

Walking Football Leagues Alliance History

2019

The Walking Football Leagues Alliance ('WFLA') was established in 2019.

The WFLA is a free to join, non-political, independent support network whose aims are to help establish, promote, and support FA affiliated walking football leagues and to encourage the growth of grassroots competitive walking football in safe environments.

All WFLA national and local tournaments are sanctioned by local FA's, which sit under the rules and regulations of the Football Association.

Originally four people were in discussions about establishing an organisation which would bring together teams from the North of England. The four were Mick Hill, the well respected referee from Lincolnshire, Paul Jackson (Derbyshire WFL), Bill Murney (Greater Manchester WFL) and Peter Stacey (Sheffield WFC).

In early 2019 two meetings were held in Darrington, Yorkshire to discuss this proposal. A brief of the organisation would be:

- To operate a website.
- To manage a schedule of walking football activity and events.
- To train and develop referees.
- To give advice to new groups wanting to start up a walking football league in their area and offer support in the organisation of tournaments, competitions and events.

Nothing was developed from these meetings and Mick Hill became involved in the Walking Football Referees Association (WFRA). Bill Murney suggested a Federation of Walking Football Leagues might have more merit even if it started small with a few Northern and Midlands Leagues involved.

It was agreed that the leagues in such an organisation would have to be FA affiliated and this would give the newly named Walking Football Leagues Alliance some credibility with the FA, leading to its acceptance and cooperation in the future, especially with walking football referee training courses.

Peter Stacey, even though initially keen on the the proposed organisation, decided that he wanted to concentrate on Sheffield WFC and his international involvement. This left Paul Jackson and Bill Murney to establish the WFLA. It was decided that Paul Jackson should approach Derek Murr, Chairman of the Essex WFL, for them to join the WFLA and Derek agreed to join the WFLA Committee.

2020

With the COVID-19 pandemic putting a stop to all walking football, the recruitment of member leagues became a slow process.

2021

By October 2021 the WFLA had 14 member leagues and with COVID-19 somewhat under control, it promised a return for walking football. The first AGM was arranged for September at the Nuthall pub/restaurant in Nottingham. This was attended by seven Alliance members, where amongst other items, the WFLA Constitution was discussed.

Competitions on the WFLA Agenda were a National Cup, a League Champions Cup and an Inter League Cup, for member teams in the over 50s, 60s, 65s and 70s age categories.

Overall Cup Competition Rules were discussed and agreed upon. Finally, the WFLA Officers roles were up for discussion and it was agreed that rather than nominate and elect Officers for the official positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, there would be a voluntary Management Committee. The League Representatives who had attended the meeting all agreed to this proposal.

A Secretary was still needed and Bill Murney agreed to continue as the Acting General Secretary. A Treasurer would be needed before the 2022 competitions started and this role would be filled nearer the time. Paul Jackson agreed to be the Acting Chairman and Derek Murr was also appointed as the Acting Treasurer.

2022

In May, Paul Jackson decided to resign from the WFLA Committee due to operational differences with other Committee members and the Derbyshire WFL subsequently withdrew from the WFLA, much to the disappointment of several of their member teams. Hedley Austin of the Wales Walking Football Federation agreed to take over the role of Acting Chairman.

The WFLA held their first competition on 28th May where the WFLA Inter League Cup was played at Leek Town FC with thirteen teams involved entered in four age categories. The winners of each age category were:

WFLA Inter League Cup Honours 2022

Winners Over 50s	Runners Up Over 50s
Dorset WFL	Greater Manchester WFL
Winners Over 60s	Runners Up Over 60s
WF Northern Premier League	Essex WFL
Winners Over 65s	Runners Up Over 65s
Greater Manchester WFL	Wales WFL
Winners Over 70s	Runners Up Over 70s
Greater Manchester WFL	Dorset WFL

A second WFLA competition, the League Champions Cup was held on 11th June, also at Leek Town FC. This featured thirteen teams in four age categories. The winners of each age

category were:

WFLA Champions Cup Honours 2022

Winners Over 50s	Runners Up Over 50s
Sleaford Academicals	Norwich City Soca
Winners Over 60s	Runners Up Over 60s
Norwich City Soca	North Ferriby
Winners Over 65s	Runners Up Over 65s
Manchester Corinthians	Rochdale AFC Strollers
Winners Over 70s	Runners Up Over 70s
Bury Relics	Rochdale AFC Strollers

In June, Mick Hill, who had resigned from the WFRA, was asked if he would like to be involved with the WFLA and in July he agreed to be the WFLA Referee Appointments Officer.

