
Football Development in Hong Kong ‘We are Hong Kong’ – Dare to Dream A Final Report December 2009



Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary	01
2	Introduction and Context	11
3	International Case Studies	20
4	Structure and Governance of Football in Hong Kong	43
5	Football Facilities	51
6	Football Development – Community to Elite	57
7	Other Key Issues	67
8	Developing and Delivering a Strategic Vision for Football in Hong Kong	71
9	Summary and Way Forward	115

Table of Appendices

- 1 List of Consultees
- 2 Site Visits Undertaken
- 2a Sample of Site Visits
- 3 AFC Assessment of Member Associations
- 4 Hong Kong Natural Turf Pitches
- 5 Hong Kong Artificial Turf Pitches
- 6 Proposed Home Grounds for Hong Kong Professional League
- 7 Playing Pitch Strategy, Model and Overview
- 8 Hong Kong Football Association First Division Teams
- 9 Everton Football Club and South Korea Training Centre Examples
- 10 FIFA Big Count Statistics 2006
- 11 National Football Training Centre – Outline Proposals



Section 1

Executive Summary

1 Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 Football matters! The link between success in international sport and the 'mood' and 'productivity' of a nation has long been recognised. Similarly there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate a direct link between participation in sport and the physical and mental health of the individual, the cohesiveness of communities and the prosperity of society as a whole. The positive benefits of sport are undeniable. If one accepts this basic principle, then it follows that 'football' as the most popular sport must surely play a key role in the collective psyche of Hong Kong.
- 1.2 It is appropriate to assess the 'health' of the sport itself to identify whether the positive benefits are being maximised. This study has investigated all aspects of football development in Hong Kong, identified its strengths and weaknesses and prescribed some corrective action in areas where intervention is seen as necessary. We are putting forward a 'Vision' for where football can be and a strategy and action plan for how the 'Vision' can be delivered.

Part 1 – Where are we now? – A Vicious Circle

- 1.3 Football in Hong Kong is in a paradoxical state. On the one hand it could be described as the 'national sport' in terms of grass roots participation. Furthermore in recent times the advent of satellite television has resulted in an increase in people watching football 'beamed' from other countries within the comfort of their homes. On the positive side therefore there is no lack of interest in football, as can be seen in the recent reaction to Hong Kong winning the final of the East Asian Games football competition.
- 1.4 On the other hand football could be described as failing in many other respects. For example the interest in watching domestic football 'live' is declining (not withstanding the two recent exceptional "sell-out" crowds at the Hong Kong Stadium for the recent South China v SC Kuwait AFC Cup semi-final and the East Asian Games final), the standard of club football is by common agreement, mediocre and the current FIFA ranking of the national team is disappointingly low (143 December 09). There is room for improvement in the administration and coordination of the sport at all levels and the standard, availability and accessibility of facilities for training and competitive matches are variable.
- 1.5 Undeniably the future popularity and impact of the sport is being undermined by these interrelated problem areas. The weaknesses and threats alluded to above are described in more detail in this report. It is almost universally accepted that football in Hong Kong has lost ground to other Asian countries in recent times and that football in Hong Kong has for some years been on a downward spiral.
- 1.6 One of the main issues is that for a variety of reasons the playing standard of elite football has declined. The reasons include: limited access to facilities, a lack of systematic talent identification and development, a lack of coordination across the sport and the perceived influence of vested interests in the sport. This has coincided with an increased availability of football on television which largely satisfies people's appetite for the sport. To add to this, the aspiration to play professionally is not part of the culture of Hong Kong. Indeed unlike many countries in the world and increasingly in Asia, the sport has a low social status in Hong Kong.
- 1.7 All of these factors combine to create a vicious circle. Poorer playing and management standards lead to a drop in the number of spectators, which leads in turn to less revenue from gate receipts and less media interest which in turn leads to less sponsorship - and so the vicious circle is perpetuated. This strategy prescribes a set of recommendations to turn things around.
- 1.8 The malaise in domestic elite football is surprising considering the prosperous heritage of the sport in Hong Kong and the popularity of watching football on the television. Football in Hong Kong is falling behind football in other Asian countries and a concerted and targeted effort is needed to break the cycle. There will be no easy answers or short term fix. Change is called for and all aspects of the sport need to improve including; governance systems and procedures, structures, relationships, strategy and

planning, resources, facilities, development programmes, people and policy. Enhancements in one area will lead to improvements in others. This calls for a coordinated and cohesive set of actions. In this way the vicious circle can be turned into one that is virtuous.

- 1.9 The purpose of this study is to propose a strategy and action plan to transform football in Hong Kong, to recover the ground lost to other Asian nations and to make football once again a sport of which the people of Hong Kong can be proud.

Part 2 – A vision for football in Hong Kong

- 1.10 If the recommendations within this strategy are implemented in a timely and effective way, it is possible to envisage a situation where within a five to ten year timescale, football in Hong Kong will have been transformed. As stated above this needs a coordinated response and some clear leadership. The vision for football in Hong Kong is set out below:

- **An independent, strong, financially secure and well managed governing body** that provides strategic leadership and direction and works with stakeholders to deliver the vision for football in Hong Kong and transform the sport into a world class product.
- **Appropriate, proportional and coordinated support from the government** at all levels to help to bring about the step change necessary.
- **Successful and professional Hong Kong “national” teams** with improved FIFA ranking and performance on the international stage backed up by world class training facilities and support services.
- **A network of strategically located, good quality facilities (grass and synthetic)** to cater for football participation (professional and amateur), and enhanced facilities and infrastructure including a new stadium and a football training centre.
- **A professional and independent league** utilising ‘home’ venues that generate loyal and increasing support with the ultimate aim of having a team capable of playing in the China League.
- **Amateur leagues and clubs with better standards of play** feeding directly into the professional level.
- **A focus on youth development** with sufficient resources to deliver improved opportunities for people to progress from beginner to elite performer backed up by rigorous systems, resources and facilities for talent identification and development.
- **Football development programmes coordinated across all sectors** including schools and club links that concentrate on both quality and quantity.
- **Significantly improved standards of coaching**, coach education, officiating and access to expertise.
- **A cultural shift** where the professional status of the game is enhanced such that it encourages people to pursue a career in football.

- 1.11 This is not a utopian vision. It has been achieved elsewhere and can be achieved in Hong Kong. The vision involves a number of distinct ‘strands’. However these are not mutually exclusive. Delivery of one is dependent on delivery of the others. Achieving the vision will need a coordinated and cohesive response from the football ‘industry’ as a whole as well as its partners.

- 1.12 First and foremost, the ‘renaissance’ of football in Hong Kong as set out in the vision statements needs to be led by a strong governing body. The Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA) should play this role. However the HKFA is experiencing financial difficulties and does not have the resources to deliver

the changes necessary. It is critical to address the current weaknesses in the organisation as a prerequisite to the implementation of this strategy. This is probably the most important action arising from this study. If the vision is to be achieved, the sport needs to be strengthened from the bottom up and from the top down.

Part 3 – How can we get there? – The Renaissance of Football in Hong Kong

- 1.13 During the course of this study there have been a number of very encouraging signs – ‘green shoots of recovery’ one might say. There have been very large crowds at two recent matches involving local teams and of course the stunning victory in the East Asian Games.



'We are Hong Kong'

'It was as if Hong Kong had won the World Cup. The fans were united as one, from the high and mighty to the humble'

- 1.14 It is critical for the future of football in Hong Kong that the momentum that has been generated by these recent successes is harnessed and channelled into positive action. There can be no doubt that the enthusiasm and appetite for the sport is alive and well. There is no truth in the commonly held perception that the local game has no future because of the media focus on football betting and European Football.

- 1.15 It is equally important to avoid complacency. It would be naïve and dangerous to assume that these encouraging signs are indicative of a general upturn in the fortunes of football in Hong Kong and that the halcyon days will return automatically without the interventions suggested in this strategy. If only it were as simple as that. The success of the national team in the East Asian Games needs to be seen in context. If viewed as a barometer of the current health of the sport and its potential, the arrow is certainly pointing in the right direction. However there is still a long way to go.
- 1.16 The proposed strategy sets out a number of fundamental suggestions and actions that are necessary to achieve the vision for football in Hong Kong. A summary of the ‘**principal**’ recommendations is set out in the table below. The evidence and rationale for these recommendations is contained in the full report. The detailed action plan in section 9 links the vision to the principal and secondary recommendations as well as setting out key milestones and responsibilities.

Implementation Plan – Delivering the Vision and Recommendations

- 1.17 As stated above it is critical that targeted and coordinated intervention takes place if the potential of football in Hong Kong is to be realised and if the current groundswell of energy and commitment is to be built upon. The principal recommendations of the strategy are set out below (there are altogether 49 recommendations in the full report – the most influential 25 ‘key’ recommendations are set out below).

Recommendations - HKFA

1. That the HKFA agree to a transformation process (Project Phoenix)
2. That the restructured HKFA decide on the constitution, governance structure and organisation, that will best serve the sport and improve the level of professional expertise and experience in its secretariat.
3. That the restructured HKFA prepare a vision that includes clear targets, strategies and development plans and draw up a five-year business plan to support this vision.
4. That the restructured HKFA be established on a firm financial footing to allow it to develop a strategy for raising financial support commensurate with the approved business plan.
5. That the HKFA appoint an external ‘change agent’ to help implement its transformation

Recommendations – The Professional Level

6. That the principle of establishing a professional football league in Hong Kong within three to five years be agreed and that the criteria for clubs to enter the league be linked to the AFC criteria.
7. That the ‘new’ HKFA and the new league encourage clubs to move towards fully meeting the AFC criteria and in particular focus on youth development through the introduction of club ‘academies’
8. That the potential for the future participation of a Hong Kong based team in the China Super League be recognised, and that this be further considered when developing the new professional league and planning the new multi-purpose stadium complex at Kai Tak
9. That the HKFA play a greater role in the development of amateur clubs and investigate the introduction of an accreditation scheme (similar to the UK Club Mark scheme)

Recommendations – Football Development Programmes and Pathways

10. That more funding be made available for District and Representative Teams and at elite level for coaches and training facilities.
11. That the HKFA recruit five Regional Football Development Officers
12. That LCSD ensure that facilities are available for representative team training and that this be coordinated with the new football training centre
13. That Hong Kong Youth Representative Teams play international friendly matches or competitions on a regular basis
14. That clubs in the professional football league operate academies for 9 to 16 year-olds and play competitive matches at all age groups in an Academy League. This activity should be coordinated with the new football training centre.

Recommendations – Football Facilities

15. That the Government allocate a “home” ground to each First Division team
16. That the Government produce a playing pitch strategy for Hong Kong that includes the implementation of a ‘Five Year 3rd Generation Artificial Pitch Development Plan’
17. That the Government invite the Hong Kong Jockey Club to develop and manage a new “national” football training centre for Hong Kong with the scale and scope required to achieve the needs of football development, including the recruitment of appropriate operational expertise *

* NB: The development work carried out at the new football training centre would be coordinated with other development programmes including those of the districts and the elite clubs. This approach is described in more detail in the main report.

Recommendations – Hong Kong “National” Teams

18. That the HKFA organise more international matches for the “national” teams, including a minimum of 8 friendly matches and 6 competitive matches (depending on timing of major competitions) annually for the men’s senior team
19. That the HKFA appoint a full-time “national” team manager and other “national” representative team coaches on terms that would allow the HKFA to attract the best coaches

Recommendations – The Status of Football

20. That, following the establishment of a professional football league, clubs include an education programme for contracted youth players from age 16 to 19 years
21. That universities and other educational and vocational institutions provide football scholarships
22. That sport or football related educational courses be offered to support players with lower academic aptitudes

Recommendations – Links with Education

- 23. That the principle of establishing school to club links be accepted and promoted
- 24. That school sports facilities be systematically improved through a strategic investment plan
- 25. That District Football Development Officers should be employed by the HKFA to work in schools and community based football programmes to identify talent and improve the standard of coaching.

1.18 The Vision is aspirational but achievable. The sub-title of this strategy is 'We are Hong Kong' – dare to dream. We make no apology for that. The above recommendations (and the others included in the main report) will all need to be implemented and sufficiently resourced to make the vision a reality.

Measures of Success – Key Targets

1.19 It is important that the vision is achieved through the implementation of the strategic recommendations. This in itself will not be enough. The changes must result in some measurable differences to football in Hong Kong. Some of the headline indicators of success together with a desired outcome are set out below. More detailed targets are included in the main report.

Target/Measure	Existing Level	Future Target	Date
"National" Team FIFA world ranking (men)	143 (Dec 09)	120	2012
		100	2015
		Maintain Top 80	2020
"National" Team FIFA world ranking (ladies)	60 (Dec 09)	50	2012
		40	2015
		Maintain Top 35	2020
Annual Number of International Matches (Senior)	5 (Average of last 5 years)	8 Friendlies (minimum) 6 Competitive (depending on competitions)	2010
Number of Registered Players	N/A	280,000*	2014
Average spectator numbers Division 1	Circa 1,000	5,000	2015
% of Population Playing	2.16%	4%*	2014
Number of Affiliated Clubs	82	120	2014
Registered Officials	1016	1,500	2015
Football Development Programmes	2,129	2,500	2012
		3,000	2015
		3,500	2020
Number of Synthetic Pitches	11	34	2015
Delivery of Football Training Centre		Operational	2012

* No current accurate measures. HKFA to establish strategy and database of registered players, affiliated clubs etc.

The Way Forward – Implementation

- 1.20 Once there has been 'buy-in' to the Vision, there must be concerted action to make sure it happens. To capitalise on the enthusiasm that will have been generated by the discussion and debate and by the success in the East Asian games, it is important to 'score an early goal' to use football parlance.
- 1.21 The HKFA must play a leading role in the implementation of the strategy. This report recommends that that the association be reorganised but on very different lines. This could be the early goal required to start the process of transformation. The Government will need to play a role in this process but it will need to 'facilitate' the process and not unduly influence it. For this reason it may be better for an outside agency to undertake this role with the support of the Government in resource terms.
- 1.22 Once re-established the HKFA can instigate many of the other changes including planning for a new professional league, developing facility and development strategies and strengthening the national team.
- 1.23 Simultaneous with this the other stakeholders can work with the HKFA to address other areas. For example LCSD can make prioritised investment in facilities in preparation for a new professional league and provide better facilities for the wider football community.

Critical Path

- 1.24 Strategic Leisure believes that some of the implementation issues are of fundamental and immediate priority. Many of these actions can be implemented simultaneously, if coordinated properly. These are summarised in five main areas as follows:
- **Governance and Structure**
 - The HKFA to lead the development of football subject to embracing the need for change
 - The HKFA to start re-constitution by -
 - ▲ Appointing a 'change' agent
 - ▲ Agreeing a new governance structure
 - ▲ Providing more clarity on roles and responsibilities
 - ▲ Recruiting new Officials – Chief Executive, Commercial Manager, Development Manager and National Team Manager
 - ▲ Preparing a Development Strategy and five year Business Plan
 - ▲ Securing appropriate funding (public and commercial)
 - ▲ Recruiting and training Regional and District Football Development Officers
 - **Professionalisation of Football**
 - Starting the process of establishing a new professional league (to AFC criteria)
 - Working with clubs and providing them with the 'tools' to meet the AFC criteria and in particular the development of youth programmes and academies
 - Linking existing and future clubs to Districts to form 'Home' grounds and putting in place plans and finance to enhance facilities where necessary
 - **Facilities**
 - Drawing up a strategy for enhancement of facilities including the conversion of a number of grass pitches to synthetic
 - Preparing a playing pitch strategy to find a better match between supply and demand
 - **"National" Football Training Centre (FTC)**
 - Preparing a specification and business case for the new training centre
 - Securing funding for the FTC
 - Appointment of FTC Director
 - Determining the management arrangements for the FTC and procuring building works
 - In partnership with other organisations, including emerging professional club academies, developing a pool of talented youth squads

- **Football Development Programmes and Pathways**

- The appointment of Regional and District Football Development Officers
- The earmarking of additional funding for programmes
- Establishing systems for programme monitoring and evaluation
- Scholarships and links with the clubs and the FTC

- 1.25 The implementation of the above measures in a coordinated way will not be easy. To maintain the momentum and drive the process forward it will be necessary to create a **football taskforce**. This should include representatives of stakeholders with the authority to make decisions and see them through.
- 1.26 Strategic Leisure believes that external expertise and representation on this taskforce is essential. Independent input will help ensure that vested interests do not dominate and that inertia is not allowed to creep in. Expertise and knowledge of what happens elsewhere in the world can be invaluable.

Resource Requirements

- 1.27 This report has noted that football is under-funded at all levels. The decline of the sport over many years has led to a reduction in income for the sport from gate receipts and commercial sponsorship.
- 1.28 The HKFA currently has minimal reserves on which to draw, and the current government subvention per capita is low. The fact that football is not an elite sport means that other sources of funding and support are unobtainable.
- 1.29 The current Government subvention given to football is circa HK\$7.5m. This supplements other money derived by the sport from FIFA/AFC, gate receipts, media, programme income etc. It will be impossible to implement the critical path described above without additional human and financial resources.
- 1.30 Strategic Leisure estimates the human resource costs to range from HK\$500k in year 1 (2010) to a total of HK\$16.4m in year 5 (2014) to provide the catalyst for the development of football in Hong Kong.
- 1.31 This funding will support the following posts:

HKFA

Chief Executive
Commercial Manager
Development Manager
National Team Coach
5 Regional Development Officers
18 District Development Officers (Community)

Football Training Centre

FTC Director

- 1.32 Additional funding for pathway development, football coaching programmes, talent identification schemes and squad training and matches would amount to HK\$5-10m per annum.
- 1.33 Around HK\$5m per pitch will be required for the conversion of grass pitches to synthetic surfaces and associated improvements in the infrastructure.
- 1.34 It is clear from the above that implementing the strategy will not be cheap and it is beyond the scope of the HKFA alone. Government funding will be required until the strategy brings about the change necessary for football to generate more income and make the sport more self-sufficient. Some people may question this level of spending. The authors of this study firmly believe that this 'pump priming' is an investment that will provide a long term socio-economic return.

Summary and Conclusion

- 1.35 Football in Hong Kong is at a major crossroads. It is not an over exaggeration to say that now is one of the most crucial stages in the development of the sport. The major plus factor is the enormous public interest and pride that has been generated by the East Asian Games and other recent high profile matches.
- 1.36 However there is no guarantee that this interest will continue and unless the strategy is implemented there is a probability that the sport will continue to struggle and decline despite these recent encouraging developments.
- 1.37 With a concerted and coordinated effort and an injection of additional funding in the right areas, the sport can flourish once again. We have recommended a way forward, and the strategic vision and action plans will achieve their full effect only if all stakeholders agree on the direction. Fundamental to all of this is the position of the HKFA.
- 1.38 The HKFA should lead the development of the sport. A voluntary transformation backed up by proportional political and financial support from the government is the best way to deliver the strategy.

Recent events have demonstrated that Football in Hong has huge potential, now is the time to deliver.



Section 2

Introduction and Context

2 Introduction and Context

I. A Brief History of Football in Hong Kong

- 2.1 Football is an extremely popular sport in Hong Kong with many people participating in the sport on a regular basis and huge interest in watching foreign league matches on television.
- 2.2 The history of football in Hong Kong dates back to the late nineteenth century. Hong Kong was one of Asia's football pioneers and boasts one of the oldest professional leagues in Asia, with clubs such as South China among Asia's best known sides in their golden era.
- 2.3 The Hong Kong national team was one of the leading teams in Asia in the 1950's and 1960's, when they came away with the 3rd place team in the inaugural Asian Football Confederation Asian Cup in 1956 and claimed 4th place in 1964.
- 2.4 During the 1960's and 1970's domestic football matches in Hong Kong had high spectator numbers with regular attendances of between 15,000 and 20,000. The teams were able to attract players from overseas as the league was competitive and the financial benefits for the players were excellent relative to many other places.
- 2.5 During the 'golden years' of the 1950's to 1970's there were many factors that contributed to the high profile of the sport in relation to spectator numbers and the success in tournaments. These factors included the lack of alternative leisure activities, the position and political situation of other countries in the region and the levels of commercial investment in the sport.
- 2.6 In the 1970's, Hong Kong (with a population of 4 million), was able to support 12 professional football teams.
- 2.7 But by the early 1990's the interest in local football in Hong Kong had dwindled and there was a significant drop in the number of spectators going to watch the football matches. This had a knock-on effect in terms of the money coming into the sport and the amount that could be paid to entice quality players and therefore maintain spectator interest.
- 2.8 The following section outlines the history of Hong Kong football in three distinct periods:

- 1. Pre-war Development**

- 2. Post-war Development (Golden Era – 1950's to 1980's)**

- 3. Post-war Development (Recession of Football 1990's to now)**

Pre-war Development

- 2.9 At the end of 19th Century, football was brought to Hong Kong when it became a Crown Colony of the United Kingdom. The participants were mostly westerners, who were businessmen and soldiers working and living in Hong Kong. The first football club (Hong Kong Football Club) was established in 1886 and the first championship game was hosted the following year.
- 2.10 In the early 20th Century, Chinese students were given the opportunity to play football at school, and subsequently became the first batch of Chinese footballers in Hong Kong. In 1908, the first Chinese football club, South China, was established and became the most popular team. With the increasing number of competitions, an organisation was needed to manage all football matches. As a result the Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA) was established in 1914 to manage all football affairs and host football matches.

Football Development in Hong Kong

- 2.11 From 1910s to 1930s, although the sport was played mainly by amateurs, Hong Kong footballers accomplished numerous significant achievements, such as winning the China Regional Competition and the International Cup. The rapid development was due in part to the import of foreign coaches and footballers from Europe, who provided experience and management skills. Hong Kong achieved good progress in both local and regional levels in comparison to other Southeast Asian countries which lacked the necessary experienced personnel to promote football development.
- 2.12 In late 1930s, during the Sino-Japanese War, football development slowed down and effectively stopped when Hong Kong was occupied by Japan from 1941 to 1945.

Post-war Development (The Golden Era - 1950s to 1980s)

- 2.13 The Japanese occupation ended in 1945 and football began to re-emerge. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Hong Kong football industry developed quickly. Hong Kong invited famous football nations to participate in local competitions, including Brazil and Sweden and also invited to Hong Kong club teams such as Blackpool from England. These competitions attracted not only adults, but also encouraged many youngsters to play football. From the 1950s onwards, more children were able to go to school and therefore had more exposure to the sport through physical education classes. Some of these students became the new batch of football players in Hong Kong. Radio broadcasts and free TV broadcasts of football matches commenced in 1959 and 1967 respectively, and served as alternative channels to deliver football matches to local people. The rapid social development after the 2nd World War facilitated the great success of football in the 70s.
- 2.14 Although Hong Kong was focusing on economic recovery and the development of industry and commerce in the 1950s and 1960s, football development was not overlooked. Several important milestones were achieved in these years, such as joining the international governing body, FIFA and assisting in the establishment of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in 1954. The 'new' Hong Kong Stadium opened in 1955, and hosted the AFC Cup.
- 2.15 The 1970s is regarded as the 'Golden Era' of football in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's entry into the qualification round of the World Cup in 1974 elevated the local interest in football to its peak. There was an increase in company teams and commercial sponsorship. Companies would organise a football team from within their own staff or hired professional players to work part-time in order to qualify to represent the company. In the 1970s, the manufacturing industry was facing a downturn and the stock market crashes in 1971 caused many people, especially young adults, to become unemployed. Individuals with a talent for football were encouraged to join the company team in order to seek a more stable income.
- 2.16 At the time, corruption was still prevalent in Hong Kong. Sponsoring football teams was a popular method for money laundering. There was limited entertainment available for people in Hong Kong in the 1970s and football was one of the few sources of cheap popular entertainment for both rich and poor people resulting in high attendances at football matches.
- 2.17 The Golden Era approached its end in 1980s. The HKFA's "All-local" team policy from 1986 to 1987 had a significant impact on football development. The HKFA decided to cultivate the next batch of footballers to sustain local football development, by prohibiting foreign footballers from playing for professional teams. The policy forced most foreign footballers to leave Hong Kong football, which contributed to the drop in spectator numbers in 1986 and 1987. Moreover, more entertainment activities were becoming available for local people. The result was a drop in the interest of football in Hong Kong when compared to the Golden Era. However, football development was still in reasonable shape. In 1980, Hong Kong hosted the World Cup Qualifier Round and 5 years later, Hong Kong defeated China in a World Cup qualifying match.

The Recession of Football - 1990s to Present Day

- 2.18 Since the 1990s, a significant decline in football development has been observed at the local level and in Asian and FIFA rankings. The increase in alternative entertainment options, the broadcasting of international football matches, the drop in salaries and status of football players and the lack of any career opportunities are some of the factors that have had a negative impact on football development in Hong Kong.
- 2.19 During the course of this study there have been signs that the interest in domestic football is increasing and that under the surface there is massive interest that could be harnessed. This new-found interest needs to be nurtured and developed. This will only happen if the football 'product' improves. There is a lot of ground to be made up.
- 2.20 This report sets out in detail the current 'state of play' of football in Hong Kong and provides a context for the recommendations.

