



Independent Football Regulator

The Football Governance Bill, introduced in March 2024 after the 2021 fan-led review chaired by Tracey Crouch MP, became the Football Governance Act 2025, which has now led to the introduction of The Independent Football Regulator (IFR)

The IFR represents a major structural change in English football and the UK Government's first significant statutory intervention in the sport's governance, addressing concerns over finances, ownership transparency, supporter engagement, and self-regulation.

Why was the IFR introduced?

The IFR implements the 2021 Fan-Led Review's recommendations, which identified persistent weaknesses across the professional football pyramid. By 2025, the Government concluded voluntary reform was insufficient, citing club failures, governance lapses, weak financial controls, ownership concerns, safeguarding issues, and fragmented oversight.

The IFR marks a move from a hands-off approach to more active government oversight of football regulation.

The Act gives the IFR broad powers over 116 clubs across the top five tiers, including:

- 1) Club licensing, requiring clubs to show sound financial management and operational resilience through credible business plans, adequate resources, and effective risk controls.
- 2) Ownership and director oversight, with tests to support transparency, integrity, and suitability, including checks on prospective owners' financial resources, source of funds, and governance record.
- 3) Supporter engagement, with structured consultation requirements that give fans a clearer voice in club decisions, including heritage matters, stadium relocation proposals, and changes affecting club identity.
- 4) Financial regulation, including oversight of the move from the Premier League's backward-looking Profit and Sustainability Rules to the forward-looking Squad Cost Ratio model, by monitoring wage-to-revenue ratios, transfer spending, and projected compliance.

At its core, SCR caps football spending as a share of club income, covering player wages, coaching salaries, transfer amortisation, and agent fees. It will apply to the Premier League and Championship from 2026/27, while Leagues One and Two will continue using the Salary Cost Management Protocol. In League Two this is set at 50% of a Club's turnover, that can be spent on player-related expenditure.

The IFR aims to protect and promote English football's sustainability for fans and local communities.

With the Act in force, the IFR is beginning its regulatory role. Frameworks and licensing requirements are being phased in, alongside the move to SCR. From 2027–28, all clubs will need a licence.

Top-five-division clubs must obtain a provisional licence before 2027–28. Applications open on 2 November 2026 and close on 26 February 2027. This will encompass a far more rigorous and dynamic oversight regime demanding good governance, to be demonstrated, with the IFL having intervention powers where they are not happy.

Each club has an IFR supervisor. TrustSTFC has recently met with Swindon Town's IFR supervisor, and the IFR's overall Supervision Manager, as well as the FSA's Head of Governance & Supporter Engagement. A broad range of topics were covered through the meeting including the IFR's role, aims and initial workstreams as they prepare to issue provisional licences to each professional club.

We discussed the Trust's role in Swindon, its involvement in the Joint Venture, our focus on the security and sustainability of the Club and finished by discussing the importance of fan consultation and engagement.

It was a very productive session, and we look forward to working with the IFR in the weeks and months ahead, to protect supporters' interests

COYR!

Nick Coote TrustSTFC