In July, a partnership was formed with the England Walking Football Community ('EWFC'), which is chaired by Tony Norton and is involved in international walking football. The WFLA and the EWFC both had the same aims to organise National Cup competitions and support the Football Association as the National Governing Body for walking football. The EWFC would also give international priority to players from WFLA member leagues. Tony Norton also agreed to join the WFLA Committee.

In September 2022, the second AGM was a virtual meeting using the Zoom platform, with 11 member leagues being represented. As there were no nominations for officers being received, the Acting Officers were voted in unanimously. They were:

Hedley Austin (Chairman), Bill Murney (General Secretary), Derek Murr (Treasurer). Derek Murr also agreed to serve as Recruitment Officer. Mick Hill and Tony Norton also joined the Management Committee. With a few amendments the WFLA Constitution was agreed.

A further Zoom meeting was called in November to confirm the revised WFLA Cup Competition Rules.

2023

By March, the WFLA had recruited more member leagues and the number now stood at 22 members.

The first WFLA National Cup was organised and the WFLA received 237 entries, a number far higher than was anticipated. The finals for the WFLA National Cup were to be played at Redditch Utd FC, home of the England Walking Football Community.

The second WFLA League Champions Cup and the WFLA Inter League Cup were arranged for the 20th and 21st May respectively. The League Champions Cup would be contested by 29

teams and the Inter-League Cup by 27 teams, both, more than doubling the 2022 entrants. The finals for each were played at the excellent Redditch Utd FC ground.

The winners of each age category were:

WFLA Champions Cup Honours 2023

Winners Over 50s	Runners Up Over 50s
Oxford Rovers	Sleaford Academicals
Winners Over 60s	Runners Up Over 60s
Godalming WFC	Hartshill Strollers
Winners Over 65s	Runners Up Over 65s
Club Kingsmaid	Woodley Pensioners
Winners Over 70s	Runners Up Over 70s
Not Played	Not Played

WFLA Inter League Cup Honours 2023

Winners Over 50s	Runners Up Over 50s
Lincolnshire FA WFL	Birmingham County WFL
Winners Over 60s	Runners Up Over 60s
Wiltshire County WFL	Birmingham County WFL
Winners Over 65s	Runners Up Over 65s
Greater Manchester WFL	Thames Valley WFL
Winners Over 70s	Runners Up Over 70s
Greater Manchester WFL	Dorset FA WFL

Both competitions were highly successful and received many positive testimonials.

In June, Hedley Austin resigned as Chairman due to conflicts of interest. Tony Norton volunteered to be the Acting Chairman until the forthcoming AGM and Mick Hill as Vice Chairman. Two new members of the WFLA Management Committee were appointed, Mick Geraghty of the Middlesex FA WFL and Colin Strong of the Birmingham County WFL.

The total membership now stood at 26 FA affiliated leagues.

In September, 44 teams across 6 age categories, which now included Women's over 40s and 50s, contested the first WFLA National Cup Grand Finals at the Redditch Utd FC ground.

The third WFLA AGM was held on 9th October. This was a virtual meeting attended by five Officers and five league representatives. Tony Norton was confirmed as the WFLA Chairman and Mick Hill as the Vice Chairman.

Three new additions to the Management Committee were appointed at the meeting, Wendy Benson, John Cooney and Steve Sanderson. All three were also appointed to the Tournament Committee along with Mick Hill and Bill Murney.

Registration forms for the three WFLA tournaments were emailed to all member leagues on 25th October. At the deadline date of 20th December 295 teams had registered for the National Cup. The WFLA league membership now stood at 27 FA affiliated leagues.

To Be Updated.