II. Other Asian Countries' Football Development from the 1950s to 1980s

- 2.21 During the period from the 1950s to 1980s Hong Kong was one of the highest ranked teams in Asia. Now Hong Kong is ranked 20th in Asia. The decline of football in Hong Kong has coincided with other countries getting better at football.
- 2.22 Following the 2nd World War and throughout the Cultural Revolution from 1960s to late 1970s, China's Government and people were pre-occupied with other issues and football development was not a priority. Japan was occupied by Allied Forces until 1952, and although Japan had a fast economic recovery, football did not become a popular sport until 1993, with the establishment of J-League. Singapore was slow in developing football and had no local league until it established the S-League in 1995.
- 2.23 With the advantage of relatively stable political and economic conditions and the influx of experienced personnel from Britain, from the 1950s to 1980s the development of football in Hong Kong was significantly more organised and advanced when compared to other Asian countries.
- 2.24 China started developing football in earnest in the 1980s. Japan and Singapore followed in the 1990s. The fast progress of football in China and Japan is not surprising given the size of the population in comparison to Hong Kong. Both of these countries had a clear football development policy and provided support to create a strong national team. Singapore has established a unique league, created a culture of district support to local football teams, and provided financial support to football development since the 1990s. All of these factors and measures have facilitated football development in these Asian countries resulting in good progress in last few decades, whilst Hong Kong football has been in decline.
- 2.25 The decline in the interest in the local football leagues has continued in Hong Kong to the present day with attendances in the 1st Division League averaging only 1,033 in the 2008-09 season.
- 2.26 Although football in Hong Kong has been in decline, it is interesting to note that the national team's rankings have remained relatively consistent over the last decade on a global and Asian basis.

Table 2.1 - Hong Kong Football Representative Team Rankings

Region	1999	2009
FIFA Ranking	129	143
Asia Ranking	25	26

- 2.27 Hong Kong Football recorded its highest world ranking of 90 in 1996 and lowest ranking of 156 in 2008, with an average ranking of 126th place (based on FIFA recorded rankings from 1993 to 2009).

Figure 2.1 – Hong Kong FIFA Ranking



- 2.28 It is necessary to adopt a realistic and practical approach when considering the heights that Hong Kong football can attain in the future taking into account the current environment, political change, competition and social factors that impact on Hong Kong football development in the 21st Century.

III. The Social and Economic Impact of Football

Social Impact

- 2.29 Football is the biggest sport in the world. In terms of the global investment, number of participants, number of spectators and level of popularity and interest, it has no equal. The best international players are global superstars, while the best clubs are massive international brands with loyal fan bases across the world.
- 2.30 At a grassroots level, requiring little equipment and an open space, football is one of the most accessible sports for casual recreation, and is played in parks and streets the world over.
- 2.31 Governments and national governing bodies invest substantial amounts of money in developing football, money which is quite aside from the commercial income from the sport which goes to leagues and clubs. A significant proportion of this also finds its way back into the development of pathways and

programmes to encourage greater participation and find ways for football to assist in the development of a healthy, educated and cohesive society.

- 2.32 It is increasingly recognised in the UK and the rest of Europe that sport provides a unique opportunity to engage with people on a variety of levels, and deliver wide-ranging benefits. Football is particularly well placed in this regard. There are a number of ways that football can contribute to wider agendas, some of which are detailed below:

(a) Healthy Lifestyles

- 2.33 The need for people to lead more active and balanced lives is a key current issue. With obesity on the increase, along with coronary heart disease and diabetes, particularly among children, many governments and health agencies are investing heavily in sport as a means of increasing activity, and improving physical and mental wellbeing.

- 2.34 Some areas where football-led interventions have been successful include:

- **Promoting physical activity**
 - Encouraging participation in football, whatever a player's ability, is a way of contributing towards better health, reducing the risk of chronic disease and having a positive effect on mental health by boosting self-esteem.
- **Promoting healthy living for children**
 - By using football-based examples for innovative learning material, young people can be inspired to improve their diet and nutrition and live a healthier lifestyle.
- **Marketing health and players as role models**
 - Footballers can be used as positive role models through marketing campaigns to promote healthy living or raise awareness of particular health issues.
- **Health and educational facilities at football grounds**
 - There is the potential for football clubs to develop joint facilities at football grounds and attract people who may not otherwise access local services. This is equally seen in education – many football grounds in the UK have areas dedicated to providing learning and education opportunities, including college courses, adult learning, numeracy and literacy. The association with sport, and particularly football, makes these environments more inviting.
- **Tackling dependencies**
 - Football can be a key tool in outreach work to contact young people at risk of exclusion, and those who have alcohol or drug-related problems. Opportunities might include developing coaching skills, opportunities to play competitively in newly established or existing sports clubs, education programmes, developing leadership skills and mentoring programmes, volunteering, casual and part-time work and pathways to full-time employment.

(b) Social Inclusion

- 2.35 The power of football to reach audiences, particularly children and young people, who are disengaged or disinterested, is substantial. It is also a tool to encourage interaction between communities and break down barriers, encouraging equality.

- 2.36 There are many hundreds of schemes which use football in this way, from very small localised projects run by clubs or local authorities, to international projects involving partners such as the Laureus Foundation. Some areas where football can be used to contribute to these agendas include:

- **Reducing crime and anti social behaviour**
 - There is increasing research and evidence to prove the value of sport, and football particularly, in tackling youth crime, anti social behaviour and gang violence. Anti-social and minor level

offences are often due to a lack of alternative activities – using football as a diversionary tactic is a common solution.

- Commonalities include the need for young people to feel a sense of belonging, status and excitement and the need to identify with role models. In Hong Kong, Operation Breakthrough is an example of this process – having been a particular success in boxing and rugby (and now extending its programmes to include football).
 - Sport-led programmes can often provide the first steps to reach out to disenfranchised individuals, providing a pathway for them to become more engaged and involved.
- **Developing community cohesion**
 - Football is extremely valuable in bringing together people from different social, ethnic or religious groups within a community to engender better understanding. Providing a common interest, it allows boundaries to be overcome.
 - As well as developing interpersonal skills, football can provide important opportunities for social contact across community boundaries, promote mutual understanding, and instil in the participants a desire for, and a commitment to coexistence. Football For Peace is an example of this in action – a programme which has run in the Middle East with Jewish and Arab children, and in Northern Ireland with children from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds.

(c) National pride and self esteem

- 2.37 Sport has a unique power to create a sense of national unity and pride. The success of a national team, particularly in the national sport is a very difficult thing to replicate in other ways, creating a 'feel good factor' which has social and economic benefits. Success of the National Team is the best way to attract people into direct participation in sport through the enthusiasm that is derived and the desire to emulate heroes and role models.

Economic Impact

- 2.38 Sport and football especially, is also a key tool for stimulating and developing local economies. Primarily through the hosting of high profile teams, athletes and events, many governments have justified significant investment in sport to achieve wider economic development, primarily through inbound tourism, which brings in 'outside investment' to an area.
- 2.39 At the present time, Hong Kong has a relatively low profile in terms of attracting international sporting events. With the exception of horseracing (which attracts thousands of spectators, jockeys and trainers) and the Hong Kong Rugby 7s, there are few regular sports events which have significant spectator or commercial recognition.
- 2.40 Achieving the maximum possible 'economic impact' through sport, or any other event is closely linked to several key factors, including: the ability to attract people from outside the host area; the duration of the event and the ability of the host to maximise the visitors' 'dwell time'; and the desire and support of local partners to make the event a success.
- 2.41 In this way, it can be seen that for Hong Kong to truly gain economic benefits from football (and opportunities certainly exist) the scale and appeal of any event must be regional at least.
- 2.42 To give an idea of the potential financial implications, UK Sport – the government agency for elite sport in the United Kingdom – commissioned an economic appraisal of a number of sporting events in 2005 and 2006. One of the events was the UEFA U19 Football Championships – a 12-day tournament held in Northern Ireland. Some key findings include:
- **The event created approximately 6,160 commercial bed nights**
 - **Subsistence (accommodation and food/drink) was the highest overall item of expenditure, with £412,764 (about HK\$5.16m) being spent on these items**

Football Development in Hong Kong

- **Total visitor spend was £560,131 (HK\$7m) with organisational spend £192,645 circa HK\$2.4m**
 - **The impact per event day was £62,731 (HK\$0.8m)**
- 2.43 It should be noted that all the figures calculated specifically avoided ‘multiplier analysis’ – where other expenditures are assumed and extrapolated – and are based on only the impact of those people who would otherwise not have spent their money in that economy.
- 2.44 The study also considered other events, including women’s cycling, rowing and youth sailing. Although the actual economic impact of the football tournament was not the greatest (the World Rowing Championships generated £3.27m (HK\$41m), the additional opportunity presented by using football as a vehicle is the significant international profile which can also be achieved.
- 2.45 One of the reasons why South Korea hosted the World Cup with Japan in 2002 was to boost its international profile, and to raise awareness and long-term appeal to encourage investment in the country both through tourism and commerce. The level of investment in both South Korea and Japan totalled billions of US dollars.
- 2.46 While Hong Kong may never be in a position to host an event on the scale of the World Cup, the potential for football to promote tourism is evident. The key consideration however, is to generate ‘new’ investment – money coming into Hong Kong from external sources. To achieve this, there must be the aspiration to deliver high quality sporting entertainment and opportunities with international appeal and scope.

IV. Asian Football Confederation Member Association Assessment

- 2.47 In 2008 the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) produced a Strategy for the Development of Professional Football in Asia with the objective:

‘To raise the standard of Asian Professional Leagues and Clubs to equate with the World/European level’

- 2.48 The Strategy includes developing an environment which is conducive to creating elite professional leagues throughout Asia and to re-launch the AFC Champion’s League in 2009 with only Clubs that meet the AFC criteria. Minimum criteria for domestic leagues were established in 2009, with additional mandatory targets by 2012.
- 2.49 The Assessment was based on ten elements of the game structure with a total number of points being 500.

Table 2.2 - Assessment Criteria – Priority of 10 items

Item	Total Points per Item
Organisation	20
Technical Standard	100
Attendance	100
Governance / Soundness	50
Marketing / Promotion	20
Business Scale	100
Game Operation	20
Media	20
Stadia	20
Clubs	50
Total Points	500

- 2.50 AFC Officials carried out the assessment based on meetings during visits with each of the Member Associations of the AFC within the Middle East and Asia region. Survey sheets and documents were submitted and the AFC Pro League Ad-Hoc Committee determined whether the criteria were met and

Football Development in Hong Kong

categorised the Members Associations from Grade's A to D as to whether they met, partially met, or did not meet the required criteria.

- 2.51 Hong Kong did not meet the AFC criteria for entry into the AFC Champions League (Grade D).

Table 2.3 - AFC Assessment of Asian Football (Out of Total of 500)

Japan	470	Singapore	237
Korean Republic	438	Thailand	213
China	415	Vietnam	211
Australia	306	India	199
Indonesia	287	Hong Kong	148

- 2.52 This assessment clearly outlines the position of Hong Kong football according to the AFC. It is evident that Hong Kong football is weak in terms of the quality of the organisation, structure and governance and there is a need for major improvements and re-structure of the sport. If the 'clubs' points are taken from the target Hong Kong Football achieved a score of 26%. There is an urgent need to improve the governance, leadership, business, facilities, grounds and organisation of football in Hong Kong.
- 2.53 The results of the AFC Assessment mean that Hong Kong is entitled to enter two clubs in the AFC Cup, but cannot enter a team in the AFC Champions League. Only five countries achieved the assessment criteria to enter clubs in the AFC Champions League (Japan, Korean Republic, China, Australia and Indonesia).
- 2.54 The AFC Assessment provides a focus for many of the actions necessary to transform football in Hong Kong. A number of specific weaknesses are highlighted and have been taken into account in formulating the recommendations in this report. The negative perception that the AFC has about football in Hong Kong needs to be changed. This will take considerable, concerted and strategic effort.
- 2.55 This section sets out the context for this report. Section 3 contains information on the lessons that can be learnt from three international case studies (Singapore, Japan and China). Section 4 looks at the structure and governance of football in Hong Kong including the roles and responsibilities of the main stakeholders. In section 5 the report illustrates the main issues concerning football facilities in Hong Kong (the 'hardware') whilst in section 6 we investigate the issues surrounding football development (the hardware). Section 7 includes a synopsis of some of the other key issues that football in Hong Kong faces. Section 8 attempts to draw together the different strands of our investigation into a blueprint for the development and implementation of a football strategy for Hong Kong. Finally section 9 summarises the situation and proposes a way forward.



Section 3

International Case Studies

3 International Case Studies

Introduction

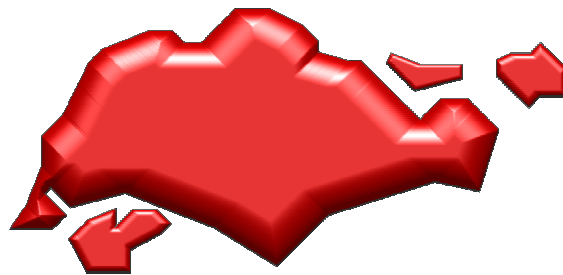
- 3.1 This Case Study section has been produced by Strategic Leisure in order to inform one of the key objectives identified in the scoping work undertaken by the project team and client team as part of the delivery of a wider assessment of the long term delivery of football in Hong Kong.
- 3.2 One of the primary objectives identified for the Football Development Study is to assess and review the development of football in other places in Asia. In compiling this section of the report we have combined desktop research with visits to the three places and interviews with key stakeholders.

Case Study Examples

- 3.3 As identified by the client team, we have reviewed the following places as case studies:
- **Singapore**
 - **China**
 - **Japan**
- 3.4 The purpose of this process is to understand more about the standards of football development in other places in Asia, with a view to exploring their strengths and weaknesses, and how these might be applied, or be of interest to Hong Kong.
- 3.5 We have endeavoured to take a wide view of the sport in each instance, and have structured our research and presentation of findings under the following headings:
- **Background – brief introduction to the country in question**
 - **Governance – including roles, responsibilities, strategic aims**
 - **Facilities and Infrastructure – relating to the ‘football pyramid’ and the quality of facilities**
 - **Grassroots/Community Participation – focusing on the entry level and ways into the sport, including comments on disability football and girls/women’s football**
 - **Elite Performance – a consideration of the highest levels of the game**
 - **Commercial Activity/Media & Television – information on commercial strength**
 - **Coaching & Officials – highlighting issues relating to the development of high quality staff**
 - **Summary of critical issues, strengths and weaknesses**

Singapore

Background



- 3.6 Singapore is an island city state with a total area of 710km² and an estimated population of around 4.8m. With an estimated GDP of around US\$51,000, it is one of the wealthiest countries per capita in the world.
- 3.7 Popular sports in Singapore include swimming, badminton, basketball and table tennis, although we consider that football is the most popular.
- 3.8 FIFA statistics (from the Big Count, 2006) provide figures that allow comparison with Singapore and Hong Kong football player, club and official numbers:

Table 3.1: FIFA Big Count (2006)

	Singapore	Hong Kong
Players (registered and un-registered)	197,003	149,956
Players as % of population (average 6%)	4.49%	2.16%
Registered clubs	54	82
Officials	1,516	1,059

Governance

- 3.9 Football in Singapore is overseen by the Singapore Football Association (FAS) www.fas.org.sg
- 3.10 The FAS was established in 1952. FAS is responsible for developing and advancing the game at all levels, governing the running of football and ensuring that the Laws of Game are adhered to from the professional "S" League to amateur leagues.
- 3.11 The FAS is also responsible for organising and running league and cup competitions, the stewardship of international teams, the establishment of youth development programmes, women's football, refereeing and coaching frameworks. It employs over 80 people.
- 3.12 The roles of the FAS are:
- **To promote and encourage the playing of football in accordance with the Laws of the Game as laid down or approved from time to time by the Federation Internationale de Football Association, hereinafter referred to as FIFA;**
 - **To promote, arrange or hold football matches, tournaments, or competitions for and on behalf of all its members in the interest of the game;**
 - **To promote and hold matches, tournaments, or competitions with, by or among foreign teams desiring to visit the Republic;**
 - **To secure and maintain affiliation with FIFA and AFC;**
 - **To advance and safeguard generally the interest of the game and to employ its funds for this purpose.**
- 3.13 The elite-level programme and activities organized by the FAS include the professional league (S League); all international competition; the National Football Academy; and National Team Training.

Football Development in Hong Kong

3.14 The FAS has a 'Roadmap' which sets the direction for football in Singapore. The two main goals are for Singapore to reach a World Cup, and to achieve sports excellence through football. The targets outlined are:

- **Connect with the football ground through involvement in recreational and amateur football, including little leagues and mini-football for children**
- **Uplift the lives of less fortunate Singaporeans and bond Singaporeans, including the setting up of a Football Foundation**
- **Establish an entertaining S. League with well-supported, professionally-run clubs and competitive matches**
- **Operate an effective pyramid structure that facilitates the upward flow of talent from grassroots to school to Centre Of Excellence to elite football**
- **To be the top football nation in ASEAN**
- **To be one of the top 10 football nations in Asia**
- **To qualify for a place in the Asian Cup final rounds**

League Structure

3.15 The top division in Singapore is the S. League. This was established in 1994.

3.16 A blueprint for the creation of a professional league was set up, with eight teams competing, each based in a regional stadium. This has now grown to 12 teams, and includes three teams either comprising foreign nationals, or from outside of Singapore: Brunei DPMM (who actually play in Brunei), the Super Reds (almost all Korean playing staff) and Albirex Niigata (almost all Japanese playing staff).

3.17 Below this league is the National Football League – an amateur league. This is split into three divisions with 10 teams in each division.

Facilities and Infrastructure

3.18 A selection of some of the larger stadia in Singapore is shown below as Figure 3.1. A more comprehensive list can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_stadiums_in_Singapore

3.19 It should be noted that the National Stadium is being demolished, with a view to being replaced by the Singapore Sports Hub.

Figure 3.2: Examples of major venues in Singapore

Name	Capacity	Notes
Bishan Stadium	10,000	Used by Home United FC in the S League, this is one of the largest venues in Singapore. Constructed in 1998 and managed by the Singapore Sports Council, the stadium will host the inaugural 2010 Summer Youth Olympic Games.
The Float at Marina Bay	30,000	Temporary venue and the world's largest floating stage. The Float will be used for five years, until completion of The Hub. The pitch is a "third generation" artificial surface and is understood to be awaiting FIFA inspection.

Football Development in Hong Kong

Name	Capacity	Notes
Jalan Besar Stadium	6,000	One of the oldest grounds in Singapore, the stadium has been redeveloped a number of times. Home ground of Young Lions FC (an U23 team which plays in the S League). An artificial pitch was laid in 2008 – funded by FIFA’s <i>Goal</i> programme.
Choa Chu Kang Stadium	4,000	Opened in 2001. Part of the Choa Chu Kang Complex, operated by Singapore Sports Council. Venue is home stadium of Singapore Armed Forces FC.
Bedok Stadium	3,864	Constructed in 1981. Home venue of Geyland United FC (who play in S League). Facility is managed by the Singapore Sports Council as part of Bedok Sports and Recreation Centre.

- 3.20 The general trend in terms of facilities is that the S. League clubs play at municipal complexes, almost all of which are managed by the SSC. These multi-purpose venues typically have additional facilities, including swimming pools, gyms, sports halls and athletics tracks. There are therefore very few purpose-built football arenas.
- 3.21 In 2007, it was announced that 284 state fields had been released for recreational purposes, to improve participation in sport and physical activity. One particular facility – Farrer Park has been designated the home of grassroots football.

Grassroots/Community Participation

- 3.22 Research into general participation has not been carried out since 2005, but at that time, participation in sport and physical activity was on the increase – 48% of polled individuals did some kind of physical activity every week – an increase of 10% on the 2001 figure. The most popular activities were jogging, swimming and walking.

School Outreach

- 3.23 The FAS works with key partners, including the S. League, local schools and other feeder clubs. There are currently nine affiliated Soccer Schools (commercial entities). The School Outreach programme specifies that S. League clubs must engage with at least six partner schools, to conduct coaching programmes.
- 3.24 Other events are also organised for schools including “small-sided” football competitions.

Mini Football

- 3.25 In 2002, the FAS launched the Sunday Mini Football programme for children between the ages of 7 and 12. A partnership was formed with the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) and the People’s Association (PA) to promote the programme to the community.
- 3.26 The FAS provided technical advice and coaching expertise for the programme, while the SSC provided funding for 20 football centres. The PA formed football clubs and recruited participants through its grassroots network.
- 3.27 The objective of the programme is to encourage Singapore’s children to develop a healthy, life-long sporting habit, foster bonding between parents and children as well as promote racial harmony by creating opportunities for social interaction among participants and their parents.

Care United

- 3.28 The S. League's charitable arm which funds development plans through three main streams – Children's Financial Assistance scheme (which goes towards funding of education); the Transportation for Elderly Folks scheme (which provides older people with transport to games); and the Development of Women's Football scheme (funds the creation of women's football initiatives).

Girls and Women's Football

- 3.29 According to FIFA notes, Singapore has 1,000 registered U18 female footballers. From 2000 to 2006, the number of registered players increased from 420 in 2000 to 2,000 in 2006. The total number of women's clubs is 41, with 13 clubs offering both men's and women's teams. Four members of FAS staff are dedicated to women's football. Girls and women's football is delivered in schools, and there are national championships for girls and women.

Small Sided Football

- 3.30 There are a number of small-sided football centres, notably the Premier Pitch at Turf City, but we have no detailed information on participation.

Elite Performance/Athlete Development

S League

- 3.31 The S League is the highest level of club football in Singapore, and the only professional league. Originally formed of eight clubs, this league now consists of 12 clubs.
- 3.32 The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) ranks all the top leagues of members countries from A to D. The S. League is ranked as C. The assessment of the S. League – based on the football competitiveness, professionalism, marketability, and financial status of the league and its clubs – is significant as it has implications for qualification for AFC competitions, namely the AFC Cup and the AFC Champions League.
- 3.33 Currently, Singapore does not qualify for a Champions League spot automatically, although it has the highest points total among the non-qualifiers, so could be considered 'next in line'. The top Singapore club side currently has to try to enter the Champions League through play-offs.

Singaporean National Team

- 3.34 Singapore is currently ranked 134 in the FIFA rankings. Its highest ranking was 73, in 1993.
- 3.35 The primary competition for the senior Singapore team is the biennial ASEAN Football Championship contested by Singapore, Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Laos. Since its inception in 1996, Singapore has won the competition three times. Formerly known as the Tiger Cup (due to sponsorship from the Tiger Beer company), it is now sponsored by Suzuki.
- 3.36 Singapore has only qualified once for the Asian Cup, and is currently second in its qualifying group for the 2011 event, behind Iran.

National Football Academy

- 3.37 The National Football Academy was launched in 2000 with the aim of developing Singapore's most promising young footballers.

Football Development in Hong Kong

- 3.38 Trainees are scouted through a systematic talent identification process before being given the chance to develop their skills under the best youth coaches in the country. The NFA has teams at every age level from U14 to U18.
- 3.39 The Academy is housed in its own building with adjacent training field and swimming pool at the Jalan Besar Stadium. The operation is geared towards producing players of outstanding football ability as well as aiding their physiological, psychological and academic growth.
- 3.40 The main objectives of the NFA are:
- **To provide a conducive football training environment, coupled with programmes to assist trainees in their studies and career planning.**
 - **To help players of outstanding ability to develop to their fullest potential.**
 - **To groom outstanding young players for the Prime League, S.League and eventually to represent Singapore.**

Singapore Sports School

- 3.41 The Singapore Sports School was established in 2002. It is responsible for training U13 to U16 School Teams. Besides sport training programmes, the Singapore Sports School also provides academic programmes, with a view to providing a seamless academic pathway from secondary school to university.

Commercial Activity/Media & Television

- 3.42 The S. League is the biggest commercial brand in Singapore football. The title sponsors are Great Eastern (insurance) and Yeo Hiap Seng (a drinks manufacturer). Other sponsors include Tiger Beer, RHB Bank, Polar Mineral Water and Avaya Communications.
- 3.43 Matches in the S. League are shown on television on Friday evenings. The S. League claims (SOURCE: www.sleague.com) that the weekly live telecasts on MediaCorp Channel 5 have seen the viewership figures go up to a weekly average of 69,000 in 2007 from an average of 37,000 in 2006.
- 3.44 The S. League labels the Friday Night Football programme “an outstanding success” and states that total match attendances increased from 416,713 in 2006 to 469,752 in 2007.
- 3.45 Other activities which can be sponsored are the School Outreach programme, the Care United programme (both noted above) and the S. League awards night.
- 3.46 The legalisation of football gambling has had a significant impact in creating funding for the sport – the Singapore Pools and Tote Board are official partners.

Coaching & Officials

- 3.47 Coaches are licensed according to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) requirements. For the ‘C’ level badge, requirements are as follows:
- **Above 21 years of age but below 35 years old**
 - **Passed the Pre-Requisite Entry Test (PRET) theory paper**
 - **Passed the National Skills Test**

Football Development in Hong Kong

- **National players, ex-national players and players with at least 2 years playing experience in the S League are exempted from the PRET and Skills Test**
 - **Possess a valid Standard First Aid Certificate**
 - **Physically fit to participate in all practical sessions**
 - **Proficient in spoken and written English**
 - **100% attendance required to complete the course**
 - **Application is subject to the approval of the Technical Director, FAS**
- 3.48 There are currently more than 450 AFC qualified coaches in Singapore. 302 coaches have a 'C' certificate, 120 have the AFC 'B' certificate; 27 have the 'A' certificate and 7 have the AFC Pro Licence.
- 3.49 FAS provides additional coaching training opportunities such as the FAS Preliminary Certificate Coaching Course at ITE Bishan and Republic Polytechnic, which is an enrichment programme for selected students from ITE Bishan and Republic Polytechnic. The participants (18 to 20 years old) are typically involved after the course with the campus football outreach programmes.
- 3.50 The FIFA/IOC Solidarity Course - Grassroots and Youth Development Coaching programme provides coaches with an insight to grassroots and youth talent identification, scouting and coaching.
- 3.51 The FAS has a referees committee which oversees the affairs of all referees in Singapore, including development, welfare and appointments. Programmes organised by the committee include refereeing courses and referees' development training.
- 3.52 There are 204 registered referees, of which six are FIFA referees and eight are FIFA assistant referees.
- 3.53 Other development strands in 2008 included an S.League Referees Seminar to refresh and improve the technical aspects of the Laws of the Game and also on field performance. Both field trainings and theory lessons were conducted during the seminar. Regular training and analysis is carried out to improve referees' performance.
- 3.54 At a grassroots level, referees are organised centrally. Clubs contact the FAS, which then allocates officials.

