committed to making our games as accessible as possible for fans, both in the UK and around the world. We welcome feedback from BBFA members on the service provided in 2024/25 and look forward to seeing the results of a survey BBFA will be issuing soon on this topic. Our goal is to build a broadcast offering that reflects the ambition of the league and connects our growing fanbase to the sport in new and exciting ways.

- *Will clubs be required to publish attendance and viewership figures?*

Clubs are not required to publish attendance and viewership figures and there are currently no plans to change this.

- *Are there plans to introduce instant replay to support refereeing?*

Yes. We are assessing the technological requirements and are working towards making this happen for all games. We will collaborate with our referees to understand the training and support they will need to use this tool to ensure they are confident when it is deployed.

- *What is your communications strategy for keeping fans informed and involved?*

It's clear from these questions as well as the level of support we have received in relation to BBF's actions, that our fans are passionate, committed, well informed and dedicated.

We recognise that we could do much more to keep fans informed and involved and actively welcome the BBFA as a potential channel to do this in a structured manner.

As we move into the new season, we will continue sharing news, creating behind-the-scenes content, interactive fan campaigns, game highlights, player stories and community initiatives across multiple platforms, making it easy for fans to stay connected with their clubs and the League.

Grassroots & Community Integration

- *What role will SLB play in developing grassroots basketball?*

Supporting and developing grassroots basketball takes place across all SLB clubs. We have many examples of working with schools, colleges, universities, local authorities and healthcare providers, to get more young people playing basketball. Along with the 50,000 young people who engage with us annually, our clubs are in their local communities, regularly delivering camps, clinics and outreach events, to over 8,500 under-18s.

Schemes including Hoops-4-Health in Newcastle and Project Take Off in Bristol enable more children to be involved in the sport, growing the fanbase and the club's position in the local community, which provides sustainability to the franchise.

Working with our partner, Biffa, SLB will be running a national 3x3 tournament in 2025/26, aimed at growing the number of young players, ultimately giving the children competing the opportunity to play a final on the show court at the Play-off Finals at The O2 in May 2026.

Within SLB, we will do more to promote what is happening through telling stories and sharing real examples that will inspire more people to become involved in British basketball.

- *Are you exploring partnerships with organisations like the London Basketball Association or local associations to grow the sport?*

Yes, our clubs are working on initiatives with local authorities and the Home Country Associations to grow the sport. A lot of these initiatives involve building a larger community base, examples of which have already been included, but in addition, Bristol Flyers deliver basketball to thousands of school children every year. Newcastle Eagles have worked with Newcastle City Council to tackle obesity and inactivity in young people in the city and London Lions are being supported by The Mayor of London to build a new basketball arena and player development hub. Like all our clubs, London Lions want to speak with any basketball stakeholders in London about growing the sport, which of course includes the London Basketball Association.

A key thing we want to get across, is that the professional clubs are just as keen to see the sport grow as everyone else. We know there are millions of young people participating in the sport in their early years. But

we also know the number of those who actively engage in basketball dwindle rapidly.

The sport nationally needs a better club infrastructure. More junior local league teams, when in most places only junior national league exists. If you grow junior local league basketball then senior local league basketball will grow too.

Case studies of good practice where sustainable participation models like Newcastle's, arguably the largest in the country, need to be replicated. We are only part of that solution.

Rather than look at the number of people wearing basketball merchandise as a dubious indicator of success, we want to see a national infrastructure that turns those millions of people who have a passing awareness of the sport in this country, into active lifelong participants and fans. Whether that is more players, coaches, referees, table officials, statisticians, commentators, administrators or tirelessly working game day staff, we need to collectively water the grassroots of the sport.

- *How are you planning to raise the validity of the sport at all levels?*

Super League Basketball is here to deliver a top-tier, professional and exciting product that fans can be proud of but just as importantly, we want to show off the incredible talent, stories, and work happening across the whole basketball community. We will share these stories across our social media platforms and live game broadcasts.