Critical issues, strengths and weaknesses

Strengths and opportunities

- Fairly good comparator for Hong Kong – slightly higher in FIFA rankings (134)
- Good base of football at most levels
- Fairly strong Football Association which seems well organised
- S. League does provide a platform for developing professional game and has TV exposure
- Some success at creating a domestic appetite. S. League has fair attendances and international matches fairly well attended
- National Academy has been developed
- Football betting funds the sport and has been adopted as a partner
- Women's and girls' football has reached a far higher level of development than that in Hong Kong
- New National Stadium at Sports Hub would be a fantastic resource

Weaknesses and threats

- Some issues over facility quality, and lack of football-orientated venues – all main stadia are similar and multi-purpose
- The S. League is behind rivals (particularly Japan) in terms of its professionalism and status
- National team has not enjoyed significant success – current Asian Cup campaign very important
- Sports Hub facility has been placed on hold due to the economic crisis. We understand that it will be built once things improve. It will be a threat to the sustainability of sport in Singapore, if it does not.
- Concerns about impact of foreign players and development

China



- 3.55 The Chinese Football Association made the decision to establish a professional league in 1994 following a realisation by the China Football Association that the existing system was not working, especially when assessing the previous results and lack of qualification for major tournaments.
- 3.56 The Chinese Football Association realised that it did not have the experience to develop the league and sought external assistance to establish the Chinese Super League. The Chinese Football Association was advised and supported by International Marketing Group (IMG).
- 3.57 China, prior to establishing the Chinese Super League had no experience of player transfers, agents, professional associations, contracts and rights, franchising and media control.
- 3.58 The China Football Association studied how successful football nations achieved international success and the following elements were considered to be important in developing football in China:
- 1. Commercial backing and sponsorship**
 - 2. Experienced football managers from overseas**
 - 3. Talented football players from overseas**
 - 4. A competitive league structure**
 - 5. A national cup competition**
 - 6. Invitational tournaments with overseas teams**
 - 7. Exporting good players abroad to gain international experience**
 - 8. Developing youth teams**
 - 9. Raising media awareness**
 - 10. Establishing links with foreign clubs**
- 3.59 Football in China was on an upward curve from 1994 which culminated in China's qualification for the 2002 World Cup Finals.
- 3.60 Football in China enjoyed a wide cross-fertilisation of ideas and practices brought about by the exchange of players, managers and officials on a world-wide scale.
- 3.61 In the early stages of development, the migration of expertise into China was through managerial and coaching appointments and through middle ranked players.
- 3.62 In 2002 and especially after the World Cup which showcased players, there was a migration of Chinese players to top European clubs.
- 3.63 Since 2002, there has been a decline in the performance of the national men's team.

Football Development in Hong Kong

3.64 The reasons given for the decline in football success at a national level include:

- **Poor technical standards in training, selection and preparation**
- **Lack of leadership**
- **Low participation and little grass roots football development**
- **An over-reliance on foreign coaches**

3.65 To address the current problems the Chinese Football Association has produced a 10 year Football Development Strategy with the objective of improving the youth players in China.

3.66 The Strategy does not set any targets for the national teams to achieve in terms of success at international competitions or FIFA World rankings

3.67 RMB 40 million has been allocated to develop youth football and the activities include:

- 1. A programme to increase the number of qualified coaches**
- 2. Establish links and partnerships with other international football associations**
- 3. Send the best young players overseas to gain experience and learn from international coaches**
- 4. Organise more international friendly and competitive matches for the national teams.**

3.68 There has been a decrease in the number of young football players in China and the Chinese Football Association is organising more programmes at grass roots level. The funding for these programmes is from local government, and the Chinese Football Association provides the coaches.

3.69 The Chinese Football Association runs National Youth Leagues for age groups at under 19, under 17 and under 15 years of age.

3.70 The Chinese Super League is the leading professional league in China with 16 clubs. The majority of the clubs play at government-owned stadiums.

3.71 Early interest in the Chinese Super League was high with good attendances, sponsorship and media coverage. In recent years there has been a problem with corruption in the game which has had a negative impact on the league. Sponsors pulled out, the media stopped covering the games and attendances dropped and the average attendance in 2008 was 13,543.

3.72 Chinese Football Association and Chinese Super League officials stated that they would be keen for Hong Kong to enter a team in the Chinese Super League, but they would have to gain approval from the league shareholders and a team could not go direct into the Chinese Super League. A Hong Kong team would need to join the Chinese 'A' League and get promoted into the Chinese Super League.

Background

3.73 FIFA statistics from the Big Count 2006 show that China has the following:

- **26,166,335 players (1.99% of population)**
- **25,455,100 unregistered players**
- **711,235 registered players**
- **1,621 clubs**
- **129,057 officials, coaches etc.**

Governance

- 3.74 Football in China is overseen by the Chinese Football Association (CFA). The CFA was established in 1924 and is responsible for governing football. The CFA is a member and under the guidance and supervision of the Chinese Sports Ministry – the president of the CFA is usually designated by the Sports Ministry.
- 3.75 The roles and responsibilities of the CFA are:
- **Fully manage football development; make policies, plans and programmes**
 - **Manage all levels of national teams**
 - **Guide the construction of football clubs and youth training**
 - **Organize and make policies, plan and programme national competitions; take charge of officials**
 - **Organize the training of coaches, referees, and member and club staff**
 - **Develop and encourage research, exploit the science of training and improve the level of scientific training**
 - **Dictate standards of pitches, guide the construction of pitches and the development of football equipment**
 - **Exchange experiences and technique internationally and regionally through formal and informal exchanges.**
- 3.76 The CFA oversees the Chinese Super League (highest league in Chinese football) and has authority over all national teams.

League Structure and Facilities

- 3.77 The Chinese Super League (CSL) was created by the rebranding of the former top division Chinese Football Association Jia A League in 2004. The Chinese Football Association Jia League is the current second tier league.
- 3.78 Originally contested by 12 teams, the CSL has been won by four teams: Shenzhen Jianlibao, Dalian Shide, Shandong Luneng, and Changchun Yatai. The current CSL champions are Shandong Luneng.
- 3.79 Under the CSL, there are two divisions in the China League – the Jia League (tier 2) and the Yi League (tier 3). The Jia League currently comprises 13 teams, although this is due to be expanded. The Yi League comprises two groups (Northern and Southern) which play off for promotion to the Jia League.
- 3.80 The other competitions are primarily contested by the bigger clubs – there is a reserve league, which is contested by teams in their respective divisions. There is also a women's Super League, and a women's FA Cup.
- 3.81 Although clubs are independent, there are regular rumours about them being brought under public control. Even at the current time, the league itself is strongly influenced by the CFA and, by association, the Chinese government.
- 3.82 A separate Futsal national league also exists – this is primarily driven by university teams, but is extremely popular.

Facilities

- 3.83 Most of the clubs in the Super League are equipped with high capacity and high quality stadia and venues. Some of the biggest are shown below:

Figure 3.3: Example CSL clubs and venues

Name	Capacity	Notes
Workers Stadium	70,000	Used by Beijing Guo'an FC in the CSL, this multi-purpose venue is one of the largest venues in China. Constructed in 1959 and refurbished in 2004, it hosted the 1990 Asian Games, and football events during the Beijing Olympics. Understood to be owned by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Sports. Club will be hosting Asian Cup, featuring Tottenham and West Ham United.
Helong Stadium	55,000	Built in 1987, primarily used for football matches. Home of Changsha Ginde. All seater venue with roof covering all seats.
Chongqing City Olympic Sports Center	59,000	Built in 2004 and home to Chongqing Lifan (who are the only side to have been relegated from the CSL, currently playing in second division, or Jia League)
Nanjing Olympic Sports Center	61,500	Opened in 2005 to host the Chinese National Games, features an athletics track and other ancillary facilities. Home ground of Jiangsu Sainty FC in CSL.
Yellow Dragon Sports Center	51,000	The centre, built between 1997 and 2003, includes a football (soccer) stadium with a running track, an indoor arena, outdoor track and field practice facility, a sports hotel, a press center, and other facilities for sports such as rhythmic gymnastics, tennis, diving and chess. Home ground of Hangzhou Greentown.

- 3.84 As the table shows, there are few issues with regard to the scale and capacity of the stock of facilities at the highest levels. Most clubs have stadia which more than meet their requirements – if anything the reverse problem is true – there are not enough supporters to fill the grounds.
- 3.85 The statistics regarding numbers and the condition of community-level pitches and training facilities are difficult to source accurately at this time.

Grassroots/Community Participation

- 3.86 Despite the massive potential base of participants, Chinese football has struggled to engage on a grassroots level. As quoted above, the 2006 FIFA Big Count notes that China had 708,754 amateur and youth players from a population of 1.3 billion (ratio of 1:1,834) compared to 738,800 from 41 million (ratio of 1:55) in England.
- 3.87 Grassroots football is practically non-existent. A leading commentator and expert on Chinese football, Rowan Simons summarises the problem: "The Chinese have tried to replicate the elite level of football they see in Europe without seeing that underneath it is a huge infrastructure of community clubs which have been there for generations. You can't create an elite model of football without a grassroots model. The Chinese just don't have the raw number of people involved in the game to produce a competitive team at the national level."

Vision China

- 3.88 Vision China is part of the wider Vision Asia programme which is being run by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) – a massive investment into football on a long term basis. The project is now in its second phase, having been launched in 2002. It is one of the AFC's flagship programmes and is being delivered in a number of countries.
- 3.89 Vision China is being delivered in five Chinese cities at present, with the aim of introducing a further 10 by 2015.
- **Zibo**
 - **Qingdao**
 - **Wuhan**
 - **Nanjing**
 - **Chengdu.**
- 3.90 The investment is aimed at improving infrastructure at the grass roots to encourage more participation at an amateur level.

City Leagues

- 3.91 City Leagues have been launched in each of the above cities (with Zibo the last to be added in 2008). The challenges have been significant, in terms of developing infrastructure, officials and clubs.
- 3.92 While it does appear that the investment is having some positive results, it should be noted that most of this is still aimed at a fairly formal level of the pyramid – probably equivalent to English non-league football. The structure of leagues and competitions also appears to be somewhat haphazard. There is generally little evidence that the layers beneath this are developing in any meaningful way.
- 3.93 However, the creation of 'chartered school' status in each city, to encourage inter-school competitions allows schools with quality to receive proper training equipment from the AFC, Education and Sports Bureaux as well as enjoy special privileges for further football development. School leagues and competitions are beginning to appear in these cities.

Elite Performance/Athlete Development

Chinese School Football Development Programme

- 3.94 In 2009, the Ministry of Sports and Ministry of Education launched the Chinese School Football Development Programme. Costing close to US\$6 million, the China School Football Project (CSFP) is a joint venture between the Sports Ministry, Education Ministry and the China Football Association.
- 3.95 This programme aims to enhance youth interest in football by increasing the number of physical education lessons for football activities and organizing inter-school leagues to select talented players. The programme is planned for implementation in schools late in 2009.
- 3.96 The two central government ministries have issued a directive for the CFA to help boost football in 46 cities across China, targeting 2,292 schools and more than two million young players.
- 3.97 The School Football Project will ensure that football will be more visible in school curriculums. The programme calls for more football in PE courses, after-school football activities, inter-class competitions, inter-school leagues as well as training and education of school teachers.

Chinese National Teams

- 3.98 China is currently ranked 98 in the FIFA rankings. Its highest place was 37 in 1998.
- 3.99 The Chinese women's teams have had far more international success than the men. The women's performances include reaching the Olympic Football Final (1996), FIFA Women's World Cup Final (1999), FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup Final (2004, 2006) and coming fourth in the World Cup in 1995.
- 3.100 The men have only qualified for one World Cup – in 2002. Given the interest in football, this perceived under-performance is a major issue.

Club development

- 3.101 Several European clubs have set up academies or partnerships with Chinese club sides in order to spread their brand, and broaden the search for talented players. English team Sheffield United bought a controlling stake in Chengdu Five Bulls (now Chengdu Blades) in 2005/6.

Youth development/pathways

- 3.102 There are three primary routes by which young talented footballers are developed. The first route is that a youth football team is organized and supported by a professional football club. The CFA established this training system to train the reserves.
- 3.103 The second route sees young players trained in an amateur sport institution or football training school which is managed by the China Football Association and the committee associations.
- 3.104 The third method is via a school-based training approach. The youth football team receives training in a normal school which is qualified to provide high level training.
- 3.105 The number of registered youth footballers has decreased in the past 15 years. From 1990 to 2005, the number of registered youth football team players has diminished from the peak of 0.65 million to 0.18 million. The public image of footballers is not particularly high, and most parents' priorities are in education.

Commercial Activity/Media & Television

- 3.106 The CSL is the primary commercial commodity. A new three-year sponsorship deal was signed for the 2009 season with Pirelli. The deal is worth an estimated €5m per year.
- 3.107 Attendances at games are hugely variable. Beijing Guo'an is probably the best supported club (some attendances reach over 40,000) but other clubs are much smaller. Mid to lower table teams often attract only several thousand spectators.
- 3.108 Beijing Guo'an's primary source of funding comes from the government (primarily Beijing City), hence it has a reduced need for commercial activity.
- 3.109 Fan bases are small and fan loyalty a particular issue. Teams have generally failed to nurture loyal fans and ties with local communities are minimal. Clubs often change their names from season to season as major sponsors go bankrupt or are unwilling to participate in the sport.
- 3.110 As a result building a strong brand name remains extremely difficult. Financial viability is almost a non-concern for choosing the locations of teams. Often, teams will be bought by an individual because of love of the sport.
- 3.111 This investment is almost always unsustainable, but teams continue as local governments often are willing to offer huge tax incentives to keep a team in the city. This has led to the volatile situation where

Football Development in Hong Kong

if the local mayor is replaced, and the policy changes, the team may suddenly become unprofitable.

- 3.112 Marketing of the league has often been criticised as disoriented. The size of China means the pursuit of a unified marketing strategy is unrealistic.
- 3.113 Football is the most widely covered sport in the Chinese media, although in recent years basketball has also risen to prominence. National competitions are generally televised on CCTV-5 - the Sports Channel. Guangdong Television reserves rights, however, for the English Premier League and the UEFA Champions League.

Coaching & Officials

- 3.114 It is understood that the football coaching system is currently being reformed or redesigned.
- 3.115 In general terms, the quality of coaching and control of coaches comes under the control of the CFA. The criteria for coaching qualifications are believed to be in line with AFC criteria – with the Pro Licence, and categories A-D.
- 3.116 It is believed that there are 7,000 level C, 1570 level B and 560 Level A coaches in China. The target of the CFA is to have 200 professional coaches.
- 3.117 As highlighted above, the Vision China programme is providing a broad platform for the development of many smaller schemes. Coach development and coach instruction are central themes – it is recognised that there is a need for more qualified coaches. Similarly, the opportunity to develop referees is being realised by the City Leagues – many referees who have been used in these leagues have moved on to gain higher levels of accreditation.
- 3.118 The CFA Referees Committee (CFARC) is the national committee supervising all the national referees. It also manages and instructs the provincial referee committees. As a division of CFA, its role is to refine the referee policies, help the referees to develop, instruct the work of referees, organize the training of referees and carry out research into referee theory.

Critical issues, strengths and weaknesses

Strengths and opportunities

- Massive potential base – of participants, spectators, players etc.
- Women's and girls football has been strong performer on world stage
- CSL a platform for developing professional game and has TV exposure
- Some success at creating a domestic appetite
- Programmes being implemented to develop lower levels of the game

Weaknesses and threats

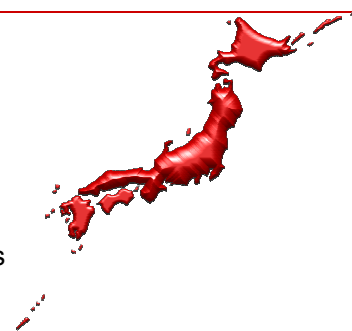
- Lack of international success
- Failure to engage and utilise potential base – poor participation and engagement
- No 'fit and proper person'-type test for club ownership – unsustainable business models
- Greater popular interest in foreign leagues – English Premiership, Serie A, Bundesliga

Addendum: Since this report was prepared football in China has been through some changes and the quality of performance has declined. Interestingly it has recently been announced that in order to recover the situation there will be a focus on strengthening the professional league and administration of the governing body, developing the quality of the national team and expanding the football development programmes particularly at a youth level. To a great extent this mirrors the vision and strategy being recommended in this report.

Japan

Background

- 3.119 Japan is a nation comprising over 3,000 islands with a total area of over 377,800km² and a population estimated at 127m. It has one of the world's largest economies, with a GDP per capita of US\$ 38,000.
- 3.120 The sporting and cultural habits are a fusion of traditional Japanese pursuits – sumo and martial arts – with other outside sports, notably baseball, soccer, golf and motor racing, popular as spectator sports.
- 3.121 FIFA statistics from the Big Count 2006 state the following:
- **4,805,150 players (3.79% of population)**
 - **1,045,150 registered players**
 - **3,760,000 unregistered players**
 - **2,000 clubs**
 - **249,603 officials, coaches etc.**



Governance

- 3.122 Football in Japan is controlled by the Japan Football Association (JFA) which oversees all national football and club competitions including the J League. The JFA was founded in 1921. The role of the JFA is identified as “an organization representing Japan to oversee the football, its dissemination and promotion of soccer, and thereby to contribute to the development of mental and physical health of the citizens.”
- 3.123 Its roles and responsibilities include:
- **Football technology research and guidance**
 - **Control of all rules and regulations**
 - **Referee registration, training and technology research**
 - **Develop football in the community**
 - **Control over the All Japan Championships and other competitions**
 - **Dictate the selection of players and team executives in Japan**
 - **Establish the rules for accreditation of amateur athletes and officials**
 - **Members of the Japan Olympic Committee and the Japan Amateur Sports Association, the only organization representing Japanese football**
 - **Members of FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association, the abbreviation FIFA) and Asian Football Confederation (Asian Football Confederation, the abbreviation AFC), the only organization representing Japan soccer**

- **Publish guidance materials on football**
- **Certification or accreditation of facilities and equipment**
- **Operations necessary to achieve other objectives**

3.124 Further to these areas of responsibility, the Mission Statement of the JFA identifies 11 key targets:

- **Promote “JFA Membership System”**
- **Secure and utilise facilities**
- **Promote “JFA Kids’ Programme”**
- **Vitalise Junior High School football players**
- **Establish elite player development system**
- **Vitalise Women’s football**
- **Promote Futsal**
- **Promote league system and improve competition standards**
- **Vitalise Regional/Prefectural Football Associations**
- **Formulate and implement policies in mid-and-long term perspective**
- **Develop management of sports**

Structure and Facilities

Structure

3.125 The highest level of club football is the professional J League, which is split into two divisions – J1 and J2. The J League is arguably the strongest league in Asia, in terms of influence and profile.

3.126 The league system in Japan is structured as follows:

- **Tier 1 & 2 – J League. J1 & J2**
- **Tier 3 – Japan Football League**
- **Tier 4 & 5 – Japanese Regional Leagues**
- **Tier 6+ Prefectural Leagues and Hokkaido Blocks**

3.127 The top two tiers (J1 and J2) are fully professional. The third level, Japan Football League (JFL), is organized by the JFA, and is a semi-professional league consisting of amateur, professional, and university clubs from all over Japan.

3.128 At the fourth and fifth tiers, nine parallel regional leagues are operated by nine different regional football associations. Some have multiple divisions. The regional associations are divided by political or geographical boundaries.

Football Development in Hong Kong

- 3.129 At the sixth tier and below, parallel prefectural leagues are hosted by each of the 47 different prefectural football associations, again divided by political or geographical boundaries. Some have multiple divisions.
- 3.130 The Emperor's Cup has been held since 1921 and is the national open cup competition, with the J League cup restricted to J League sides. The All Japan Senior Football Championship is the cup for lower tier sides, while the All Japan Regional Football Promotion League Series is a regional round-robin elimination tournament.

Facilities

- 3.131 Information on some of the major venues used for football in Japan is shown in Figure 5.1 below:

Figure 3.4: Example J League clubs and venues

Name	Capacity	Notes
Nissan Stadium (International Stadium Yokohama)	72,370	Used by Yokohama F Marinos as a home ground, it was opened in 1998 and is the biggest stadium in Japan. It hosted the final of the World Cup in 2002. A multi-purpose venue with athletics track
Saitama Stadium	63,700	Built in 2002 to host matches in the World Cup, it is used by Urawa Red Diamonds for big games (club uses Urawa Komaba Stadium at other times – 22,000 capacity)
Shizuoka 'Ecopa' Stadium	51,000	Built in 2001 and the centrepiece of the Ogasayama Sports Park. Used primarily for football, although also suitable for athletics due to track. Ecopa Arena next door used for other performances. Home to Jubil Iwata's big games (club also uses 16,000 Yamaha Stadium)
Hiroshima Big Arch	50,000	All seater venue which opened in 1992 as the venue for 1992 AFC Asian Cup (which Japan played and won). Also hosted the 1994 Asian Games. Home ground of Sanfrecece Hiroshima.
Ajinomoto Stadium	50,000	Otherwise known as Tokyo Stadium – the first venue to offer naming rights for an estimated US\$10m. The home of FC Tokyo and Tokyo Verdy, but also used for concerts etc. Although the venue is built to accommodate athletics, there is no warm up track, so no track inside the stadium has been installed.
Sapporo Dome	41,580	A good example of a multi-functional arena which serves a variety of functions and sports. Has hosted World Cup Football, as well as skiing. Currently used for baseball and football, with retractable pitches.

- 3.132 As would be expected for clubs playing in the J League, the quality of venues is extremely high. This situation has been further enhanced by the requirements of FIFA for hosting the World Cup, which the country did in 2002, with Korea.
- 3.133 Most of the major venues therefore meet strict international standards, and are suitable for every level of club or international competition. Many are also cutting edge in terms of design, layout and technology, providing a superb experience for spectators.
- 3.134 In terms of grassroots facilities, as is explored below, many facilities are found in schools and educational establishments. There has been a pattern of growth in numbers of all facilities (indoor and outdoor) in recent years. However, there is still a demand for more facilities – nearly 40% of the population want increases in the number of facilities, while over 22% would like to see increases in opening hours. (source: Prime Minister's Office: Opinion Survey on Stamina & Sports)

Grassroots/Community Participation

Schools

- 3.135 There are opportunities to play sports at all ages, and school plays an important role in the community. Kindergarten and lower elementary school students can play in a private sports club that can be joined for a moderate fee.
- 3.136 Most martial arts can be started at 4 or 5 years old. From 5th grade onwards, schools offer free after-school activities to students. Middle and high schools encourage their students to join school sports clubs.
- 3.137 Prefectural and national-wide level contests and tournaments are held every winter and summer for all sports. Some of the tournaments, such as the National High School Baseball Championship and High School Soccer tournament are almost as popular among fans as professional sports.
- 3.138 Over 60% of sports facilities are built on secondary education sites, with 24% of facilities publicly accessible. Others are at universities or are privately owned.
- 3.139 The government recognises that the effective use of school facilities is important, but Japan faces challenges in communicating with local people and creating a genuine 'joint use' approach.

Community Sports Clubs

- 3.140 Japan has a strong tradition of community sports clubs. It is believed that around 10% of elementary school age children are members of such clubs, and that there are some multi-sport clubs.
- 3.141 In general terms, clubs tend to specialise in terms of members. Research published by the Japan Sports Club Association suggests that around 90% of clubs were single activity, and 60% were focused on a particular age group.
- 3.142 There is a tendency for clubs to dissolve within 10 years. Also, the efficient use of facilities is a concern, with a lack of coordination.

Girls and Women's Football

- 3.143 As in Europe's advanced countries, Japanese women's football is organized on a promotion and relegation basis.
- 3.144 The top flight of women's football is the semi-professional L League (currently branded as the Nadeshiko League). Most clubs are independent, although the recent trend is to have women's sections of established J League clubs.
- 3.145 Although Japanese fans have generally taken to the sport, Japanese women, especially at national level, have little government or private backing, which makes competing at the highest level difficult. The best result they have had is reaching the World Cup Quarter Final in 1995, although the Japanese came fourth in the Beijing Olympic Games.
- 3.146 According to FIFA notes, there are nearly 36,000 registered female players. 100 clubs are women-only, while 30 offer both men's and women's football. Three dedicated JFA staff take charge of the sport.

Elite Performance/Athlete Development

J League

Football Development in Hong Kong

- 3.147 The J League is the only league which has been given an A grading by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). The J League is the highest level of professional football in Japan, and arguably in Asia. Given its comparative youth – it was only formed in 1993 with 10 clubs, replacing the semi-professional Japan Soccer League – the growth in influence and strength of the league is remarkable, but there have been difficulties.
- 3.148 Following a massive surge of interest after its inception, with average attendances over 19,000 in 1994, the next few years showed a decline in attendance, and created problems for clubs and sponsors.
- 3.149 In 1999, the administration took steps to change the situation. As well as encouraging clubs to build better bonds with their communities, the league structure also changed. Two divisions (J1 and J2) were created, with the Japan Football League as the third tier.
- 3.150 The structure of the season and the game itself has gradually evolved in terms of moving away from 'results' through golden goals, penalty shootouts etc. The strength and depth of the J League is shown by clubs' regular successes in the AFC Champions League – the last two winners were Japanese sides.
- 3.151 Today, the J League has 18 clubs in Division 1 and Division 2, with plans to grow to 22 in each division.

Japanese National Teams

- 3.152 Japan is currently ranked 31 in the FIFA rankings – the second highest nation from the Asian qualifying group (behind Australia). Its highest place was 9 in February 1998. The best performance of the senior men's team was in the 2002 World Cup. They reached the last 16 in the tournament, and also qualified for the World Cup in 2006, but were eliminated at the group stage. They have again qualified for the World Cup in 2010.
- 3.153 The Japanese team has won the Asian Cup three times, making it the joint most successful nation (with Saudi Arabia and Iran).

Commercial Activity/Media & Television

- 3.154 The J League is undoubtedly the powerhouse of Asian football in terms of commercial strength. Its very existence is a testament to massive amounts of planning and corporate investment.
- 3.155 Large sponsorship deals have been a feature of the league since its inception and the investment, sponsorships, salaries, attendances and television audiences are all on a different level to other Asian nations. J League sponsors include Canon, Konami, Calbee and Coca Cola.
- 3.156 Further plans exist to broaden the appeal of the league by encouraging more foreign players to join clubs.

Attendance

- 3.157 The signs are that the game is enjoying a period of growth in popularity. The J. League and J. League clubs launched the "Eleven Million" project in 2007 with the target of reaching an annual aggregate attendance at official matches of 11 million spectators in 2010. The aggregate attendance at official J League matches (including home games of J League clubs in the AFC Asian Champions League) reached an all-time record of 9,130,030 in 2008. The J League average in 2008 was 19,278, although there was significant variation from Omiya (10,714) to Urawa (47,609).

Trends

- 3.158 J League supporters are very technology-orientated. Surveys carried out for the league suggest that 69% of spectators receive information on the sport from its website. Further, 39% of respondents were

Football Development in Hong Kong

season ticket holders, suggesting a high degree of loyalty.

Finance

- 3.159 The average business revenues of clubs in the 2007 business year rose in both divisions to 3.267 billion yen in J1 (an increase of 8% from the previous year) and 1.163 billion yen in J2 (an increase of 2% from the previous year).
- 3.160 The turnover figures by club show 11 J1 or J2 clubs reporting revenues in excess of 3 billion yen. Increases in gate and other revenues have raised club income levels and the number of clubs reporting a current account deficit fell sharply from 15 to 7 from 2006 to 2007.

Television

- 3.161 The amount of televised J League football has increased significantly.
- 3.162 When the league was created in 1993, there were 180 matches, which were shown a total of 204 times. In 2008, there were 306 matches played in J1, with coverage shown 526 times. In J2, 315 matches were shown 403 times.

Coaching & Officials

- 3.163 According to the "Opinion Survey on Stamina and Sports," the Japanese want central and local governments to dedicate significant efforts to the training of sports instructors and coaches. There is a need for more coaches and for better coaches.
- 3.164 The Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture offers various training programmes and courses, including the Lifelong Sports Promoters Course targeting community sports instructors.
- 3.165 As the governing body, the JFA is responsible for developing referees at all levels. The professional refereeing system was introduced in 2002.
- 3.166 In 2008, the number of referees in Japan in all classes and categories increased to 199,792 in 2008 from 187,083 in 2006. This figure includes female referees, who now total 8,023, up from 7,021 in 2006. There were 121 male Class-I referees and 30 Women's Class-I holders in 2008.

JFA Referee College

- 3.167 There are 12 Special Referees, of which six are registered as FIFA referees. Recently, the first graduate from the JFA Referee College joined this group.
- 3.168 The College is the training organization that the JFA established in 2004 in order to train young and talented referees. With the increase in the number of J League matches, it has been vital to have good quality referees for the success and the development of the J League and Japanese football.
- 3.169 The Referee College has so far had 28 students, and 16 of them have qualified as Class-I referees capable of officiating in Division One matches. One of those Class-I referees officiated in Division One in 2008, while three others served in Division Two. Four of them are in their 20s.
- 3.170 The JFA also introduced its Referee National Training Centre system from April 2007 to educate referees across the nation and help them share the same standards. Regional training centre sessions take place every month, while national gatherings are held twice a year.

Critical issues, strengths and weaknesses

Strengths and opportunities

- Strongest professional league in Asia
- Significant commercial strength of J League
- Facility quality very high – inspirational arenas for spectators
- Very strong participation base for women and girls' football
- Intelligent approach to home grounds – many J League clubs have two venues
- Growth in interest in being officials/referees. Referee College a success
- International success

Weaknesses and threats

- J League is still young.
- Some clubs still have grounds which they cannot fill
- J League heavy reliance on sponsorship for finance – not match day orientated
- Japanese FA reliance on J League
- Women's team not successful
- Has J League reached its plateau?



Section 4

Structure and Governance of Football in Hong Kong

4 Structure and Governance of Football in Hong Kong

Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Hong Kong Football Association

- 4.1 The HKFA is the governing body and National Sports Association responsible for football in Hong Kong. The HKFA was established in 1914.
- 4.2 The HKFA is governed by nine Directors who make up the Board, three Advisors to the Board and a number of Task Forces responsible for different aspects of the sport. The current Task Forces include:
- **Disciplinary Task Force**
 - **Appeals Committee Task Force**
 - **Referees Task Force**
 - **Youth & Technical Development Task Force**
 - **TKO Training Centre Task Force**
- 4.3 The HKFA Board of Directors and Task Forces are supported by the HKFA Secretariat. The HKFA mission statement is:
- “To promote and develop football in Hong Kong, including, Professional, Youth and Amateur football, so as to enhance the world ranking and image of Hong Kong football, to provide quality football matches for the people in Hong Kong, and to make football the most popular sport in Hong Kong.”***
- 4.4 The HKFA is responsible for the national representative teams, Hong Kong Leagues (professional and amateur), youth training and development, coach development, referees and discipline.

Hong Kong Football Leagues & Clubs

- 4.5 The Hong Kong Football League Division 1 to Division 3, including the District Junior Leagues at all levels are organised and managed by the HKFA. All fixtures and training sessions are booked by the HKFA for these leagues, clubs, teams and junior squads.

Table 4.1 - HKFA Leagues & Teams

League	Teams
First Division	11
Reserve Division	11
2 nd Division	10
3 rd Division A	20
3 rd Division B (District Teams)	15

- 4.6 A short profile of the 1st division football teams for the 2009 / 2010 season is provided as appendix 8.
- 4.7 The First Division clubs are independent and manage their own business and finances. The money to pay salaries comes from a share of gate receipts, sponsorships and donations from owners or benefactors. First Division clubs require significant financial support from sponsors, owners or benefactors to survive and history has shown that if the sponsor, owner or benefactor decides to withdraw from the club then the club cannot exist. The average home team gate receipt in 2008-09 season was HK\$183,792 which for most First Division clubs is not enough to pay the players' salaries.

Football Development in Hong Kong

- 4.8 The 3rd Division B is for District Teams. The District Teams receive money from the District Councils (approximately HK\$100,000 to HK\$130,000), to run the team and youth teams (6 teams) from under 12 to under 20 years of age. In addition to the HKFA Leagues there are numerous independently run amateur leagues such as the Yau Yee League. These leagues are well established; committee led, and have clubs that have been in existence for many years.
- 4.9 The Hong Kong Football Club is a well established private organisation with excellent facilities. The Club runs the Hong Kong 7's Football Tournament each year which attracts local and international teams.
- 4.10 The Yau Yee League is a well known amateur league consisting of 50 teams participating in 4 divisions. The League has been in existence for over 30 years.
- 4.11 Other leagues include the Herbalgy League which operates three leagues in Hong Kong on hard court surface pitches.
- 4.12 The number of players registered to the HKFA in 2008-09 season was 4,553. The table below illustrates the number of registered players by category.

Table 4.2 - HKFA League Registered Players

Group	Amateur	Contract	Total
First Division	0	310	310
Reserve Division	173	2	175
2 nd Division	265	0	265
3 rd Division A	579	0	579
3 rd Division B (District Teams)	488	0	488
Elite Youth League	338	30	368
Youth Team	1,821	22	1,843
Youth District Team	362	0	362
First Division Futsal	35	128	163
Total	4,061	492	4,553

Government (Central and District)

Home Affairs Bureau

- 4.13 The Hong Kong SAR Government organisation responsible for establishing policies related to sport is the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB). The bureau formulates and coordinates policy for developing sport in Hong Kong and also has the responsibility for the co-ordination and the strategic planning for sports facilities.
- 4.14 The Government's principal objectives for recreation and sport are:
- To raise the profile of sport and physical recreation in the community, emphasising the link between exercise, physical fitness and a healthy lifestyle;
 - To coordinate the provision of high quality recreational and sports facilities;
 - To encourage collaboration among different sectors of the community in fostering a strong sporting culture in the community;
 - To support and facilitate the implementation of initiatives which help make Hong Kong a major location for international sports events;

- To promote sports exchanges with neighbouring provinces/cities in the mainland; and
- To raise the standard and the profile of Hong Kong sport internationally.

Leisure Cultural and Services Department (LCSD)

- 4.15 LCSD is the executive department of the Hong Kong SAR Government that is responsible for implementing policies for sport. It promotes community sport and administers funding support for the relevant organisations under the policy formulated by HAB.
- 4.16 LCSD develops and manages sports facilities for use by the general public, including football grounds, stadiums and football pitches, which can be booked by the public for general use as well as by the HKFA for training programmes and local and international football events. LCSD also supports and organises sports programmes for the community, often in conjunction with the National Sports Associations.

District Football Clubs

- 4.17 There are 18 Districts in Hong Kong which run football teams at all levels.
- 4.18 The District Football Teams focus on youth development and have age groups ranging from under 12's to under 20's. Funding is provided to the District Teams from the District Council's with an average of HK\$145,000 per District per annum (2008-09). The District teams receive venue support from LCSD with each (age group) team in the District League provided with free facilities to train for 36 sessions per season.
- 4.19 This initiative is showing signs of success with two District Teams, Tai Po and Shatin, progressing into the HKFA 1st Division. Other District Teams are also starting to progress through the leagues system.

Education

Primary and Secondary Education

- 4.20 At both primary and secondary level football is one of the most popular sports played in Hong Kong inter-school competition. Whilst predominantly played by boys, there is also a girls' inter-secondary school league.
- 4.21 Inter-school competitions are played between around 85% of all secondary and 60% of all primary schools in Hong Kong. Competitions are organised initially on a round robin basis; as the better teams win through they play each other in a series of quarter, semi and eventually finals matches. The competitions are organised on an area basis reflecting the geographical boundary divisions in Hong Kong.
- 4.22 The inter-school competitions involve thousands of matches per year; the main issue in organising the competitions is the lack of available pitches, and the lack of good quality pitches. Many of the early competition round matches are played on hard pitches. Schools do not necessarily have easy access to their own on site pitch; although there is a recognised standard in Hong Kong for the amount of outside space to be provided for both secondary and primary schools, this does not necessarily translate to the provision of sports facilities, given the lack of land in the built up environment of Hong Kong. Whilst there are some examples of schools sharing pitches, this is not common.
- 4.23 It is important to note that schools have priority access to book community facilities during the school day; however, given the overall lack of both pitches and good quality pitches, this priority does not actually address the major facility issues in relation to football, both within the curriculum and in terms of inter-school competition.

- 4.24 Whilst the resources required to organise the competitions are funded through the Government and delivered through the School Sports Federation, each individual school has to decide how much it will allocate to training for, and competing in, these inter-school matches. There is little squad training of promising young footballers in the education environment.

Higher Education

- 4.25 There are a number of education establishments that offer sports and leisure related degree courses in Hong Kong. At present it is understood that there are no formal university or college scholarships that are available for promising footballers that offer a combination of education and football development. The Hong Kong Sports Institute which does offer this combination does not cater for football as it is not currently an elite sport. Based on consultation feedback however, it is clear that some HE/FE institutions are offering educational opportunities for promising athletes to facilitate their development in specific sports e.g. basketball. There is potential for this approach to extend to football players, and in time become more formalised.
- 4.26 One of the major issues in developing young players is that there is a high drop out rate of players once they reach high school age as education is considered to be a much higher priority for an individual's later life and career than participation in sport, particularly in football. This perspective is underpinned by the fact that a career in football does not currently offer good prospects in terms of salary and lifestyle.
- 4.27 An alternative to the dedicated Football Academy or Centre of Excellence system (see below) is the opportunity for education to be combined with a sports scholarship. For such a system to work effectively in Hong Kong students would need to be able to study any subject in the curriculum, and train and represent the University and/or College at football. Further investigation is needed to assess how well University/College leagues are structured and organised and their competitive level to inform consideration of a future scholarship option.
- 4.28 A combination of higher and further education with football will help prevent talented footballers from dropping out of football throughout their studies, improve the quality of players and offer the clubs another pool of players to choose from when developing football squads.
- 4.29 There is an example of 'best practice' in Singapore at the Singapore Sports School which is focused on developing pupil's education and sports ability. This is a model that could be adopted. The school's mission states that 'we are dedicated to the optimal sports development and academic rigour of our talented student-athletes' and a vision to be 'recognised nationally and internationally as a premier sports school'. The school is not open to all applicants and potential students must apply and attend selection trials to be offered a place at the school.
- 4.30 The excellent quality of facilities, education and sports development is the major attraction for sending a child to the Singapore Sports School. In regard to football the school's soccer academy objective is to provide the nucleus of the National U-23 and Senior Football Team from the schools ranks. The school is focused on the child's education attainment, but also aims to develop talented young football players through:
- **Recruitment**
 - **Quality Coaching**
 - **Safe and Productive Learning Environment**
 - **Rational, Planned and Dynamic training programme**
 - **To prepare boys for life after the Academy**
- 4.31 As a parent of a young, aspiring football player in Hong Kong, a high quality educational and sporting

Football Development in Hong Kong

environment for a child such as the Singapore Sports School would provide an attractive option which combines the opportunity to achieve in terms of both education and sport.

Hong Kong Sports Institute (Elite Sport)

- 4.32 The Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI) is the training base for more than 600 athletes where they can obtain centralised support in terms of training facilities, strength and conditioning, sports science and medicine, as well as accommodation and catering.
- 4.33 To support the elite training programmes, the HKSI Ltd receives recurrent subvention from the Government and derives income from other sources such as commercial sponsorship and private donations.
- 4.34 The Elite Training Programme in the HKSI is the centrepiece of the elite sport training network in Hong Kong. Currently, this programme covers 14 "Elite Sports", athletics, badminton, billiard sports, cycling, fencing, karatedo, squash, rowing, swimming, table tennis, tenpin bowling, triathlon, windsurfing and wushu.
- 4.35 As can be seen by the above list of sports, football is not an 'elite' sport.

Sports Commission

- 4.36 The role of the Sports Commission is to advise the Administration on:
- **Policies, strategies and implementation framework of sports development in Hong Kong**
 - **The provision of funding and resources in support of sports development in Hong Kong**
- 4.37 The Sports Commission will review and advise the Administration on the recommendations made in the Football Development Strategy.

Other Agencies

- 4.38 The following Committees report and inform the Sports Commission and have representatives on the Board of the Sports Commission.

Major Sports Events Committee

- 4.39 The role of the Major Sports Events Committee is to advise the Administration through the Sports Commission on:
- **The strategies and initiatives for the promotion and hosting of major sports events in Hong Kong**
 - **The strategies for partnerships with the sports, tourism and private sectors for major sports events**
 - **The principles, procedures and control mechanism for the allocation of funds for major sports events**
 - **The funding priorities for major sports events**

Community Sports Committee

- 4.40 The role of the Community Sports Committee is to advise the Administration through the Sports Commission on:

- **Strategies and initiatives to promote community participation for all persons in sports which are not classed as elite sports**
- **Establish strategies to foster partnerships with different sectors of the community**
- **To develop student sports**
- **To develop community sports clubs and their interface with district sports associations and national sports associations**
- **The promotion of major community sports programmes**
- **The principles, procedures and control mechanism for subvention**
- **The funding priorities for community sports programmes**
- **The provision of sports facilities in all regions of Hong Kong and the improvement of existing facilities**

Elite Sports Committee

4.41 The Elite Sports Committee advises the Administration through the Sports Commission on:

- **The strategies and long term objective for providing elite training programmes at the Sports Institute**
- **The development of partnership relationship with different sectors of the community and sports training institutions to enhance the delivery of elite sports training programmes and to improve the training facilities in Hong Kong**
- **The co-ordination and mobilization of stakeholders in the sports sector and in the community at large to provide support to elite athletes including their education and vocational development.**
- **The strategies to promote sponsorship and participation of the private sector in elite sports development**
- **The policy direction of the Hong Kong Sports Institute**
- **The principles, procedures and control mechanism for the allocation of funds for elite sports**
- **The funding priorities for elite sports development**

Hong Kong Jockey Club

4.42 The Hong Kong Jockey Club, founded in 1884 to promote horse racing, is a non-profit organisation providing horse racing, sporting and betting entertainment in Hong Kong.

4.43 The Hong Kong Jockey Club holds a government granted monopoly in providing pari-mutuel betting on horse racing, the lottery and fixed odds betting on overseas football. The Jockey Club is the largest private donor to charity in Hong Kong contributing on average HK\$1 billion a year.

4.44 The Jockey Club has funded numerous sports projects and is supportive of the development of sport in Hong Kong. The Jockey Club donated HK\$413,000 to the Society for Community Organisation to organise a team in the 2006 Homeless Football World Cup. In addition, HK\$88 million was donated to

Football Development in Hong Kong

establish the Hong Kong Jockey Club Sports Medicine and Health Science Centre to support the hosting of major sports events and provide support for elite sports athletes. The centre works with Tai Po Football Club offering a series of physical ability tests.

4.45 The Hong Kong Jockey Club has a history of working closely with the Government organisation, bodies and LCSD including:

- **The Club has assisted LCSD to run the Beijing 2008 Olympic Torch Relay in Hong Kong and provided Sha Tin Racecourse as the venue for staging the Community Celebrations on 2 May 2008**
- **The Club worked with LCSD to promote the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games by supporting two live sites set up by the LCSD at Victoria Park and Sha Tin Park during the Games period.**
- **The Club donated HK\$ 864 million to fund the establishment of the Hong Kong Stadium. The Kowloon Park sports complex and many of the city's public swimming pools were also built wholly or partly with the Club's contributions.**
- **The Club sponsored the cost of close to HK\$ 600 million for the reclamation, initial construction, capital and some operational costs for the Jubilee Sports Centre (now the Hong Kong Sports Institute).**

4.46 The Club has demonstrated expertise in developing sporting talent. Established in 1972, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Apprentice Jockeys' School is aimed at realising the Club's commitment of grooming home-grown talents and developing them into world class riders. In 2005, the School introduced a formalised all-round training programme for interested young people aged 15 or above who have completed Secondary Three education and possess diligence, and a positive, attentive attitude, as well as a passion for sports. The trainees are given a professional and demanding training programme, with the opportunity to train and race internationally. Around 20 racing trainees are recruited each year for the programme. The quality of jockey's from Hong Kong is recognised worldwide and the jockeys are now the graduates from this successful programme.

4.47 The Jockey Club understands the popularity of football in Hong Kong and the need for more facilities for intensive football training. With this understanding, the Club has indicated its support for the establishment of a football training academy in Hong Kong with the following objectives:

- **To establish a football training academy with high-quality pitches and other auxiliary facilities which will serve as a major football training ground**
- **To provide intensive residential training programmes for the youth squad and national squad at elite level**
- **To raise the professional football image of Hong Kong internationally and stimulate public interest in football**



Section 5

Football Facilities

5 Football Facilities

- 5.1 Hong Kong's public football facilities include the Hong Kong Stadium and sports grounds that are used for competitive football matches in Hong Kong. The Stadium and sports grounds are owned, managed and operated by LCSD.
- 5.2 The Stadium and sports grounds can be booked by a variety of users including members of the general public. Certain groups are allowed to make block bookings in advance such as schools and National Sports Associations. The LCSD works closely with the HKFA in booking grounds for the football leagues and facilities for football development programmes.
- 5.3 The District Sports Associations use the sports grounds for a range of mixed sports programmes, including the District youth and senior football teams.

Hong Kong Stadium

- 5.4 The Hong Kong Stadium is the main outdoor sports arena in Hong Kong. The stadium is used almost exclusively for football and rugby as the stadium does not have an athletics track and concerts have not been held there due to complaints from local residents. The stadium was redeveloped from the old Government Stadium in 1994 and has a capacity of 40,000.
- 5.5 The stadium is ideal for hosting football competitions and matches as it offers good unrestricted views from all areas of the ground. The main problem with the stadium is the quality of the surface. The stadium has a history of turf problems due to the fact that the grass is on a sandy base and parts of the stadium do not get direct sunlight due to the stadium roof design.
- 5.6 The future of Hong Kong Stadium is uncertain following the construction of the new 50,000 Kai Tak Multi Purpose Stadium which is due to open in 2018.

Football Training Centre

- 5.7 There is currently no dedicated football training facility in Hong Kong. We consider that the development of a Football Training Centre is vital for the long term health and development of football in Hong Kong.
- 5.8 A training centre would be a major asset in the development of players, coaches and referees in the region. The HKFA would be able to use the centre as a training base for Hong Kong representative senior and junior teams.
- 5.9 A training centre should also house medical, exercise, science, coach, video analysis and education departments. Accommodation is required to allow players or course attendees to stay at the training centre. Additional facilities should include a quality fitness centre and a rehabilitation swimming pool.
- 5.10 There is a need for a mix of natural turf and artificial pitches, with the preferred development option including a covered full size artificial football pitch to allow training to take place in all weather conditions.

Figure 5.1 - Example of covered football pitch



- 5.11 Providing an accessible base of operations, like the site for a football academy identified at Tseung Kwan O, seems to be an obvious solution in stimulating growth in the Hong Kong talent.
- 5.12 There are obvious concerns about the initial capital cost of building a training centre and then the on-going management, operational and maintenance costs. Plans and designs have previously been developed and it is not the intention of this study to delay matters further, but it must be noted and stressed that the correct facility mix is critical in ensuring that the centre is sustainable for the long-term.
- 5.13 A quality training centre would also provide a potential winter training base for overseas teams and generate an additional income stream. It is recommended that proper planning, detailed design, feasibility study and business case be produced before the scheme goes ahead.
- 5.14 The Hong Kong Jockey Club has previously pledged HK\$103 million towards the funding of the proposed football training centre. The scale, scope and facility mix proposed in this report will require a greater outlay in order not to compromise the quality of the training centre.
- 5.15 At present it is understood that discussions are taking place between the Jockey Club, the Government and the HKFA on the development of the centre.

Mong Kok Stadium

- 5.16 Mong Kok Stadium for many years has been the venue for most HKFA 1st Division games, Asian Cup matches and the training venue for the Hong Kong Football Teams of all age groups. The stadium is under going re-development at present. The grass surface has often been poor with many bare patches. This is a result of over use and not enough 'down time' between matches to maintain the pitch.
- 5.17 The stadium has a capacity of 7,700, seating on all four sides with a partially covered main stand over the central and VIP areas.
- 5.18 The stadium closed for re-development in the autumn of 2009 for a period of 18 months. The re-development programme will include the addition of further cover, closed circuit television, refurbished seats and changing rooms and improved lighting. The re-development will improve the quality of the

Football Development in Hong Kong

stadium, but will result in the capacity being reduced to 6,500.

- 5.19 Due to the fact that the Mong Kok Stadium is closed for re-development and the Hong Kong Stadium would not be able to withstand the full programme of matches that the Mong Kok Stadium normally accommodates, the HKFA, in consultation with LCSD, has allocated a home ground to each 1st Division Football Club for the 2009-10 season.
- 5.20 The allocation of grounds to 1st Division Clubs for the 2009-2010 football season is as follows:

Table 5.1 - 1st Division Football Club Ground Allocation 2009-2010

Ground	Capacity	Athletics Track	Football Club/s
Hong Kong Stadium	40,000	No	South China AA Kitchee SC
Siu Sai Wan Sports Ground	12,000	Yes	Citizen AA
Sha Tin Sports Ground	2,900	Yes	Shatin SA
Yuen Long Stadium	5,000	Yes	TSW Pegasus FC
Tai Po Sports Ground	2,500	Yes	Tai Po FC
Tsing Yi Sports Ground	1,500	Yes	Sun Hei Tuen Mun Progoal
Sham Shui Po Sports Ground	2,194	Yes	Fourway
Kowloon Bay Park	1,152	No	Happy Valley AA Advance Tai Chung

- 5.21 Two District Teams, Sha Tin and Tai Po, are based at grounds within their own districts, which has led to the development of a shared club and district identity. The local community are able to support and follow clubs based in their district and the District Youth Teams provide direct pathways from the Youth Development Programmes in the area into the reserve and first team. The other Clubs in the First Division do not have such a close bond with specific district communities or potential supporters in the stadium or ground that they have been allocated and therefore it is difficult for the clubs to develop a supporter base which would improve the rivalry and competition between the clubs.

Football Pitches and Training Facilities in Hong Kong

- 5.22 Football is an extremely popular sport in Hong Kong and the demand for facilities during peak periods is very high and significantly exceeds supply. The quality of the sports grounds is variable.
- 5.23 The Hong Kong Football League Clubs (1st to 3rd Divisions) and the District teams are required to book training facilities through the HKFA. The HKFA liaises with the LCSD to allocate the training facilities for these football teams.
- 5.24 The demand for the training facilities far exceeds the supply of pitches in Hong Kong and this leads to pressure on LCSD to offer equity in allocating quality training facilities close to where the teams/clubs require a venue. There is an additional demand for training facilities and pitches from the general public and due to the policies in place in relation to making these facilities available to all members of the community, the demands are increasingly high.
- 5.25 The under-provision of facilities results in over use of the training facilities, including natural turf pitches, and LCSD not being able to allocate a specific venue to clubs and teams on a block booking basis. This results in the clubs and teams not being able to have a consistent venue and time for training which impacts on the quality of training sessions and the ability for both the coaches and players to plan their schedules in advance. The position is not conducive to developing quality training programmes.

5.26 The total number of football pitches available through LCSD is as follows:

- **Natural turf pitches** **50**
- **Artificial turf pitches** **24 (11 are 3rd Generation*)**
- **Hard court pitches** **231**

** 3rd Generation is a type of artificial turf pitch that is approved by FIFA for competitive football.*

Site Visits

5.27 Site visits were undertaken as part of this study to assess the quality of football facilities in Hong Kong. The site visits included natural turf, artificial turf and hard court pitches and training facilities. The site visits focused on the facilities that are available for club, team and public bookings for football.