The SLB Men's league already provide, free of charge, support to the SLB Women's league, including administering competitions, marketing, financial management and corporate services. We are also in dialogue with another league to provide similar support from next season.

By continuing to work with British coaches, referees and officials, we want to offer clear pathways for people to progress.

Continuing to grow our community engagement is crucial to the success of our clubs, as participation at grassroots levels increases, we see a direct link to the number of fans attending games growing, which then raises the profile of the sport.

Through continual development of pathways we will ensure talented players have even more opportunities to play top-tier professional basketball in Great Britain.

Operating as a recognised league will allow us to do everything we've been doing and more. SLB will only get better and better.

SECTION 4: BBF REMIT

This section sets out some guidance around BBF's actual remit

FIBA Statute and Internal Regulations

The FIBA General Statute prescribes that, all bodies (including national governing bodies such as the BBF) must observe the General Statutes, the Internal Regulations, other rules and regulations, and decisions of FIBA. Strict observance of the Statute and accompanying FIBA Internal Regulations, both in spirit and letter, is the primary condition for obtaining and maintaining membership in FIBA.

Non-compliance with these provisions may lead to the intervention of FIBA as appropriate, including sanctioning provided for in the General Statutes and the Internal Regulations of FIBA.

Relevantly, the FIBA General Statute requires that the BBF must:

- Maintain full control and governance of basketball in their country, including without limitation, control over their national competitions (**Article 9.1(a)**);
- Remain in good standing (including in good financial standing) (**Article 9.1(b)**);
- Promote amicable and courteous relations with other national member federations and their members, officials and players (**Article 9.2**);
- Manage their affairs independently and with no influence from third parties (**Article 9.7**).

BBF Policies

The BBF has also issued a number of its own Regulations (see [here](#)) which relevantly state:

- In accordance with Article 4 of the FIBA General Statutes, the BBF's role is, inter alia, to: ensure that basketball throughout Great Britain via its members and licensed leagues, is carried on in a manner that allows the sport to be competitive and fair and formulate or adopt and implement appropriate policies in relation to discrimination, sexual harassment, equal opportunity, equity, drugs and doping, health, safety, infectious diseases, and such other matters as arise from time to time as issues to be addressed in basketball (**Article 1.1 of BBF Integrity Policy**);
- BBF have a legal and regulatory obligation to maintain the highest standards of integrity by carrying out their work in a way that will not compromise the reputation of the organisation (**Article 1.1 of the Anti-Corruption Policy**);
- A core function of British Basketball Federation is to maintain and be seen to be maintaining the integrity of the sport (**Article 2.1 of the Anti-Corruption Policy**);

The British Basketball Federation is committed to enabling a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment across our sport. Our mission to transform people's lives through basketball threads through all aspects of participation; from training to competition, supporters to players, from domestic to international competition (**Article 1 of the Code of Conduct**).

- British Basketball Federation's policies support the delivery of world-class governance across the sport and enable the realisation of our commitment to safely and inclusively engage with all participants and deliver both the mission and values of this outstanding sport (**Article 1 of the Code of Conduct**).

BBF public statements

The BBF's website also contains the following statements:

- "The goal of British Basketball is to create a world class elite basketball programme in Great Britain and to lead the overarching strategy for the growth of basketball in England, Scotland and Wales, working in close collaboration with the HCA's" (link [here](#));
- "The BBF is at a critical juncture in its development, focused on ensuring gold standard governance, creating opportunity for all, and capitalising on the momentum that the game currently has in the UK to ensure basketball is a leading high-performance sport for the nation to be increasingly proud of" (link [here](#));
- "As the National Governing Body, it was our duty to run an open, transparent and non-discriminatory tender process to award the long-term licence for the Men's professional league in Great Britain. We have fulfilled this obligation, working hard to promote the best interests of the whole sport and to achieve long-term viability and success for professional basketball in Great Britain" (link [here](#)).