5.28 Over 60% of all natural turf pitches in Hong Kong available for booking through LCSD were assessed as part the study.

5.29 The site visits were undertaken during the summer season and many of the pitches were under repair. There was evidence that many of the natural turf pitches were in a poor condition due to excessive use during the football season and the climatic conditions that the pitches are subjected to in Hong Kong.

5.30 It is understood that the natural turf pitches can be used for up to 60 sessions (1.5 hours per session) per month. This amount of use of a natural turf pitch is extreme and unsustainable in any climate let alone one as challenging as Hong Kong. The result is that the pitches are damaged and the quality deteriorates within a few months of play.

5.31 The majority of the sports grounds that will accommodate the first division football clubs in the 2009-2010 season were under significant repair. The cost of this annual pitch repair is expensive. According to LCSD the cost of pitch repair of the natural turf pitches is equivalent to HK\$700 per session, or HK\$336,000 per pitch per season based on 8 months of play. The cost of repair and the loss of income during the period of repair is very costly to LCSD.

5.32 In contrast, the artificial turf pitches inspected were in very good condition. Several of the new artificial turf pitches such as Cherry Street Park and Kwong Fuk Park are excellent and were use during the site visits unlike the natural turf pitches that were out of commission. The artificial turf pitches require minimal maintenance and can be used 100% of the time. It is estimated that the artificial turf pitches can be booked for 270 sessions per month as opposed to the 60 sessions per month for a natural turf pitch.

5.33 It makes good business sense to convert a large proportion of natural turf pitches to artificial pitches to allow the clubs, teams and public to get the maximum amount of use from the football facilities, to generate additional income and to reduce maintenance costs.

5.34 The main advantages of a 3rd Generation artificial football pitch are:

- **Artificial turf can be a better solution when the environment is particularly hostile to natural grass. An arid environment or one where there is little natural light are examples of where an artificial turf pitch is a better option than natural turf.**
- **Artificial turf can withstand significantly more use than natural grass and can therefore be used much more frequently. This allows sports ground owners to generate more income from their facilities.**

5.35 LCSD is in the process of constructing four new artificial pitches and converting four existing artificial turf pitches to 3rd Generation (or potentially the latest 4th Generation) surfaces. This action is to be

commended, and the programme of replacing turf pitches with artificial ones should be accelerated.

Schools and University Facilities

- 5.36 The main challenge facing football participation in both primary and secondary schools is the lack of access to good quality facilities. Whilst some schools have some form of pitch, this is often hard-surfaced and is also used as a playground area. Schools have been accorded priority access for booking community football pitches during the school day but this does not actually address the lack of facilities, as the number of available and good quality pitches is also limited.
- 5.37 The lack of good quality, on-campus football pitches across Hong Kong presents a challenge to the future development of the game. Whilst it is clear that the lack of available land prevents the large scale development of pitches, it should be recognised that on-site pitches encourage both informal and formal participation and make it easier to organise inter-school competitions, and to provide coaching as part of curriculum delivery. The fact that the majority of inter school football competition matches have to be played off site presents logistical challenges and also involves significant cost in terms of transport, pitch hire and time.
- 5.38 There are a few developing examples in Hong Kong where the issue of access to on-campus pitches is being addressed. Essentially this involves the concept of pitch sharing through a Schools' Village.
- 5.39 The Schools' Village concept (there is currently one example in Hong Kong at Wong Tai Sin) could offer a potential option for future pitch development and would help to overcome the key issues facing football participation and development in schools – lack of pitches, poor quality of available pitches and the need to travel off site to take part, which has both time and cost implications.
- 5.40 The key issues for future development of football in education are the need to address the facility issues – quantity, quality and availability, and the opportunity to better harness the interest in participation, (as evidenced by the high numbers of young boys and girls playing in inter-school competitions). The establishment of clear and well structured development pathways will facilitate increased participation at recreational level in local leagues on good quality playing surfaces (which contributes to increased physical activity and improved health), and critically identify, develop, support and realise individual talent from school to national team and competition.



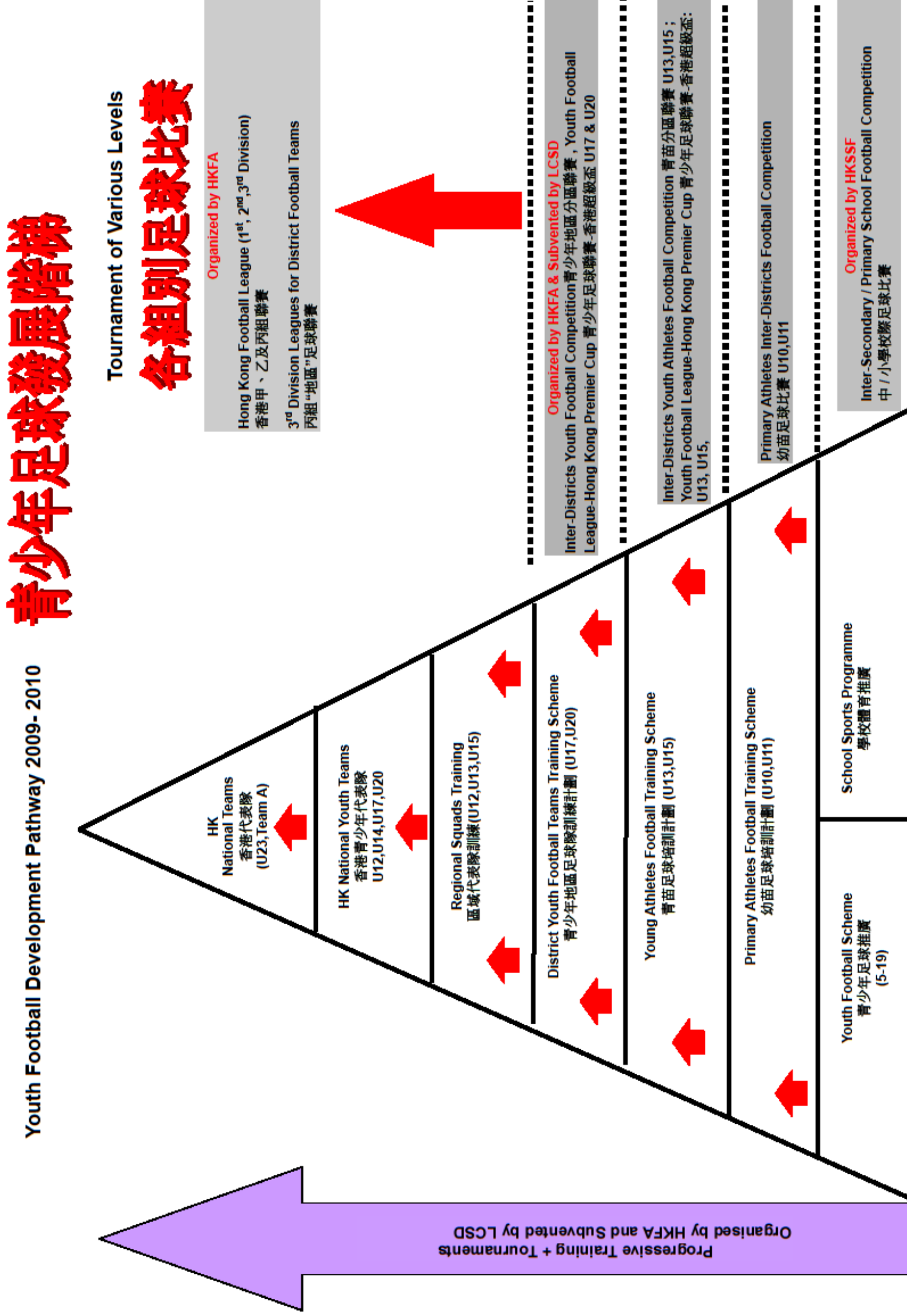
Section 6

Football Development – Community to Elite

6 Football Development – Community to Elite

- 6.1 Youth Development Football programmes and pathways have been established by the HKFA and LCSD. The programmes start at grass roots entry level for young children up to the elite regional and Hong Kong representative level to the age of 20 years.
- 6.2 LCSD is providing an annual subvention to the HKFA of about HK\$7.5 million in 2009-2010. Of this sum, HK\$5.9 million is allocated for football programmes. The majority of this funding is used for the organisation of youth development programmes.
- 6.3 The programmes include participation in the schools, community and Districts. These development schemes, initiatives and programmes exclude the coaching and football development that is taking place within the football clubs and the commercial football/soccer training schools that operate throughout Hong Kong.
- 6.4 The HKFA and LCSD have developed a progressive and systematic football development pathway

Figure 6.1 - Youth Development Pathway Model (Organised HKFA & subvented by LCD)



Grass Roots – Quantity versus Quality

- 6.5 The Government, through Annual Subvention to the HKFA, is funding junior and youth football development programmes. The level of funding is in the region of HK\$ 3.9 million a year of which 20% is venue charges back to LCSD.
- 6.6 The breakdown of the annual subvention to development programmes for 2009-2010 is detailed below:

Table 6.1 - Breakdown of the annual subvention to development programmes for 2009-2010

Development Programme	Annual Subvention (HK\$)
Youth Football Schemes	1,542,150
Primary Athlete Football Training Programmes	337,003
Young Athlete Football Training Programmes	1,022,706
District Football Training Programmes	992,458
Total	3,894,317

- 6.7 In the 2008-2009 season the total number of participants on the junior and youth football development programmes was over 48,000.

Table 6.2 - 2008-2009 season the total number of participants

Programme	Number of Participants	Number of Events
Primary Athletes Football Training Scheme	3,240	74
Young Athletes	5,120	100
District Youth	6,260	113
Youth Football Scheme	29,976	1,534
Regional Squad Training	90	3
Total	48,366	2,054

- 6.8 In addition, there are community football and promotional football activities such as the 'now TV' programmes which attract a further 15,000 participants.
- 6.9 There appears to be a focus on getting a high number of participants on the programmes and schemes and monitoring these figures. This demonstrates commitment on behalf of the HKFA and Government. However, the participation rates and number of events does not automatically mean that programmes are actually improving the quality of football in Hong Kong.

Pathways and Continuum

- 6.10 It is evident that football development for young players is not as developed as it could, and should, be in Hong Kong. There are lots of opportunities and there is evidence that pathways exist, but there are gaps and weaknesses in the process and the Hong Kong Football Association does not have any direct contact with certain pathways such as the commercial operators and independent junior leagues.
- 6.11 There is no emphasis on the development of individual football players, although once a school team has reached the final stages of the inter-school competition, a school can elect to provide coaching and developmental resources to support them in the final competitive stages.
- 6.12 Equally, there are no clear developmental pathways for football from grassroots recreational play ie 'kick abouts', to participating in school teams and then linking into local clubs. This type of pathway or continuum is not in place to support football participants at either recreational or the more talented level.
- 6.13 This means that an individual who simply wishes to play at school and then in a local team/league to keep physically active has no clear direction to follow in terms of club/league contacts, or opportunities to become more involved in the administrative side of the game.

Football Development in Hong Kong

- 6.14 A talented individual, whilst more likely to be identified as a school team player, equally has no defined pathway to follow in terms of talent development, linking into a Football Centre of Excellence, or a professional Club Academy Programme, alongside educational provision, such as are now in place in all the major footballing countries in the world.

School/Club links

- 6.15 Unlike many major footballing countries, there appear to be very limited developmental resources in Hong Kong e.g. sport specific development officers, school sports co-ordinators who specifically facilitate school to club links. Given the large numbers of participants in football throughout primary and secondary school, there is significant potential to continue such levels of participation beyond the education environment and potentially into the professional game; this is unlikely to happen however without committed developmental resources at all levels.
- 6.16 The developmental resources identified currently appear to be initial support from registered coaches through the HKFA; these coaches are sent into schools to assist in establishing a school football team, and delivering technical training. The Hong Kong School Sports Federation organises school football competitions and regional school sports teams through the different age groups. The senior Hong Kong School Sports Federation team participate in the Hong Kong 3rd Division District League. The links and pathways between the school teams and regional school teams with the clubs is weak and this study will recommend new posts to help solve this issue.

Talent Identification and Development

- 6.17 There are opportunities for young players to progress through the different coaching programmes and these are available across all the Districts (as noted in the HKFA Annual Report noting participation figures). There are coaching programmes operated by the HKFA and funded by the public sector providing opportunities for all junior and youth players in the community. This is a good foundation on which to build.
- 6.18 In addition, the HKFA co-operate with LCSD to provide outreach coaching programmes for local schools.
- 6.19 There are a number of commercial football training companies that operate junior football programmes as a business. These companies offer coaching to children who have the parental support and economic means to attend these coaching programmes and sessions. The courses can, however, be expensive and are therefore not readily available to the whole community.
- 6.20 Due to a lack of career opportunities and the poor remuneration that the top coaches can earn, the sport is losing to private programmes some high-quality coaches and ex-players who would provide a massive boost to the development of junior and youth football in Hong Kong.

Coaching, Coach Education and Officials

- 6.21 The School Sports Federation undertakes the training and development of referees (recruited from local sports and social clubs, and the wider community), essentially to satisfy the demands of the inter-school competitions. Individuals pay a subsidised fee to take part in the courses and when qualified they are then employed by the School Sports Federation as referees, at a significantly higher rate than other referees facilitating inter-school competition in other sports e.g. basketball.
- 6.22 The School Sports Federation also subsidise teachers to gain football coaching qualifications.

Youth Football Scheme

- 6.23 The Youth Football Scheme has the aim of promoting an interest in football for all youngsters in Hong Kong.

Football Development in Hong Kong

6.24 The scheme follows four stages:

- Stage 1: Basic Football Skills Training**
- Stage 2: Advanced Teamwork and Strategy Training**
- Stage 3: Inter-District Competition**
- Stage 4: Inter-Regional Competition**

6.25 The objective of the scheme is to identify and cultivate new talent and improve the standard of football in Hong Kong. The scheme is open to 5-19 year olds.

6.26 The Youth Football Scheme is held during the summer months, all over Hong Kong and run on the hard court surfaces.

6.27 The level of coaching is basic due to the number of coaches required to run the scheme and the programme is aimed primarily at mass participation and not elite development.

District Football Programmes

6.28 The District Football Development Programmes cover 6 age groups from under 12 year olds to under 20 years olds in three groups:

- **Primary Athletes Football Training Scheme** **under 10 & under 11**
- **Youth Athletes Football Training Scheme** **under 13 & under 15**
- **District Youth Football Training Scheme** **under 17 & under 20**

6.29 The Districts nominate their own coaches, but they must have 'C' Licence or above.

6.30 The teams in all age groups receive regular training and the training facilities are provided free by LCSD. Trials are held at the start of each season to select the squads and there is a limit of 30 in each age group.

6.31 The teams play in inter-district league and cup competitions.

Hong Kong Football Clubs Youth Teams (1st & 2nd Division)

6.32 The clubs operate three youth teams, under 20, under 17 and under 15 years of age. The teams participate in an 'Elite' League which has 15 teams.

6.33 The teams participating in the Elite League are eligible to participate in the Nike Cup, but not in the District Cup or Leagues. The District Teams are allowed to enter the Elite League, but they receive no funding or free training sessions from LCSD if they participate in this League.

6.34 There is generally a lack of junior and youth development programmes below the Elite Youth Team age groups.

6.35 One exception is the youth development programme established by FC Barcelona and Kitchee Football Club, which has a curriculum that takes young players through set stages of development. The programme has been developed over many years at the centre of football excellence at FC Barcelona. Similar youth development programmes are in operation at all European Elite Football Clubs which operate Youth Academy Programmes from the ages of 8 years – 16 years. The selection process and talent identification can begin as early as 6 years old for entry and selection into the football schools.

- 6.36 Kitchee Football Club do not charge young players to take part in the programme, although they do have to pass a selection test, which is similar to entry to an advanced youth development squad at all football academies and centres of excellence around the world. The programme receives financial support through sponsorships.
- 6.37 The young players that have been on the programme for 18 months have progressed and the FCB Escola Hong Kong representative teams have achieved success in football tournaments. The programme demonstrates what can be achieved with the right vision, technical programme, quality coaching and financial support to develop young football players at the early stage in their development.

Regional Squad Training

- 6.38 The HKFA arranges regional squad training, selecting players from each age group to attend development programmes to improve the better players. Funding is allocated to support this training.

Hong Kong “National” Youth Teams

- 6.39 The elite players from each age category are selected to represent Hong Kong. The objective is for the players to keep improving by playing against high quality opposition, training with high quality players and receiving high quality coaching. The players can then progress through the age categories with the aim of being good enough to progress to the under 22 or senior Hong Kong Representative Team.

Hong Kong “National” Senior Team

- 6.40 The senior team is the final stage in the process. The ultimate aim of the youth development pathway is to be selected and play for the Hong Kong Representative Senior Team.

Coaching, Education and Officials

- 6.41 The HKFA has a Task Force responsible for the development of Coaches and Referees in Hong Kong. It is essential for the development of football to have well-qualified and experienced officials and coaches.
- 6.42 The HKFA organise regular coaching courses at a range of levels to increase the number of coaches in Hong Kong to promote the sport.
- 6.43 In 2009 the coaching course programme included:

- **Youth Football Leaders Certificate** **5 courses**
- **D Coach Licence** **2 courses**
- **C Coach Licence** **3 courses**
- **B Coach Licence** **1 course**

Hong Kong “National” Teams (profile and performance, the ‘causal link’)

- 6.44 The HKFA are responsible for the management, selection and organisation of the Hong Kong Representative Teams.
- 6.45 The funding for the teams to train and compete internationally comes from FIFA, subventions from LCSD and HAB, and money generated by the HKFA from invitational tournaments and visiting international teams.

Football Development in Hong Kong

6.46 Representative teams include the Men's and Ladies First Team, Youth teams ranging from Under 12 years to Under 20 years, Hong Kong League Selection Team and a Futsal Team.

6.47 The current FIFA and Asian rankings for the teams are (Dec 09):

Table 6.3 - FIFA Rankings

Team	FIFA World	FIFA Asia
Men's	143	26
Ladies	60	13

(August 2009)

6.48 The HKFA does not have a dedicated training venue where the representative teams can meet and train.

6.49 The pay for Hong Kong Football Representative Youth Team Coaches is a reported \$300 an hour. This hourly rate will not encourage the better coaches in Hong Kong to join the Representative Team Coaching Staff.

6.50 The current Hong Kong Representative Team sponsor is Adidas and the deal is for goods and football kit but not any financial contribution which could be invested back to fund into the Representative Team training and coaches.

6.51 Results in recent years have been poor and there has been no progression in competitions for the senior and youth representative teams.

6.52 The lack of facilities and resources, poor results and not being able to attract the best coaches has resulted in an overall poor state of affairs for the Hong Kong Representative Teams.

6.53 This is reflected in the number of matches that the Senior Team have played over the last 5 years which is much less than that of the neighbouring countries including the better and emerging countries in the Asia region.

Table 6.4 - 2005- 2009 Matches Played and Planned (2009)

Country/Region	FIFA Ranking	Cup/Qualifier	Friendlies	Total
Japan	39	40	46	86
China PR	108	21	40	61
Singapore	127	19	42	61
Thailand	117	17	38	55
Hong Kong	134	14	21	35

(Source: FIFA)

6.54 The Hong Kong Senior Men's Representative Team are not as active as the other countries highlighted in the table above. The Hong Kong Team needs to play more friendly matches to develop the team and gain more experience in playing international matches. More matches would also generate interest in football in Hong Kong and encourage spectators to watch the matches. HKFA must be selective about which countries to invite to make sure the game is a competitive spectacle and allow the teams to develop steadily.

6.55 The current profile of the Hong Kong Representative Team is low, few games (average of 7 a year), giving it little opportunity to develop and improve. At this stage in Hong Kong's football development, it would be beneficial to arrange friendly matches with countries with similar FIFA World Rankings such as Thailand, Singapore, UAE, Jordan etc.

Ladies' Football

6.56 In putting in a section specifically about ladies' football, there is a danger that the reader may feel that

Football Development in Hong Kong

the rest of the report is totally male-centric. It needs to be pointed out therefore that this section is just about ladies' football development. The rest of the report is generic and deals with issues that affect both sexes.

- 6.57 Ladies' and girls' football is organised by the Hong Kong Ladies Football Association (HKLFA). The HKLFA organise the Ladies Open League and focus on the Hong Kong Ladies Representative Team.
- 6.58 The HKLFA is led by a Chairperson and organised by a committee. There has been no change in the governance of the HKLFA and the current Chairperson has been in post for the last 30 years plus.
- 6.59 The Hong Kong Ladies League is made up of ten teams. There are no youth or junior leagues for girls to play and therefore the senior teams allow girls from the age of twelve years to participate.
- 6.60 There is a Ladies Nike 5-a-side Hard Court Tournament held annually.
- 6.61 The Youth Development Scheme (Now TV) encourages girls to play football, but there are no pathways for the girls once they leave this grass roots programme. There is therefore a void for girls aged between 7 years to 12 years as there are no teams or leagues that cater for girls of this age.
- 6.62 The ladies' teams have the same issues as the men's and boys' teams in relation to finding suitable training facilities and in many cases the ladies' teams, such as Kwai Tsing and Rangers, have to accept training on hard court surfaces.
- 6.63 Football for girls is limited in schools due to lack of facilities and coaches.
- 6.64 LCSD provides a subvention of \$33,970 in 2009-10 for the Ladies Football League organisation and the payment of football pitches.

Access to Support Services (Sports Science, therapy, psychology etc)

- 6.65 Football in Hong Kong is not classed as an Elite Sport and has therefore not been a part of the Hong Kong Sports Institute since 1997. Young footballers received very good support when they were part of the Sports Institute.
- 6.66 At present the 1st Division Clubs focus on the first team rather than youth development and nurturing potential talent. The clubs are buying in overseas players with the necessary experience and talent to add value to the clubs. There is therefore no incentive to develop sports support services such as sports psychology or sports nutrition to develop young players.
- 6.67 Access to support services for developing young footballers is at present very limited. A training centre for the HKFA Representative Teams would allow for these support services to be provided at a set venue.

Elite Football

- 6.68 There is a need to question whether 'elite' football currently exists in Hong Kong. The honest answer is 'no', elite football is not being played at any level in Hong Kong, although there appear to be positive developments at junior football level with excellent initiatives taking place in the private sector.
- 6.69 Quality of football can be measured in many ways and can differ from one person to the next subject to previous experiences. When measuring Hong Kong football against international standards it ranks poor, as seen in the AFC Study on professional football and the FIFA ranking.
- 6.70 Hong Kong football is suffering in terms of facilities, representative teams, clubs, 1st Division League, funding, remuneration and support for players and the lack of quality football on the pitch which results in a lack of spectators and virtually no commercial activity.

Football Development in Hong Kong

- 6.71 At best the First Division League can be considered semi-professional and the better clubs are only attracting players because of the salaries that the club owners or benefactors are prepared to pay with no return on the investment.
- 6.72 The League system is unstable and potentially in transition. Hong Kong does not have a dedicated Football Training Centre and most existing football grounds are athletics stadiums being used for football.
- 6.73 The overall picture of elite football in Hong Kong is poor and the future is bleak if this decline continues. It could be stated that at present elite football does not exist in Hong Kong in 2009. It is important to address this because success of the professional game and the National team is fundamental in maintaining existing and generating new interest in football.



Section 7

Other Key Issues

7 Other Key Issues

Football Funding & Subvention

- 7.1 LCSD supports the development of football in Hong Kong through the funding of football development programmes and activities at all levels and financial support for national squad training from senior level to youth team age groups and the Ladies Football Team.
- 7.2 Funding is also available for referee training and development.

Table 7.1 - LCSD Football Subvention 2009-2010

Area	\$
International Competition (outside)	463,320
International Competition (Hong Kong)	218,856
Squad Training	607,088
Regional Squad Training	181,167
Football Training Programmes	3,894,317
School Sports Football Programmes	392,480
Local Competitions	157,470
Referee Training Courses	27,635
Meetings	18,025
Total	5,960,358

- 7.3 In addition, LCSD pays for staff and office expenses at HKFA at an annual cost of \$1.5m.
- 7.4 It is estimated that the subvention will support 2,117 football development programmes which will attract over 53,000 participants. The programmes are based in the community (Youth Football Scheme) and at a District level (Primary and Young Athletes Training Programme and the District Training Schemes). 65% of the LCSD subvention is used for football development programmes.
- 7.5 LCSD provides subvention for National Sports Associations in Hong Kong. Football receives the sixth highest level of subvention out of a total of 58 National Sports Associations. The level of subvention and estimated programmes and subvention for the sports in 2009-2010 is shown in the table below:

Table 7.2 - National Sports Association Subvention, Programmes and Participation

National Sports Association	\$	Programmes	Participants
Basketball	9,126,025	976	46,038
Squash (Elite Sport)	9,049,716	1,127	25,711
Badminton (Elite Sport)	8,759,253	1,187	35,893
Swimming (Elite Sport)	8,426,071	418	27,817
Table Tennis (Elite Sport)	7,716,022	1,212	35,030
Football	7,506,215	2,129	54,128

- 7.6 The level of subvention for football is low in comparison to these other sports when considering the popularity of the football and the high number of participants.

Table 7.3 - National Sports Association subvention per programme and participant

National Sports Associations 2009-10	LCSD subvention per programme (\$)	LCSD subvention per participant (\$)
Squash	8,030	352
Swimming	20,158	303
Badminton	7,379	244
Table Tennis	6,366	220
Basketball	9,350	198
Football	3,525	139

Football Development in Hong Kong

- 7.7 In terms of all the National Sports Associations, football is ranked 55th out of 58 in terms of subvention per participant.
- 7.8 The HKFA generates income through levies from football matches, tournament income, subvention from LCSD sponsorships and FIFA subvention.
- 7.9 The HKFA do not have any development plans or strategies in place to take to the Government to request any additional income or funding to promote or improve the quality of football in Hong Kong.

Status of Professional Players and Coaches

Hong Kong Professional Footballers Association

- 7.10 At present the status of a professional football player in Hong Kong is considered low due to salary, limited career prospects and the uncertainty of the clubs remaining in existence due to ownership by benefactors and no strict club regulations in place.
- 7.11 The importance of a professional football players union is highlighted in the quote below from a professional and international football player:

*‘You give your life to football and then it often forgets you. Football clubs have a bad habit of taking players, making the most of them, and then vomiting them up once they’re too old or injured [...] That’s where the **Professional Footballers’ Association (Union)** are so wonderful, because they do not forget anyone’.*

Malcolm MacDonald (ex-professional and international football player)

- 7.12 There is a need to support the rights of a professional football player in Hong Kong at all stages in their development and career. Creating a support network and improving the position of a professional footballer in Hong Kong will result in the status of professional players improving and will encourage more talented young players to enter the sport as a career.
- 7.13 It is recommended that a Hong Kong Professional Footballers Association (HKPFA) be established to protect, improve and negotiate the conditions, rights and status of all professional players t.
- 7.14 The HKPFA would also manage three main areas:
 - **Benevolent Fund**
 - **Accident Insurance Fund**
 - **Education Fund**
- 7.15 The Benevolent Fund would provide financial assistance for any member or dependant past or present who is facing financial hardship. There is also death benefit payable to the next of kin of any member in the event of his death whilst under contract.
- 7.16 The Accident Insurance Fund would ensure that all Hong Kong professional contracted players are covered under an Accident and Sickness Insurance Scheme in the event that they suffer a specific injury or illness which results in their permanent total disability to play professional football. This fund also pays a subsidy to ensure that every player has private medical insurance and immediate access to the best possible treatment.
- 7.17 The Education Fund would provide grants for training and qualifications for players once their careers are over. It would also provide funding for the young players on academy or youth development programmes. The HKPFA could provide advice and guidance on the provision of educational and vocational courses, in preparation for a second career, for all registered and ex-registered professional

Football Development in Hong Kong

players playing in Hong Kong.

- 7.18 To manage and operate the HKPFA on behalf of the professional players in Hong Kong will require the recruitment of a professional team, plus a grant from either the HKFA or other sources, such as the Government. The current financial position of the HKFA means that they are not in a position to fund a proposed HKPFA.

Futsal

- 7.19 Futsal is a variant of association football mainly played indoors, it is a five-a-side game, and is recognised and supported by FIFA.
- 7.20 Futsal is played with a smaller ball with less bounce than a regular football. The rules create an emphasis on technique as well as ball control and passing in small spaces. The hard court pitches in Hong Kong provide a similar type of training facility to that of a Futsal pitch.
- 7.21 A Futsal pitch is smaller than a regulation full size football pitch and is 40m x 22m in size and therefore an alternative to football in Hong Kong with limited space and lack of football pitches.
- 7.22 Below is an example of a Futsal pitch on top of a building in Tokyo.

Figure 7.1 - Futsal pitch in Tokyo



- 7.23 Hong Kong hosted the FIFA Futsal World Championships in 1992 with 16 Nations participating. The HKFA organise the Nike District Football League.
- 7.24 Hong Kong qualified for the finals of the AFC Asian Football Championships in 2006 in Uzbekistan and a representative team is participating in the AFC Futsal Championships 2010 qualification round in November 2009 when Hong Kong will play against Chinese Taipei, Japan and Macau.



Section 8

Developing and Delivering a Strategic Vision for Football in Hong Kong

8 Developing and Delivering a Strategic Vision for Football in Hong Kong

(I) Hong Kong Football Association

Introduction

- 8.1 The most important and potentially influential stakeholder in the delivery of football development is the National Sports Association, the Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA). The World Governing Body FIFA will only recognise and work with one governing body in any country or region. Furthermore FIFA will not permit any direct government intervention in the management or administration of football. It is critical therefore that is the HKFA functions as a strong and independent governing body with a clear strategy and sufficient resources.
- 8.2 The HKFA is responsible for the national representative teams, Hong Kong Leagues (professional and amateur), youth training and development, coach development, referees and discipline.
- 8.3 The HKFA currently organises the HKFA leagues, the booking of training facilities for clubs, the set-up of stadiums and grounds, stewards and ticketing. With the resources at its disposal there is little time for any other activity. It is estimated that 80% of time and resources is used to run the HKFA leagues. This leaves an estimated 20% of time and resources for developing the sport and for looking after representative (“national”) teams. Whilst the organisation of the leagues is an important function, it is clear that other important activities are receiving too little attention.
- 8.4 Developing the national teams does not appear to be a priority for the HKFA. As highlighted in the strategy report, there is a lack of training time, facilities and support services for the teams. There are inadequate funds for the development of elite squads.
- 8.5 This is not a sustainable situation. The ‘club versus country’ issue is particularly relevant in Hong Kong and the current weaknesses of the game exacerbate this problem.
- 8.6 In terms of Youth Development the HKFA receives a subvention from LCSD but this is channelled through the districts, which in turn allocate money as they see appropriate. This leads to inconsistent levels of investment and variations in the quality of the development of young players.

Commentary on Current Situation

- 8.7 As stated above, it is imperative for the development of football at all levels that the HKFA is independent and strong. There can be no compromise on these two criteria.
- 8.8 In relation to the first point, we can conclude that the constitution of the HKFA affords it the degree of independence from the Government required by FIFA. The regulations do permit government funding of the governing body and a partnership where the public sector provides advice, support and facilities. On a separate point however, we do believe that there should be a degree of further separation between the FA and the football leagues and this issue is discussed later.
- 8.9 In relation to the second point, the strength of the organisation, we have some reservations. The remit of this study precludes a full operational review but inevitably the ability of the HKFA to deliver the current and future needs of football has been a recurring theme.
- 8.10 It is easy to condemn the HKFA and to place at its door the many issues and problems associated with football in Hong Kong. It is neither our role nor our intention to do so. The individuals that serve the FA both as employees and elected officials are without exception dedicated and enthusiastic.
- 8.11 We applaud their commitment and the way they continue to do their best for the game they love in

difficult circumstances. We merely seek to comment in an independent and objective way on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the existing structure and its ability to lead the transformation of the sport that is so desperately needed. Our work has highlighted a number of key issues and these are summarised below.

- 8.12 It is worth mentioning that it is not just Strategic Leisure that has reservations about the ability of the current HKFA to deliver the step change necessary for football to reach its potential in Hong Kong. Earlier in this report we highlighted the AFC assessment that ranked Hong Kong low against other AFC nations on a range of criteria. The AFC report points to the need for significant change.

Key Issues

- **Long-term vision:** It is of concern that there appears to be no strategy or action plan for the development of football in Hong Kong. A long-term 'dream' with associated strategies and plans is one of the key factors that has led to the success of football in Japan. A clearly articulated and communicated vision with targets for achievement is crucial for any organisation to function effectively. This is particularly relevant for a sports governing body where many other stakeholders and partners need to 'buy-in' to the direction of travel and contribute to its delivery. We believe that the vision set out in this report could be adopted by the HKFA. This would provide a focus for future investment and action.
- **Governance and Modus Operandi:** The FA (in keeping with many sports governing bodies) is immersed in an administrative culture and bureaucratic systems. There is a focus on internal procedures rather than on strategic leadership of the sport. Part of the reason for this is the lack of a strong secretariat with sufficient empowerment and resources to manage the day to day operation.
- **Articles of Association:** The system of electing officials to the HKFA does not help the development of football. The two-year tenure is too short to get any consistency and to develop and implement change. Almost as soon as someone is appointed, they are focussed on the need to get re-elected. The 'pool' from where members are drawn from also mitigates against an independent and strategic organisation. We understand that representatives from the clubs form the FA Council. There are inevitably conflicts of interest and vested interests. The 'power base' lies with clubs and club directors have a disproportionate influence on FA procedures, direction and policy. This is not a healthy situation for the sport as a whole.
- **Planning for football development:** As a consequence of having no overall strategic plan, vision, priorities and targets, there is a lack of planning for sports development, youth development, facility development, league development etc. There should be clear, coherent and linked plans for the various strands of activity. Other stakeholders should be able to take a lead from the HKFA and structure their own plans and pathways accordingly. This will lead to greater coordination across the sport.
- **No "national" football training centre:** One of the FA's main priorities should be the elite end of the continuum i.e. the "national" team and development squads. Although there are discussions regarding a new training centre, nothing is in place at the moment. This is seen as a major omission and one to be rectified quickly. This does need to be done correctly however and this issue is dealt with in more detail elsewhere in this report. It is important to note that a "national" training centre does not imply a centralised approach to football development. The centre will need to be coordinated with other providers and the professional clubs in particular who through this strategy will be encouraged to develop their own academies.
- **Commercial awareness and involvement:** Most national FAs derive a large proportion of their income from commercial activities such as merchandising, sponsorship and TV rights. The HKFA has no commercial department and this vital income stream is not there. The lack of commercial revenue reduces what can be achieved and the influence of the HKFA at both ends of the continuum.

- **Promotions:** The FA must promote their own competitions such as the HKFA Cup as an occasion to raise awareness, attract existing and new spectators and show case youth development and youth elite squads to encourage other young potential players in Hong Kong.
- **Financial resources and opportunities for investment:** The sport of football in Hong Kong is stagnating. There is insufficient money circulating in the sport to make a difference. There is a need for investment in many areas, both capital and revenue for example in facilities and development programmes for players, coaches and officials. As stated above part of the problem is that the HKFA has insufficient human resources to carry out income generating activities.
- **Professionalism:** The HKFA in comparison to other national FAs is under-resourced in terms of full time salaried staff. Furthermore because of the general state of the sport in Hong Kong and the lack of money in the sport, the salaries that can be paid are low for key individuals. It is difficult to attract and retain the calibre of staff required to drive the organisation forward.
- **Current Financial Position:** We have reviewed the accounts for the HKFA. Expenditure has exceeded income for the past few years and the reserves have dwindled to the point where a similar budget deficit will put the balance sheet into a negative situation. We are aware that the HKFA is having to cut programmes and activities in an attempt to balance the books. This is not a healthy or sustainable position. The organisation is not financially strong enough to implement the far reaching recommendations in this report. Improving the financial situation is therefore an imperative. In view of the other changes that are required now may be an opportune time for the HKFA to agree to a transformation process. For now, we will refer to this change as “Project Phoenix”

“Project Phoenix” – What would this mean?

- 8.13 We believe there is a need for and more importantly an opportunity for radical change in the governance of football in Hong Kong. This could mean a ‘managed demise’ of the existing HKFA and replacement by a new body. This move would not be universally popular and is considered unlikely to happen given that the FA itself (as an independent body) would need to be its own ‘executioner’.
- 8.14 The HKFA must know itself that it is in difficulty financially and it must also appreciate the failings in the game despite one or two recent successes such as the East Asian Games.
- 8.15 It is in everyone’s interest therefore for there to be significant change in the administration of football in Hong Kong. We would contend that the HKFA has much to gain from this strategy and that the long term development and success of the game is paramount. It is to be hoped that the HKFA would choose of its own volition to undergo a transformation process. This would involve amongst other things:
- **Self-determined changes to the constitution, membership and governance structure.**
 - **Preparing a vision for the new organisation in terms of aspirations, declaration of intent (targets), strategies (Development, Facilities, Elite etc) and development plans for each strand of activity**
 - **Production of a 5 year Business Plan to deliver the strategies and plans**
 - **Election of an appropriate number of suitably experienced and influential members**
 - **Recruitment of (2) Non-Executive Directors to provide the necessary checks and balances**
 - **Recruitment and retention of qualified and professional officers including the appointment of a Chief Executive, a Commercial Director a Football Development Manager, National Team Manager/Coach, five Regional Development Officers and District Community Football Officers**

- **Being established and subsequently managed on a financially stable and sustainable basis with funding that matches the strategy**
- **Independence from the professional leagues and clubs**
- **More focus on representative teams, elite development and football development pathways**
- **More games organised for representative teams**
- **Establishment of links with other countries/teams for sending players out to develop**
- **Participation in the development and management of a HK Football Training Centre**
- **Establishment of a commercial department and focus on sponsorship and income generating activities**
- **Promotion of the FA Cup Final and other FA events as an occasion to show case football in Hong Kong**
- **Establishment of a Hong Kong League Committee (independent and separate to organise leagues)**

Future Governance and Organisational Structure

- 8.16 It will be for the HKFA to determine how the 'Council' is elected and how it conducts its business. We would recommend that the FA 'Council' be made up of elected members that are representative of the game as a whole and not just the elite clubs. Council Members would have voting rights. Elected Members would be independent from the clubs and any future professional league. Ex-officio members and stakeholder representatives should also attend meetings to ensure professional advice and partner 'buy-in'. Members should sit on the 'Council' for four years with re-election based on a rotational basis (i.e. not all Members seeking re-election at any one time). This would ensure more continuity and independence.
- 8.17 There would be a small (no more than 10) 'Executive Committee/Board' of Members who would deal with matters as delegated by the main Council.
- 8.18 Beneath this there would be a number of standing committees e.g.:
- **Administration**
 - **Finance and Commercial**
 - **Disciplinary**
 - **Technical**
 - **Officiating**
 - **Coaching and Football Development**
 - **Representative Teams and National Training Centre**
 - **International Relations**
 - **Competitions and Teams**

- **League Liaison**
- **Marketing and Communications**
- **Other Ad-hoc committees as required**

8.19 The FA Council and its standing committees would be served by a team of full time professional employees. There would also need to be a 'Board of Executive Directors' that would advise the FA Board and through them the Council on policy and implement the Council's decisions. The executive team would be headed by an experienced Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The New Chief Executive's Role

8.20 In the opinion of Strategic Leisure one of the fundamental requirements for the transformation of the HKFA and the implementation of this strategy is the early appointment of a Chief Executive. In fact we would suggest that this post be filled in 2010 so he or she can be instrumental in the changes to the HKFA and the delivery of the critical path.

8.21 The successful candidate must have an understanding of sport in general and football in particular although it is unlikely that they will be a former player or coach. A commercial and business background is more important because the transformation of the HKFA will require considerable business and financial acumen as well as good communication and change management skills. A visionary leader is required with sufficient credibility and gravitas to garner the support of the HKFA Members and Officers and to be able to influence and work with other stakeholders. Previous experience of the management of change with a sporting environment would also be expected.

8.22 The Chief Executive should be given sufficient autonomy to manage the organisation and deliver key targets within the parameters of a largely public funded organisation. They would be given a number of key targets to achieve including;

- **Managing 'Project Phoenix'**
- **Recruiting key members of the management team e.g. Commercial manager and Development Manager and Officers**
- **Leading the HKFA's response to this development strategy and measuring outcomes**
- **Providing inspirational leadership to the HKFA staff**
- **Supporting and reporting to the Board and Council**
- **Preparing the HKFA Development Strategy and Business Plan**
- **Securing additional funding from the Government**
- **Assisting in the development of the Football Training Centre**
- **Leading the move towards a Professional League**
- **Liaison and partnership with other stakeholders**

8.23 The above list is an illustration of the wide-ranging job description for this post. It is an important and high level position carrying significant responsibilities. The remuneration package should be commensurate with these roles and responsibilities and attractive enough to interest people from outside Hong Kong. It should be performance-related so that incentives are built in to the delivery of core objectives.

- 8.24 There should be two external Non-Executive Directors sitting on the Board to input expertise and to provide the necessary checks and balances for the Board and Chief Executive.
- 8.25 The CEO would be supported by specialists in a number of disciplines including:
- **Finance and Administration**
 - **Marketing, PR and Communications**
 - **Technical**
 - **Commercial**
 - **International Relations**
 - **National Teams**
 - **Football Development (Elite)**
 - **Football Development (Community)**

Other Key Positions

- 8.26 The Chief Executive will be busy managing the transformation process. This strategy is also advocating that the sport becomes more self-sustaining in financial terms. The consultants believe that additional public sector funding should be used initially to pump prime this strategy. However football needs to generate more money itself through sponsorship, media, gate receipts, image rights, naming rights etc. The appointment of a **Commercial Manager** is key in this respect. The person appointed should have a commercial background (not necessarily a financial control one) and should be set targets for income generation. Over a period of time and particularly with the development of a new professional league the balance between public and private funding should change.
- 8.27 A second area where this report suggests significant change is in relation to football development. We suggest the early appointment of a **Development Manager** whose job it would be to coordinate all development programmes and work with other providers and stakeholders. This person would obviously need a football background probably as a player but certainly as a coach. Although knowledge of different coaching methodologies should be a prerequisite, this is in fact more of an administrative role coordinating all development activities and being a conduit between the various providers. This person would advise the HKFA Board on football development policy. This position is distinct from and different to the current HKFA Technical Manager.
- 8.28 The Development Manager cannot determine development policy and implement it. There is a need for additional resources to implement the development strategy. This should be at two levels. The first is the more elite end of the continuum and we advocate the appointment of five **Regional Development Officers**. These people would report to the current Technical Manager and would be responsible for talent identification and development at a regional level as well as coach development and education. They would liaise with the professional clubs in their region and work with Districts to feed talented players into the appropriate development pathway. Further guidance on the role of these officers is set out later in this report. There is also a need for 18 **District Football Development Officers**. These people would be more community 'grass roots' development officers and they would work with schools and community clubs. They would undertake hands-on coaching sessions as well as local coach/teacher education work, They would pass talented young people onto either Districts or professional club academies and essentially be the glue which holds community football development together. We are advocating that these people are employed by the HKFA but this is subject to the organisation accepting the recommendations and putting in place sufficient funding and systems to make this community network operate effectively. They could be employed within Education or LCSD.

- 8.29 We also advocate the appointment of a **National Team Manager/Coach** who would take responsibility for increasing the success of the national team. This person should be suitably qualified and experienced and have a solid track record at the highest level. We would expect that at least initially this would be a foreign manager. Suitable remuneration would be required to attract the right calibre of person. Experience shows that the skill of the Manager is of critical importance in terms of sustaining success at an international level. Targets for improvement in the FIFA rankings should be agreed. It is likely that the person appointed would be based at the National Football Training Centre and would work closely with the Development Manager and also the separate professional club academies.

Summary of Project Phoenix

- 8.30 Strategic Leisure cannot emphasise enough the importance of making these changes to the HKFA. Even if the current organisation is minded to go through this change process, we would have reservations about it managing the transformation itself. Additional external expertise will be vital in driving through the paradigm shift that is required. Our favoured approach is a common agreement within football that the HKFA must embark on Project Phoenix and that the HKFA not only 'buy-in' to this new approach but that they lead by example and agree to the changes. **Football in Hong Kong will not improve without these changes to the Governing Body.**

The 'Football Family'

- 8.31 On a different but related matter, one of the impressive things about the Japan Football Association is its 'football family'. This is basically a 'membership' programme whereby clubs and individuals can affiliate, for a nominal fee to the Governing Body. There are a number of benefits of this wider 'club'. Firstly it allows the FA to gauge the 'health' of the sport by monitoring interest levels. Secondly it provides a source of secondary income and thirdly it provides a mass database for the dissemination of marketing and information. We would advocate the instigation of a similar programme in Hong Kong.

NB Recommendations in bold are the 'principal' recommendations of the strategy. The others are still important but are more 'secondary' in terms of the impact they can have on football in Hong Kong.

Recommendations - HKFA

- 1. That the HKFA agree to a transformation process (Project Phoenix)**
- 2. That the restructured HKFA decide on the constitution, governance structure and organisation, that will best serve the sport and improve the level of professional expertise and experience in its secretariat.**
- 3. That the restructured HKFA prepare a vision, that includes clear targets, strategies and development plans and draw up a five-year business plan to support this vision.**
- 4. That the restructured HKFA be established on a firm financial footing to allow it to develop a strategy for raising financial support commensurate with the approved business plan**
- 5. That the HKFA appoint an external 'change agent' to help implement its transformation**
- 6. That a Hong Kong 'Football Family' be created through the instigation of a membership database**

(II) Development of the Professional Level

- 8.32 A thriving 'elite' facet of the sport is the life-blood. As stated earlier success of the professional sport including a well-performing national team can have a very positive impact on the sport generally. As has been so effectively demonstrated recently by the tremendous achievement of winning the East Asian Games gold medal, success on the football field can boost national morale and generate higher levels of interest and participation. This strategy provides an opportunity to build on this success and to simultaneously address a number of linked issues.

Hong Kong Football League (Establishment of a Professional League)

Assessment of the Current Situation

- 8.33 Hong Kong is currently not able to support a fully professional football league. Analysis shows that in the 2008/09 season average attendances at 1st Division matches were 1,182. Of these 30% were complimentary tickets and the average entrance price for paying spectators was HK\$39. Home club gate receipts averaged HK\$18,345. This level of money coming into the top tier of the game is not sufficient to sustain a professional league. A superficial analysis of the 2009/10 season to date (up to the end of November) reveals a better picture. Average attendances were 2,448 with only 16% complimentary and average ticket prices of HK\$52. However these statistics are influenced by the two South China AFC matches. Stripping these out leaves average attendances of a mere 801 with 33% complimentary and average ticket prices of HK\$38. Baseline indicators therefore remain very low. The aggregate attendance of 55,188 for the two South China matches is very positive and reinforces the huge appetite for the sport that was demonstrated at the East Asian games in December 2009. However the domestic league product must match the demand and this is not happening at the moment.
- 8.34 There are a number of reasons for this current state of affairs. The current League is unstable and subject to change (i.e. there were Mainland Chinese Clubs playing last year but these have subsequently been expelled). Election and relegation is not effectively controlled or regulated.
- 8.35 The HKFA leagues operate a promotion and relegation system with two clubs being promoted and relegated each season. In recent years the relegation has not been enforced which affects the competitiveness of the league and the ethics of the rules being laid down. In the 2006-07 season, South China were due to be relegated from the 1st division, but were re-instated following a request from the club.
- 8.36 The reason for the HKFA allowing South China to remain in the 1st division has not been disclosed, but it has been implied that the club was allowed to stay due to the long history in the league and the fact that the club attracts the most spectators and generates income for themselves and opposition clubs. Such decisions make promotion and relegation battles between clubs at the end of the season meaningless and will not attract spectators.
- 8.37 Clubs are weak with very few 'bankable' assets. Few clubs own their own ground (exceptions are South China AA and the Hong Kong Football Club) and most clubs ground share which obviously impacts on the fan base and gives no continuity or loyalty to supporters.
- 8.38 With some notable exceptions, most clubs do not invest sufficient time or money into youth development. There is no incentive for them to do so. Players are not effectively 'contracted' and can move to any club they want to for a slightly higher wage. There are no significant (if any) transfer fees paid to clubs. The lack of a transfer system precludes the usual trade of players that generates and moves money around the football industry and is very important for the less established or cash rich clubs if they can find a highly talented young player who can be traded to a wealthier club.
- 8.39 Most clubs have under-developed commercial skills and activities and there is a lack of income from merchandising, sponsorship and TV rights. The confluence of these financial factors means that there

Football Development in Hong Kong

is a downward spiral taking place.

- 8.40 Another serious problem is the quality and availability of grounds and facilities for training and competitive matches. Not only do clubs have to share with other teams but they have to share with the general public. The volume of games played results in very poor pitches, which in turn leads to a poorer standard of play. This has coincided with a surfeit of good quality football available almost 24/7 on television.
- 8.41 In some cases expenditure exceeds income and clubs are dependent on rich business men/women or benefactors to survive. If these people choose not to subsidise the team, the clubs collapse. This does not promote long term, passionate support.
- 8.42 The League is currently supporting over 300 paid professionals. Given the standard of play and the income being generated this is not a sustainable situation.
- 8.43 In summary, the top flight of football in Hong Kong is under serious pressure. Attendances are poor and the league is not competitive.

Commentary

- 8.44 A strong and sustainable professional domestic league is usually the bedrock on which football sits. This report has highlighted the demise of football in Hong Kong as a spectator sport. For many of the reasons highlighted above, attendances at domestic games have declined to an all time low. Average gates are now circa 1,000 and this is a serious problem for many reasons. This issue is really at the heart of the problems that football in Hong Kong now faces. It is the start of the vicious circle. Falling attendances and low admission charges mean that clubs have less money to attract quality players and coaches. They also result in less money for sponsorship as the commercial exposure is reduced. Less money equals poorer standard of play which means even fewer spectators and so the cycle is perpetuated. Breaking out of any vicious circle usually requires drastic action.
- 8.45 On a positive note, all is not lost. Twenty thousand people recently turned up to watch an AFC Cup game between South China AA and Neftchi of Uzbekistan. In November 2009, 38,000 attended the AFC Cup Semi-Final between South China AFC and SC Kuwait. This shows that there is interest but this needs to be harnessed. We are certain that with a better, more competitive level of play, home and away fixtures and international interest, spectator numbers will recover. This will be the catalyst for attracting more money into the sport with the associated benefits that that will bring.
- 8.46 Fortunately there is a model to follow; the J League, although obviously there are some differences that will need to be considered.

The J-League Model

- 8.47 Japan realised that domestic football held the key to both international success and the development of grass roots football. A decision was taken to radically overhaul the professional game. This was to counter a decline in the performance of the national team and to reverse a trend of declining attendances at domestic football matches. The establishment of the J-League did not happen over night. It was conceived, planned and implemented in a systematic and strategic manner.
- 8.48 There were 5 key stages. Stage 1 (March 1988 to March 1989) was described by Hirose Ichiro in his paper 'The making of a professional football league', as 'A sense of crisis and wrestling with alternatives'. A specially formed working party quantified the problems and evaluated a number of different options.
- 8.49 As would be expected there was considerable and sustained objection to the establishment of a professional football league. It was apparent that the existing structures, clubs, facilities, people and resources were not ready to move straight to a fully professional league. Clubs were inextricably linked to large corporations and the need to invest in football coincided with difficult economic times. At the

Football Development in Hong Kong

end of stage 1 the working party had identified a need to establish the league as a legal entity, draft the league's rules, define the entry criteria for clubs, identify the requirements for and location of 'home' grounds (public sector facilities) and prepare a business case. There was an early realisation that the success of the league was dependent on a robust commercial strategy including clever marketing, sponsorship and merchandising.

- 8.50 Stage 2 (June 1989 to July 1990) was concerned with establishing a draft plan for the establishment of the league – the principle had been agreed at the end of stage 1. A number of sub-groups were established with different remits covering; franchising and assurance of grounds availability, coach licensing and youth development, determining the number of teams and criteria, referee and match commissioner issues, PR and spectator mobilisation, player contracts and registration, income and expenditure for teams, sounding out existing teams and other partners. One of the major tasks was to persuade existing clubs that it was possible and that they should be involved. The role of the FA was crucial in this regard.
- 8.51 Teams had to align themselves to a particular geographical area and 'home' ground. This was seen as crucial to generate commercial and spectator interest. It marked a major change for many clubs. Clubs also needed to form partnerships with sponsoring corporations (often an established connection) but also the relevant local authority because of the need to improve the quality of grounds and services.
- 8.52 The third stage (August 1990 to February 1991) was essentially studying the feasibility of the football business. The FA of Japan had by this time agreed to the formation of the J League but all involved needed persuasion that it was economically viable and sustainable. New Committees were formed and these delved deeper into some key areas including: finance and franchising, operations and game scheduling, players and teams, refereeing, coaching, well-being, facilities, business and PR. There was a blatant and determined approach to using experience of similar leagues in other parts of the world most notably, Germany and Britain. Twenty potential J League clubs had expressed an interest and these were rigorously scrutinised to ensure they could meet the exacting criteria for entry particularly in relation to the ground, franchise arrangements, spectator mobilisation and competitiveness. Creating a brand for the league and marketing it to differentiate itself from the previous league and other popular sports such as baseball was critical and much was invested in this area.
- 8.53 The fourth stage (January 1991 to November 1991) was one of the shortest but one of the most important. It can be described as 'moving towards the J League but this belies the significance of putting in place the fine detail. Launch events were instigated because it was recognised that it is absolutely essential to get the press on your side and to harness their new enthusiasm. At the time the popularity of football was at a low ebb and spectator mobilisation was a real challenge. They overcame reticence to 'support' a new club by creative branding of each club, effective merchandising and giving each club a home venue. The J League collectively negotiated sponsorship deals that were then cascaded down to the prospective clubs. This ensured that money filtered down to the place where it was most needed. Such was the interest generated that broadcasting rights were sold for 33 times the amount that the previous league had generated!
- 8.54 The fifth stage (November 1991 to March 1993) was 'incorporation to implementation'. The J League became a legal entity in November 1991. Once this had been achieved sponsors were falling over themselves to become associated. Excitement and anticipation was reaching fever pitch. This was fuelled by the attraction of major overseas personalities as players and coaches. The J League learnt from the American NFL that marketing and merchandising were indispensable to the sports business as a 'service industry'. With five years of system design behind it, the J League kicked off in May 1993. At the outset it was thought that it would take three years to establish the J League, in practice it took five. Tickets were sold centrally and in all 800,000 people wanted to watch the inaugural round of matches, vastly more than were available.
- 8.55 At the beginning the J League was nothing more than an idea. It was turned into a successful venture through a systematic, collective and strategic approach. Its success is undeniable. The cost of setting it up has been repaid many times over. The first three years cost around HK\$ 1.3m and a further HK\$3.2m was spent improving public sector facilities. The cost to establish a J League Club was circa HK\$0.65m for capital with a further HK\$65m for business expenses. In some cases this was doubled

Football Development in Hong Kong

when taking player salaries into account. The cost of this was initially borne by sponsoring corporations with most recouped through ticket sales, broadcasting rights, merchandising and sponsorship. The J League has been instrumental in transforming football in Japan. It was part of a three pronged strategy for raising the standard and level of interest in the game.

- 8.56 The other two prongs being, co-hosting the 2002 World Cup and investment in Youth Development. The strategy has been successful. J League games average around 20,000 people per game and the national team has steadily risen up the FIFA rankings. Football now rivals Baseball as the national sport in Japan. The number of football 'customers' (players and spectators) continues to increase.

Lessons to be learnt from Japan

- 8.57 We would not advocate a 'blind' copying of the J League in Hong Kong. Circumstances are different. For example the population is much smaller and existing infrastructure (grounds etc) starts from a lower baseline. Furthermore when the J League commenced it did not have to compete with satellite TV broadcasting matches from Europe and South America! However there are some basic principles that can be readily adapted and adopted. Keys to the success of the J League were: knowledge formation, nurturing of human resources, information networking and sharing of values. Although closely linked to the Japan FA, another key was the independence of the J League. Another important factor was a shared vision and the desire to innovate. Detractors were either left by the wayside or converted. The priority is to create something so alive and exciting that eventually cynics become advocates.

- 8.58 The J League is a prime example of a successful business enterprise. It is important to think of it in those terms. It must be a commercially driven and viable proposition. This does not mean that there cannot and should not be a place for public sector involvement and investment. In fact it won't work without the 'light touch' of government support, financial and other.

- 8.59 There are many parallels between the state of professional football now in Hong Kong and the situation in Japan at the end of the 1980's. There are some pre-requisites

- **Do not under-estimate the challenge!**
- **Consider and evaluate the options carefully**
- **Identify threats and potential obstacles**
- **Choose the correct path and have the courage of your convictions**
- **Be flexible but do not compromise on the basic principles**
- **Put in place strategies to deal with threats and detractors**
- **Plan and contingency plan**
- **Engage with stakeholders throughout the process**
- **Establish a partnership between the public and private sectors with appropriate risks and rewards**
- **Buy-in foreign expertise where necessary but develop local 'capacity building' thus reducing reliance over time**

- 8.60 We do not think that Hong Kong is ready to establish a professional football league now (2010). However, subject to the adoption of some of the other recommendations contained in this report it is ready to embark on the 'journey'. Like Japan, it may take five years to achieve. Again like Japan, there will be obstacles and barriers to overcome. Some of the challenges include:

Football Development in Hong Kong

- **Role of the HKFA:** It is arguable whether the current HKFA is geared up to lead the establishment of a professional football league. Any decision to proceed along these lines needs to be linked to the recommendations to re-establish the HKFA (Project Phoenix).
- **Simultaneous League and Club Development:** It is likely that there would be some interest from some existing clubs to become part of a new professional league. It is also likely that others would not. This is a key issue. During the planning stage it would be necessary to determine the number of teams needed to make the league viable (10-14) and to clarify the entry criteria. In our opinion the initial 'franchise' criteria should be linked to the AFC Development Strategy (and the emerging FIFA criteria) which includes as an objective the establishment of professional leagues. Key to participation in the AFC Champions League which must be the target for professional clubs in Hong Kong is the establishment of such a league. The AFC has set out criteria for a professional league which will become 'mandatory' in 2012. Minimum requirements have been set for the period 2009-2012. The criteria are summarised below:
 - **Attendance**
 - Admission charges to be imposed
 - Sufficient Interest
 - **Teams**
 - National Coverage
 - Minimum number of clubs and matches
 - Home and Away fixtures
 - Clubs to meet AFC definition of the professional club (see below)
 - **Marketing**
 - Agreement between the league and the clubs
 - **Media**
 - Exposure to tv, press and 'new' media
 - **Stadium**
 - Well organised matches in high quality facilities
 - **Legal**
 - The league to have an independent governing body (under the auspices of the FA)

8.61 Hong Kong's ability to meet these criteria was assessed by the AFC. The results of this analysis and the focus for action are contained in the table below. In terms of meeting the minimum requirements the AFC use the following scoring mechanism; A = Meet the criteria. B = Ensured to meet the criteria by 2008. C = Not ensured to meet the criteria by 2008. D = Do not meet the criteria.

Football Development in Hong Kong

Table 8.1: Criteria for Participation in the new ACL

Main Criteria	Detailed Criteria	Minimum Requirement 2009	Minimum Requirement 2012	AFC Assessment of Hong Kong	Action Required
1. Organisation	Number of teams in the top division	8	12	A	Adopt targets for new League
	Number of league matches per team	21	33	C	Adopt targets for new League
	Duration of the season	-	10 months	A	Adopt targets for new League
	Duration of the league of the top division	7 months	8 months	A	Adopt targets for new League
	League format	H & A	H & A	A	Adopt targets for new League
	Number of international referees	6	6	B	Adopt targets for new League
	Number of international asst referees	8	8	B	Adopt targets for new League
	Referees Education Programme	Yes	Yes	A	Adopt targets for new League
	Officially appointed referee assessor at league matches	Yes	Yes	A	Adopt targets for new League
	The league has its regulations	Yes	Yes	A	Adopt targets for new League
	Regulations for the status and transfer of players	Yes	Yes	A	Adopt targets for new League
	Disciplinary codes	Yes	Yes	A	Adopt targets for new League
	A system for promotion / relegation	Yes	Yes	A	Adopt targets for new League
2. Technical Standard	Total points of the technical standard	Within the top 23 MA	Within the top 23 MA	-	
3. Attendance	Average ticket price	Not free of charge	Not free of charge	A	No Action Needed
	Average number of attendance per match	2,000	5,000	C	Adopt targets for new League
4. Governance / Soundness	The number of attendance per match is measured and announced in accurately counted figures	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
	Governments inappropriate intervention to the league management	None	None	A	No Action Needed
	Fixed game	None (in the past 1 season)	None	A	No Action Needed
	The league governing body is a legal entity governed by its football association	Yes	Yes	C	Establish New League based on AFC Criteria
	The league governing body has a management structure which controls competition, marketing, media and finance	Yes	Yes	D	Adopt targets for new League
	i) Club representatives ii) representatives of football association and iii) representatives from the leagues top management are the members of the highest decision making body (executive committee) of the league	Yes	Yes	D	Adopt targets for new League
	The position of the C.E.O MUST be full-time	Yes	Yes	D	Adopt targets for new League
	The league has an audited profit and loss statement balance sheet	Yes	Yes	D	Adopt targets for new League
	The league has an auditor	Yes	Yes	D	Adopt targets for new League
	5. Marketing & Promotion	Centralised marketing system of the elements such as media rights, certain sponsorship and merchandise	Yes	Yes	C
Promotion strategies		Yes	Yes	D	Adopt targets for new League
Publication tools such as i) media rights ii) match programmes and iii) website		Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
6. Business Scale	All 3 elements of i) media rights ii) sponsorship and iii) merchandising are the main source of income in the league	1 element of more	Yes	A	No Action Needed

Football Development in Hong Kong

Main Criteria	Detailed Criteria	Minimum Requirement 2009	Minimum Requirement 2012	AFC Assessment of Hong Kong	Action Required
7. Game Operation	An official match commissioner at league matches is appointed	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
	Different circulations for the spectator, media, players, officials, VIP's are sourced	Yes	Yes	C	Adopt targets for new League
	A security officer is appointed	Yes	Yes	B	Adopt targets for new League
	The league has written security guidelines	Yes	Yes	C	Adopt targets for new League
	The league has hospitality programmes for VIP's and sponsors	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
	The league has fan service programmes at league matches	Yes	Yes	B	Adopt targets for new League
	The league has a registration system for media representatives at league matches	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
	The league has a media department in the league secretariat	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
	Each club has a media officer	Yes	Yes	C	Adopt targets for new League
	Each stadium has a media tribune	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
8. Media	Each stadium has a media working room	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
	Each stadium has a working space and required facilities for TV broadcasting	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
	Pre-match / post match media conference are held	Yes	Yes	C	Adopt targets for new League
	Each stadium has a mixed zone at league matches	Yes	Yes	B	Adopt targets for new League
	Match report distributes to the media	Yes	Yes	B	Adopt targets for new League
	The league provides match information to the fans	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
	How often the league matches are broadcast in full length per season	1 match per league	Minimum 50% (of the total matches)	A	No Action Needed
	Domestic league is covered on newspaper weekly	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
	Domestic league is covered on major football magazines on a monthly basis	Yes	Yes	A	No Action Needed
	Number of * A – class Stadia* which could be used for ACL with a minimum capacity of 5,000 seats	1	4	A	Designation of suitable 'home and away grounds for participating clubs to meet minimum standards
9. Stadia	Number of players under professional contact in the top team of each club	16	20	A	Adopt targets for new League
	All the clubs have the revenue such as i) gate receipts ii) media rights iii) sponsorship iv) merchandising v) transfer fee income and vi) revenue distributed from the league	Yes	Yes	A	Adopt targets for new League
	All the clubs are commercial entities under its national law	Yes	Yes	B	Adopt targets for new League
	No clubs have overdue payment	No	No	A	No Action needed. Clubs entering the new league to maintain this position
	Submission of an audited profit and loss statement and balance sheet to the league governing body	Yes	Yes	C	Adopt targets for new League
	Cross-ownership of the clubs is not allowed	No	No	A	Adopt targets for new League
	The director and employees of one club are not employed by any other clubs nor do they possess the shares of any other clubs either	No	No	A	Adopt targets for new League
	The directors must have youth development programmes with youth teams in the clubs or affiliated clubs	Yes	Yes	D	Adopt targets for new League
	All clubs * head coached possess AFC profession license diploma or equivalent license approved by AFC	Yes	Yes	C	Adopt targets for new League
	All clubs have competent management staff who are in charge of the tasks such as competition marketing, media and finance	Yes	Yes	A	Adopt targets for new League
10. Clubs	All clubs have or can guarantee the use of home stadium with a minimum capacity of 3,000 seats	Yes	Yes	C	Designation of suitable 'home and away grounds for participating clubs to meet minimum standards
	All clubs have or can guarantee the use of training sites	Yes	Yes	D	Adopt targets for new League
	All clubs conduct activities contributing to the local community of the hometowns	Yes	Yes	D	Adopt targets for new League
	All the clubs can prove the support from local government in the following areas i) use of the stadium ii) use of training site iii) improvement of access to the stadium for the fans	Yes	Yes	A	Adopt targets for new League

ASSESSMENT

D

A Meet the criteria

C Not ensured to meet the criteria by 1st October 2008

B Ensured to meet the criteria by 1st October 2008

D Do not meet the criteria

- 8.62 This assessment gives a focus for prioritised action. The two main weaknesses are seen as the organisation/governance/soundness of the league structure and the participating clubs. This must be borne in mind when establishing the league and in determining the criteria necessary for clubs to gain access. Before any of this can happen however the HKFA as lead body needs to go through the changes we are recommending so that it is in a more sustainable and credible position and have sufficient skills and resources to develop the professional game.
- 8.63 It goes without saying that a League can not function without sufficient participating teams. These teams need to meet the minimum criteria and be sustainable. There is more to being a 'professional' club than merely paying its players. So in relation to the clubs there are some key criteria that clubs wishing to participate in a future professional league should achieve. The clubs aspiring to be a 'franchised' club as part of a new professional league will need to demonstrate that they can achieve the minimum standard within a realistic timescale.
- 8.64 We envisage a three stage process as part of a move to a professional league. Stage 1 would be an expression of interest setting out the clubs desire to be considered for a franchise and a development plan showing how the criteria will be met. Stage 2 will require confirmation of the interest and a detailed plan showing progress against the criteria and absolute guarantees that any outstanding matters will be addressed. Stage 3 would involve a final application and assessment process to confirm which teams will form the inaugural league. The criteria are as follows:
- **Players**
 - The majority of players on 'professional' contracts
 - **Financial Position**
 - Clubs receiving revenue from gate receipts, media rights, sponsorship, merchandising, transfer fees, league contribution
 - No clubs having overdue payments
 - Submission of audited profit and loss statements and balance sheets to the football league
 - **Coaches and Officials**
 - Head Coaches to possess AFC Professional Licence or equivalent
 - Trained and Qualified Coaches
 - **Facilities**
 - Guaranteed access to Stadium minimum 3,000 seat and Training Facility
 - **Legal**
 - Commercial entity under national law
 - Cross ownership of clubs not allowed
 - No 'conflicts of interest' i.e. directors and employees of one club not to have any interest in another club
 - **Management**
 - Competent and qualified paid employees including CEO and Company Secretary
 - Nominated staff for marketing, media, competition and finance
 - **Fans and Admission**
 - Good community relations with specified programmes (e.g. links with schools)
 - Admission charges to games
 - Gate receipts to be the 'main' source of income
 - **Youth Development**
 - Investment in Youth Development Programmes with youth teams in the club or affiliated to the clubs

Football Development in Hong Kong

- **Partnerships**

- Strong support from Local Government in terms of the use of a home stadium, use of training sites, improved access to stadiums

- 8.65 Some clubs in Hong Kong are closer to meeting these criteria than others. Equally it is understood that not all existing clubs will want to commit to achieving these standards or to aspire to be part of a professional league or have the ability to achieve this within a reasonable timeframe. It makes sense however to link club development to the AFC criteria and to the criteria for establishing an AFC endorsed Professional League as the two are inextricably linked.
- 8.66 The establishment of the new league will need to be based on a 'franchise' approach with clubs applying to be part of the league and receiving advice, support and resources to help them to achieve these standards. This will be an interactive process as in Japan when the J League was formed.
- 8.67 The above framework should be adopted for clubs that wish to be part of a new professional league. The new league should also set criteria for aspiring clubs at other levels although clearly the thresholds for amateur clubs will need to be lower.

Elite Youth Development

- 8.68 As stated above most existing clubs do not have well developed programmes for youth development. It should be a prerequisite of participation in the new professional league that clubs develop youth training programmes and establish their own academies. Once formed the academies should form a league to play each other thus increasing the intensity and quality of their play.
- 8.69 It is important to point out that the proposed HK Football Training Centre is **NOT** seen as a replacement for or in any way a duplication of these club academies. We are not advocating a centralised system. We are actually advocating a de-centralised 'continuum' where the professional clubs are part of the development process and pathways through the development of their own academies. The national training centre will not 'poach' players from clubs. Rather it will work with clubs, who will release players for additional coaching sessions to supplement their own. The Football Training Centre would select talented 'age-group' players from the various providers including the clubs. These training squads would not replace the club academies but rather they would be complementary. In other words a young player could be trained at a club and be selected for an age group national squad and receive 'extra' and supplementary training and support perhaps 6 times per annum. They would not be trained full time at the Training Centre in the same way that the "national" team players wouldn't. They would be picked from the clubs and attend specific squad sessions. The professional clubs would benefit from this intense, high-level input and support.

Amateur to Professional Club Continuum

- 8.70 In all football playing countries the number of amateur clubs far outweighs the number of professional clubs. Hong Kong is and will be no exception. The number, strength and quality of the amateur game is of fundamental importance. These are the places that the majority of people will play, where talent is identified and nurtured and where future professional players will emerge. The HKFA must pay as much attention to the amateur game as it does the professional sport. This is not happening at the moment. Most people play their football in non-affiliated leagues and clubs.
- 8.71 Better management and organisation of amateur clubs and leagues is essential if the pathways between the amateur and the professional ranks are to improve. Indeed some amateur clubs may aspire to be professional one day.
- 8.72 There must be a framework in place to allow this transition. One way in which the HKFA can facilitate this process is to put in place programmes whereby clubs can improve their knowledge, skills and the services they provide to their members. An accreditation scheme is recommended similar to the Club Mark scheme introduced a few years ago in the UK. This could be promoted and administered by the

Football Development in Hong Kong

District Development Officers with them giving support to local clubs and individuals. The HKFA should introduce its own 'Chartered Club' scheme to raise the standard of football at a local level.

- 8.73 To achieve the standard clubs must affiliate to the Governing Body and demonstrate minimum standards in terms of facilities, coaching, youth development, child protection, duty of care to members, policies of equity, community links etc. Once a club achieves the standard they can access resources to help them improve further. Clubs achieving Club Mark in the UK have indicated they have gained benefits in a number of areas including:
- **Attracting and Retaining more Members**
 - **Raising the standard of coaching and playing**
 - **Continuous Improvement in management processes**
 - **Access to funding**
 - **Improved facilities**
 - **The development of coaches and volunteers**
 - **Links with schools and local communities**
 - **Sponsorship**
 - **Raised profile**
 - **Marketing and communication**
 - **Overall development of the club**
- 8.74 Strategic Leisure believes that the introduction of a similar scheme in Hong Kong could widen the 'football family' and raise the standard of amateur football in terms of both administration and play.

Facility Development at the Professional Level

- 8.75 **Network of High Quality Facilities:** As stated above, it should be a pre-requisite that each Club should have a home ground of minimum standards and size. This will mean a partnership with a municipal district. Some of the existing facilities could be improved but in other areas there may be a need for some targeted investment in 'Community Stadiums'. These should have a main 'arena' for football which whilst not exclusively used for professional matches should be 'protected' to avoid over use. Stadiums should also have other training facilities support services and possible (subject to land availability) synthetic pitches to facilitate development activity and to cater for local community demand.
- 8.76 **Spectator Mobilisation:** Creating 'home' venues should encourage spectator development. This loyalty should be further encouraged by creating a new identity for clubs with associated branding, marketing and merchandising and through forging links through the use of Community Stadiums.
- 8.77 **Creating the 'WOW' factor:** Getting people out of their armchairs to watch live football is a big challenge. The demand is there but it needs to be developed. One option to achieve this is to encourage teams wishing to enter the new league to develop a 'partnership' arrangement with established foreign teams. Clearly this alliance will need to be mutually beneficial. We think this can be achieved. It could work as follows. District Team X partners with Manchester United (to use an obvious example to illustrate the point). The team playing in the league would be called (District X Manchester) and could (subject to sponsorship constraints) play in the same colour strip thus increasing merchandising arrangements for both clubs and generating customer loyalty. The participating clubs could pool expertise in:

- **Coach development**
 - **Player development (train away in Europe/South America/Australia)**
 - **Cross cultural exchanges**
 - **Annual training / coaching camps**
 - **Sports science development and support**
 - **Joint sponsorship opportunities**
- 8.78 Hong Kong clubs could act as a conduit for partner clubs into mainland China to boost international interest and marketing benefits and have an arrangement whereby talented players coming through academies were offered first to partner clubs. Foreign clubs could 'blood' young players in the Hong Kong league before playing them in higher standard domestic leagues 'back home'.
- 8.79 Financial arrangements would reflect the relative input from each partner as well as the risks and rewards. Clearly this proposal needs further thought but is put forward because there will be a need to create some novelty if the league is to be successful. This is happening to some extent already. Kitchee has a partnership with FC Barcelona, South China has contacts with Tottenham Hotspur and other clubs have similar arrangements. A number of Hong Kong business people have stakes in European football clubs so what we are suggesting is simply more of the same.

Participation in the China Super League

- 8.80 Throughout the production of this strategy, stakeholders have raised the issue of a 'Hong Kong' team participating in the China League. This is a complicated issue. We have discussed this with the Chinese Football Association (CFA).
- 8.81 Whilst the CFA do not object in principle, there are some difficult issues to address. Firstly the average attendance at Chinese domestic matches is currently 13,500. Levels at Hong Kong matches are significantly lower. The CFA would need some sort of guarantee that attendances would be higher. The second issue is that there is a perceived discrepancy in the standard of play. Any Hong Kong team taking part would need to start in one of the lower divisions (A or B) and would not be initially inducted into the top league.
- 8.82 There are also complications from a Hong Kong perspective. For example who would select the team, would there be promotion and relegation for the right to represent Hong Kong and how would any team relate to the national team. FIFA would not accept the national team playing in a domestic league.
- 8.83 There are considerable advantages of having a Hong Kong team participating in the China League such as generating interest, higher spectator numbers, raising the standard of play etc. Many of the complications can be overcome although this will not happen overnight and needs to be part of a wider plan to develop and improve the professional game.
- 8.84 We believe that the participation of a Hong Kong based football team in the China Super League would significantly enhance the standing of football in Hong Kong and should be a definite ambition. Much work needs to be done to be in a position to achieve this objective. We see this work as being related to a number of other factors to be addressed in this report. For example the standard of play needs to improve and we believe that this is inextricably linked to the re-emergence of the HKFA, the development of a professional league, the emergence of stronger clubs and the provision of new and enhanced facilities including a new main stadium.
- 8.85 A team participating in the China Super League could be the 'anchor' tenant for the new stadium and this would help to make the facility more sustainable and at the same time make the participation of a

Football Development in Hong Kong

Hong Kong team more attractive to the organisers of the China Super League. It is understood however that any team entering the China League would in all likelihood enter at Division A or B level.

- 8.86 To help to create the 'wow' factor and to encourage the development of clubs, the right to play in the China League could be an incentive offered to clubs in the new professional league. It is acknowledged that it could take three to five years to get the new professional league established and for the league itself and participating clubs to attain the AFC criteria. (Attainment of the AFC club criteria would be a prerequisite for a club joining the China League in any case). So once the league was established the 'carrot' for the inaugural winners could be a place in the China League. This would generate huge interest in the game and would act as an incentive for investment from Districts, sponsors, entrepreneurs etc. The rewards for being in the China League would be substantial. This would leave the runners up spot in the inaugural year and the winners in subsequent years to qualify for the AFC Champions League. This suggestion would need to be discussed with and endorsed by the AFC because there is potential (albeit unlikely) that two teams from Hong Kong could end up playing in the Champions League, the team that won the Hong Kong League and a team from Hong Kong winning the China League.
- 8.87 If the team playing in the China League were to be relegated, subject to the agreement of the China League the new professional league could provide a replacement.

The Role of Gambling and the Hong Kong Jockey Club

- 8.88 Gambling on the outcome of domestic football matches is not permitted in Hong Kong. This is not an unusual situation and is because of the potential for corruption and match fixing. We do not advocate the lifting of the ban on gambling on domestic football at this stage but we believe it is an issue that could be reconsidered if and when a professional league is developed (say in five years time) and providing that sufficient safeguards and sanctions are implemented at the same time.
- 8.89 Other countries have overcome or at least minimised the problems associated with gambling on football by imposing severe penalties on clubs and players such as expulsion from the league and life bans. Similar draconian measures could be instigated at an appropriate juncture in Hong Kong to avoid potential problems and the money that could be generated would be useful in implementing the league and developing the sport at grass roots. For example, a Football Foundation could be established and administered by the Hong Kong Jockey Club which would give this well-respected organisation a role in the football 'family'. They could be a main sponsor of the league and a partner in the delivery of other aspects of the game such as the Football Training Centre.

Summary

- 8.90 There are a number of inter-related actions that are necessary to revitalise professional football in Hong Kong. This all stems from the re-establishment of the HKFA. We do not think that a fully professional league in Hong Kong is viable at the moment (2010). We do believe that it is an aspiration that is essential if the game is to flourish and deliver its potential. More work needs to be done on the structure of the league, the development of clubs and the other the issues raised above. The list of tasks and suggested timeline below:

Football Development in Hong Kong

Table 8.2 - The Development of Professional Football in Hong Kong – Action Plan

ACTION	YEAR 1 - 2010				YEAR 2 - 2011				YEAR 3 - 2012				YEAR 4 - 2013				YEAR 5 - 2014				YEAR 6 - 2015				YEAR 7 - 2016			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1. Re-establishment of HKFA	1.1 Agree the need to change																											
	1.2 Transformation Process																											
2. Hong Kong Professional League	2.1 Stage 1 – The making of the League																											
	2.1.1 Determining Criteria																											
	2.2 Stage 2 – Detailed Planning																											
	2.2.1 Establish Committee(s)																											
	2.2.2 Club Gateway 1 *																											
	2.3 Stage 3 – Agreement and ‘buy in’																											
	2.3.1 Establish Legal Entity																											
	2.3.2 Club Gateway 2 *																											
	2.4 Stage 4 Implementation																											
	2.4.1 Finalise Details																											
2.4.2 Club Gateway 3 *																												
2.5 Stage 5 - Launch																												
3. Participation in China League																												
4. Opening of National Stadium																												

* Club Gateway 1 – Expression of Interest

* Club Gateway 2 – Commitment of meet Criteria

* Club Gateway 3 – Assessment and Entry in League

- 8.91 The strengthening and re-emergence of the HKFA, the development of a professional league, the establishment of minimum criteria for clubs, the participation of a Hong Kong team in the China League and the development of a new stadium are seen as fundamental to the successful development of football in Hong Kong. They can all be part of a strategy to reform and transform the sport and can galvanize and unite all stakeholders in a quest for football excellence, something that is lacking at the moment. All of the initiatives will create interest and raise the standard of play at all levels. These few but significant actions are the main catalysts that will improve the performance of the “national” team and at the same time encourage higher levels of participation at grass roots. If implemented alongside other recommendations in this strategy such as the development of the Football Training Centre and the creation of better development pathways between the various providers of football opportunities, then we have no doubt that football in Hong Kong can not only recover the ground lost since its heyday but surpass those achievements.

Recommendations – The Professional Level

- 7. That the principle of establishing a professional football league in Hong Kong within three to five years be agreed and that the criteria for clubs to enter the league be linked to the AFC criteria.**
- 8. That a more detailed study should be commissioned into the feasibility and potential arrangements for a professional football league in Hong Kong (Stage 1)**
- 9. That the ‘new’ HKFA and the new league encourage clubs to move towards fully meeting the AFC criteria and in particular focus on youth development through the introduction of club ‘academies’**
- 10. That the potential for the future participation of a Hong Kong based team in the China Super League be recognised and that this be further considered when developing the new professional league and planning the new multi-purpose stadium complex at Kai Tak**
- 11. That the HKFA play a greater role in the development of amateur clubs and investigate the introduction of an accreditation scheme (similar to the UK Club Mark scheme)**

(III) Youth Development

- 8.92 The HKFA and LCSD have established the Youth Football Development Pathways, with tournaments at different levels. The structure follows the broad base grass roots development to the elite level at Representative Youth Teams and the Hong Kong “national” team.
- 8.93 LCSD supports the youth development pathways with subvention to fund the coaching programmes at each level.
- 8.94 The Youth Development Scheme and the summer’ football programme are aimed at mass participation as the numbers attending demonstrate. The scheme does offer children the opportunity to play football and learn some basic skills, but the coaches delivering the programme have in most cases entry level qualifications. The scheme does provide an opportunity for coaches to identify talented young footballers, but a system or pathway must be in place to direct these players to district or club teams. The age range for the scheme is up to 19 years, which is far too old for this grass roots scheme.
- 8.95 Programmes are in place to develop young football players which include the School Sports Programme, the Primary Athletes Football Training Scheme, the Young Athletes Training Scheme and the District Youth Football Training Scheme. A total of 48,000 children and youth attended these schemes and programmes in 2008-09 which is commendable, but how many of these young players have the talent, skill and drive to become a professional football player and what is the quality of coaching on these programmes?
- 8.96 It is fine for a child to attend the programmes, but if the coaching is basic and does not follow a structured curriculum there will be no player development. The level of subvention for the grass roots Youth Football Scheme is \$1.5 million a year. This is the highest level of funding for a football programme or football scheme provided by LCSD. If the quality at the elite level is to improve the level of funding at the elite level needs to be increased.
- 8.97 The purpose of this study is to identify the means of improving and developing football in Hong Kong. The football development schemes at present focus on mass participation. If the quality of football is to improve there needs to be a focus on the elite development. This unfortunately means that children and youth players of average or even good ability are eliminated from development programmes. This is just the harsh reality that not all young players have the natural ability to progress and make it as an elite football player.
- 8.98 There are currently three main development pathways in place for children from the age of 12 years upwards, the School Pathway, District Pathway and the Football Club or ‘Elite’ Pathway. These three pathways are considered to be an effective way of developing young players in Hong Kong, but there does not appear to be any link between the separate pathways, and the HKFA are predominately involved in the district pathways to the detriment of the other routes.

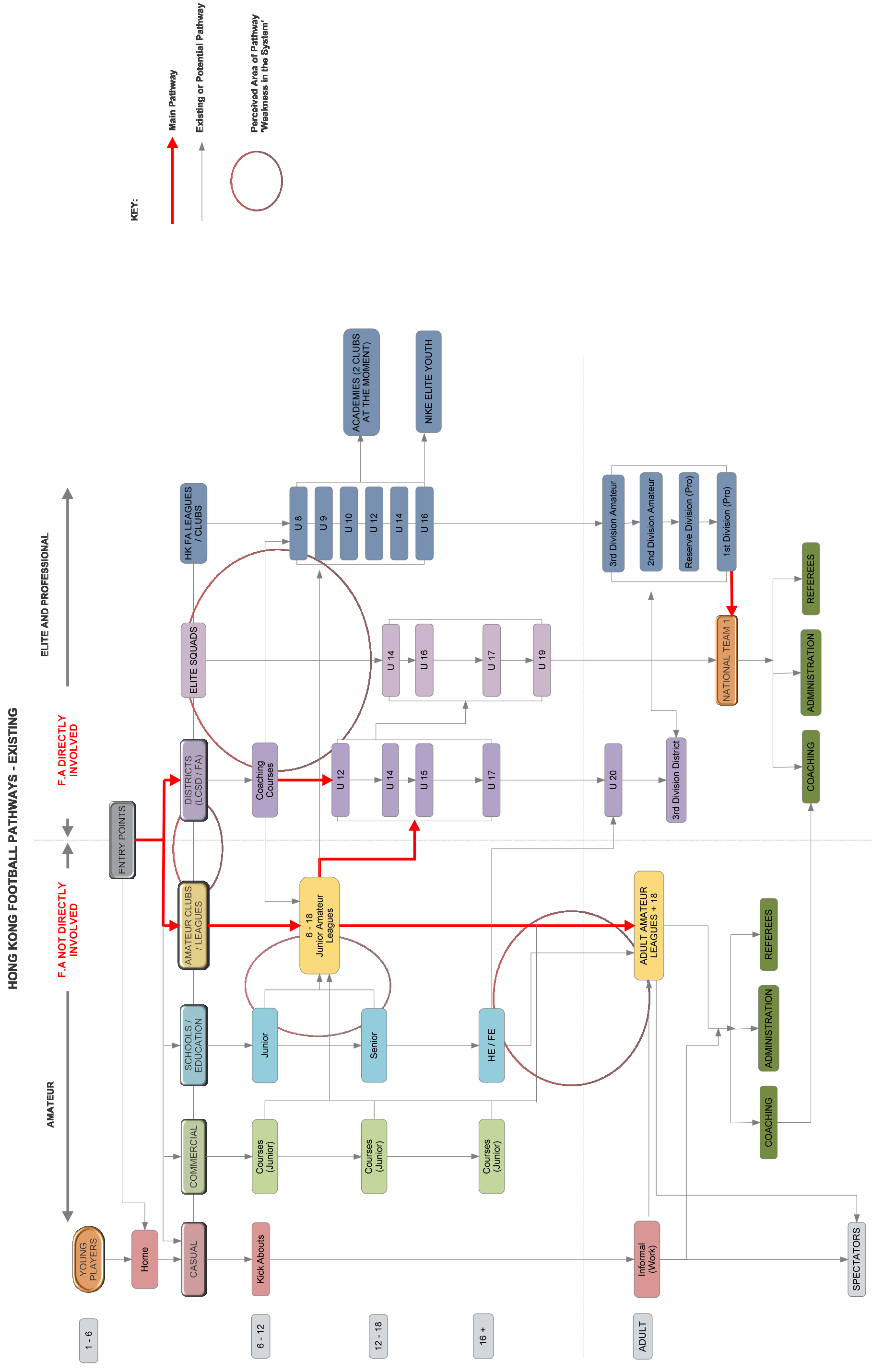
Pathways

- 8.99 Sports development pathways are the routes available for entry and progressive development in a sport from grass routes to elite level. Exit pathways also exist for sports men and women from elite level (or the highest level the person has achieved) out of the sport or involvement in the sport participating at a lower level, coaching, management or administration.
- 8.100 In Hong Kong there are currently a number of pathways whereby a young football player can start playing the sport competitively and progress through the age and skill groups.
- 8.101 Not all children have the aspiration to become a professional footballer and many children may start playing football with family and friends informally and continue playing football casually as a leisure activity only.
- 8.102 The entry or starting point for competitive organised football in Hong Kong includes the following:

- **Commercial coaching operators**
- **Schools**
- **Amateur clubs and leagues**
- **District programmes and representative teams**
- **HKFA league clubs**

- 8.103 The progression routes differ through the pathways and it is important to understand that it is common for a keen young footballer to participate and progress in more than one pathway and therefore the opportunity to be observed, have their talent identified and progress is higher for these young players.
- 8.104 The HKFA, working in partnership with LCSD, organises beginner coaching programmes and the opportunity to progress through primary athlete, young athlete and district training programmes and teams. The ultimate aim of these programmes is to identify young players who have the ability to progress to the Hong Kong representative teams at all age groups starting from under 14 years to the senior team.
- 8.105 Our understanding of the existing Hong Kong Youth Development Football Pathways is shown below. We recognise that the situation regarding football opportunities and pathways in Hong Kong is complicated and dynamic. The dangers of trying to summarise this in a diagram are obvious. Nevertheless it does identify the main options open for the 'journey' from beginner to "national" player.

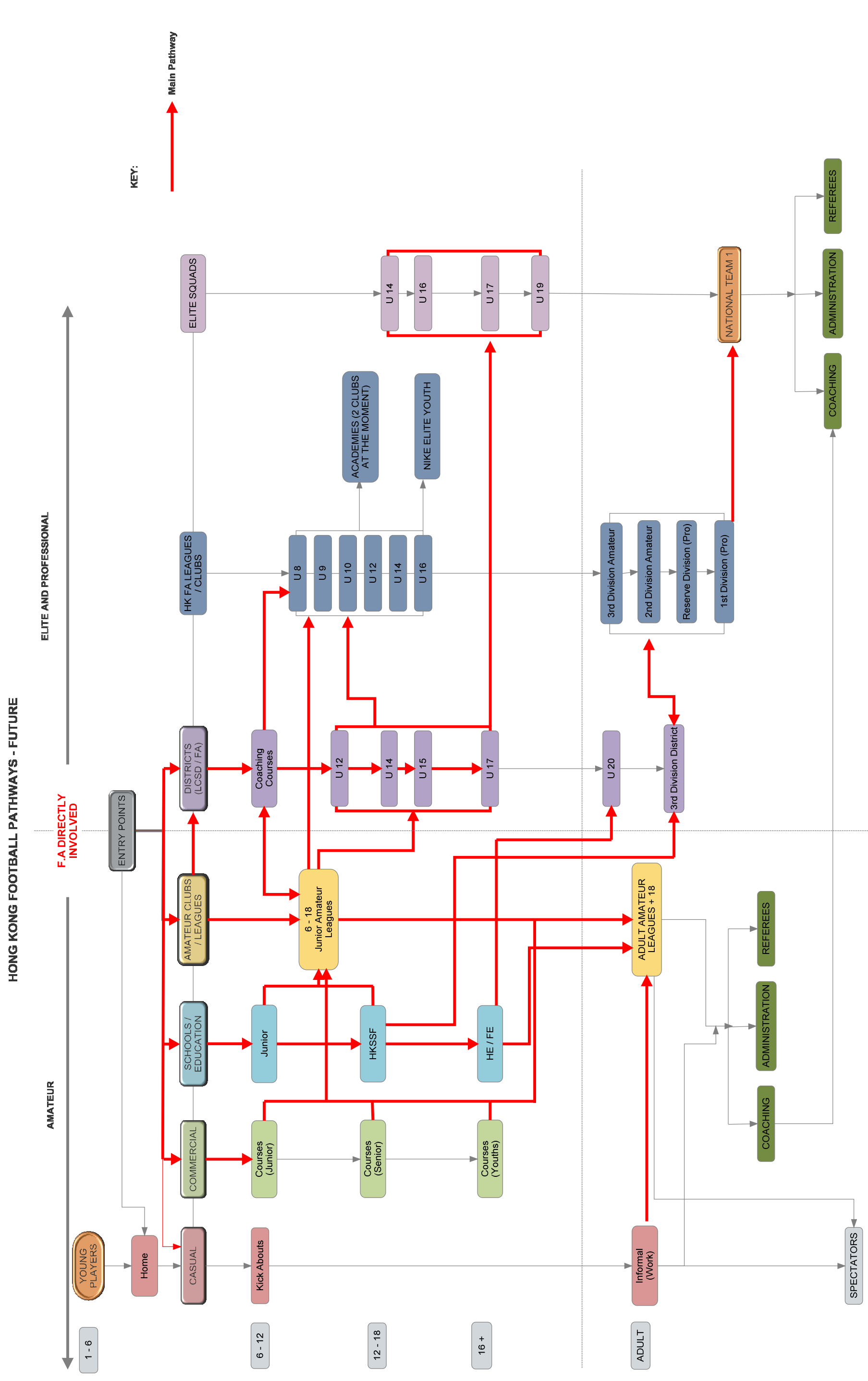
Figure 8.3 – Hong Kong Football Pathways - Existing



Football Development in Hong Kong

- 8.106 There are existing pathways such as the school and amateur club pathway where there is a danger that a young footballer may not get the opportunity to be identified for the district or representative squads as the HKFA and representative coaches have little involvement in these leagues/pathways unless the coach of the team or parent is proactive and makes direct contact with the relevant selectors.
- 8.107 There also appear to be few pathways between the education sector and the amateur junior clubs or pathways from the end of education into senior amateur or professional teams.
- 8.108 It is recommended that new positions are created for District and Regional Football Development Officers to link these pathways and ensure that no young footballer with the skills and ability to progress is omitted due to a lack of screening and talent identification.
- 8.109 It is recommended that the HKFA establish stronger links and communication lines with the schools and education football teams and squads to find out about the promising young players, and that opportunities are offered for progression in the sport. The District Development Officers will play a key role in this respect.
- 8.110 If the above recommendations are implemented a stronger set of football development pathways will be realised with the HKFA involved at all levels. The future Hong Kong Youth Development Football Pathways, following implementation of the above recommendations, are shown in the diagram below:
- 8.111 To improve and make the football development pathways more effective there needs to be:
- **Support from the HKFA in terms of evaluation, monitoring, support and funding of the programmes and schemes**
 - **Establish and develop links and partnerships between the different pathways available for young footballers in Hong Kong**
 - **An introduction of intense quality coaching following an established curriculum for each age group**
 - **Professional youth development within the clubs**
 - **A critical and harsh selection process to programmes focusing on elite development rather than mass participation**

Figure 8.4 = Hong Kong Pathways - Future



Football Development in Hong Kong

8.112 The key differences between the two structures (existing and future) are as follows:

- The pathways are more defined and would be implemented by the District and Regional Football Development Officers who would identify talent and make connections between the different levels and providers
- A young and talented footballer should find it easier to be identified and to move between the different providers. A young player might at any one time play for his or her school, district team and be part of a club academy
- The HKFA should be involved at all age groups and performance levels from community grass roots up to the elite level. The Development Officer system should allow for the 'tracking' of a footballer throughout his or her lifetime

8.113 Exit pathways from playing football must be established for amateur and professional players to encourage the player to remain in the sport. Opportunities need to be made available through training and career development for players to become officials (referees and / coaches) or enter management or administration and therefore support the future development of football in Hong Kong.

HKFA and Youth Development

8.114 The HKFA operates the Representative Youth Teams, District Youth Leagues and has in place a Youth and Technical Development Task Force. The HKFA organises coaching courses and seminars each year to ensure that coaches are in place to deliver youth programmes and schemes.

8.115 The HKFA has recently appointed a Technical Director who has responsibility for handling the Hong Kong Representative Teams, youth and coach development programmes.

8.116 Overall duties include:

- **The co-ordination and planning of coaching programmes**
- **Organising refresher courses for coaches**
- **Produce coaching related literature**
- **Establish a coaching structure at district and regional level**
- **Administer all coaching activities of the association**
- **Develop the Hong Kong representative**

8.117 It is recommended that the Technical Director report to the new Development Director and that between them they produce a 'Strategic Football Development Programme' which will incorporate the coaching structure at district and regional level.

8.118 Furthermore the above remit and duties for the new Technical Director are too much for one individual and it is recommended that a number of posts are established to deliver the youth and coach developments in Hong Kong.

8.119 It is recommended that five **Regional Football Development Officers** be appointed to report to the Technical Director and to implement the Strategic Football Development Programme in the regions which will cover a set number of districts.

8.120 The role of Regional Football Development Officer will encompass the following areas:

- **Growth and retention** – monitor youth development, primary athlete and young athlete schemes, plus the district programmes. Work at grass roots level to increase and sustain the number of teams, visit schools in the region to deliver football coaching programmes

- **Raising standards** – monitor coaches delivering programmes that receive funding from LCSD or HKFA. Ensure that quality and safe facilities are available for coaching programmes
- **Better players** – focus on developing better players in the 5-11 age groups prior to playing in the District teams, deliver coach education programmes in the region and establish a pool of volunteers willing to assist with football programmes
- **Running the game** – be a point of contact in the region for leading and governing the game efficiently

8.121 In turn we recommend the appointment of 18 District Development Officers who will be linked into the Regional structure but be more focussed on community grass roots football. These people will work with schools and community clubs and do first hand coaching as well as talent identification and other activities such as coach/teacher education etc.

Representative Teams

8.122 At the moment the Hong Kong Representative Training for all age groups takes place regularly, but is often quite a distance for some young players to travel, especially if they live in the New Territories.

8.123 The Regional Development Officers could work with smaller squads in specific regions and allow the young players who cannot travel to the representative training sessions the opportunity to still be a part of the representative squads. It is recommended therefore that the region be based on the same area that the Regional Football Development Officer is based and the programmes can be monitored by this post. Sufficient funding must be made available to pay the required coaching rates for these important posts to further develop the young elite players in Hong Kong. It will be important to ensure that these representative regional squads do not cut across the professional club academies once established. The Regional Development Officers will need to be the conduit between District and Regional Teams, the professional clubs and the National Training Centre.

8.124 The HK regional representative youth team age group squads must draw on talent identified at the clubs, district level and school representative teams. This should complement the club academies and provide opportunities for talented young players that are not 'captured' by a professional club. The 'late developers' in particular will benefit from this joined-up approach.

8.125 It is recommended that Hong Kong Representative Youth Teams participate on a regular basis in international competitions and travel to participate in other countries to gain valuable experience playing against different teams. Many overseas professional football club youth academies and football centres of excellence would welcome the Hong Kong Representative Teams and a schedule of games would be easy to organise against quality opposition.

8.126 HKFA should seek to get sponsorship to support the representative youth teams and assist in funding these trips abroad which are essential for the development of the players.

Quality Coaching

8.127 The role of the coach and the programme is critical for the development of a young football player. The coaching programme must be progressive and developmental. The amount of time a young player receives coaching is also very important in developing young footballers.

8.128 Football academies in Europe work on the principle that it will take 10,000 hours of training to produce an elite footballer!.

8.129 Gus Hiddink, former Holland Coach and current Russian National Team Manager and Technical Director of Chelsea Football Club was asked about his three priorities in player development and his list

Football Development in Hong Kong

is simple “Technique, technique, technique.” It is essential therefore that quality coaches are appointed at all levels of the game to nurture and develop young players. The District and Regional Development Officers will play a key role in coach education.

- 8.130 Trevor Brooking, English Football Association’s Director of Football Development, stressed the importance of quality coaches at young age groups and has noted his concern that the top coaches tend to progress through the age groups and coach at a senior level, when in fact for the development of future football it would be better if these top coaches were working with the 5 – 11 year old players. It is at this age that the early techniques are mastered and allow for the child to progress at a faster pace.
- 8.131 The HKFA tend to select naturally gifted players from the system only after the prime learning period of 6 to 11 years has passed. It is important that the HKFA team of coaches and selectors begin to get involved at an earlier age with quality coaching, which is monitored and evaluated. The District Development Officers will be ‘embedded’ in the local schools, clubs and community and will be able to identify, develop and encourage talent as well as move the best players through the various pathways.
- 8.132 The HKFA organise and run coaching courses and seminars annually and they are well attended. This good practice needs to continue with opportunities for coaches to further develop their skills and to increase the number of coaches in Hong Kong.
- 8.133 The professional clubs will develop their own youth development programmes and academies. The success and quality of the programmes can be assessed by the number of young players that progress through the youth team ranks and into the first team. An additional measure of the success of the programmes will be how many of the clubs players are selected for the both the junior and senior national team squads. The Football Training Centre will be the apex of elite training but will be complementary to rather than competing with club academies.
- 8.134 A structured and systematic football coaching development programme following a curriculum of study must be established for all age groups which the District football coaches in Hong Kong can adopt. The District programmes are funded by LCSD subvention and it is expected that professional development programmes are in place and can be monitored to ensure that the funding is used effectively. It is necessary to ensure that there is enough time allocated for youth teams to train, the facilities are improved to allow quality training to take place, there are sufficient numbers of quality coaches and the payment for coaches is enough to attract experienced coaches to develop the elite youth players.
- 8.135 The Youth Football Scheme receives \$1.5 million subvention from LCSD. It is recommended that more subvention and funding be directed at the elite youth squads and training programmes.

Youth Development in Clubs

- 8.136 The level of youth football development varies at the football clubs in Hong Kong. There is currently no real benefit in developing young players at the first division clubs due to the current structure of the clubs, the lack of a transfer market and the method of player recruitment.
- 8.137 The clubs in the first and second division do run youth teams at under 20, under 17 and under 15 age groups and participate in an Elite Youth League of 15 teams. The clubs therefore focus attention on players from 14 to 20 years and not any younger. This is often too late to develop the basic skills.
- 8.138 If the Clubs establish quality Academies and the proposed Professional Football League attracts investors and sponsors then it follows that the business of football in Hong Kong will generate higher salaries and opportunities. Football will be able to offer young players a career.
- 8.139 It is important to note that a transfer market is crucial to the success of the football academies to justify the investment in time and money that the clubs will make in developing the talented young players. The young players will be contracted to the clubs for a fixed period and the Professional League will need to establish rules to prevent clubs poaching or enticing the better players from one club to

Football Development in Hong Kong

another. It will take some time therefore for the club academies to become established. In the meantime other providers and pathways will need to be put in place.

- 8.140 If the proposed Hong Kong Professional Football League is established it is recommended, and will be part of the club entry criteria, that all clubs operate youth development programmes and it is recommended that these are in the form of a Club Youth Academy. The Football Academies will cater for young players from under 9 years to 16 years old.
- 8.141 If the leading football clubs in Hong Kong are playing in a well managed professional league and offer generous rewards and incentives to players there should, in theory, be a healthy pool of young players with an aspiration to join one of the professional club's football youth academies.
- 8.142 To attract young players the clubs need to establish a professionally run youth development programme and opportunities to move through the ranks of the youth teams into the senior professional team. Competition for the best players will be intense and the clubs will require quality football scouts to identify talent at an early age.
- 8.143 The clubs will recruit young players from as early as 7 years old and it is recommended that players do not join the clubs or are contracted to a club before 8 years old. A one year contract would be signed between the player and club with an option to 'retain' or 'release' at the end of each year.
- 8.144 There are examples of clubs in Europe inviting up to 600 young players to football trials at the age of 7 years old and then reducing this number to the first club intake of 20 young players into the under 9 year olds.
- 8.145 The selection process will be severe and if the clubs establish professional academies it is anticipated that the best young players will aim to play for a club with an academy rather than a district, school, or club without an academy. The players that are rejected by the clubs must have other opportunities to play at a high level hence the need for strong school and district set ups to complement club academies.
- 8.146 The Youth Academy teams will play in an Academy Elite League at all age groups. The clubs will be required to coach and train the young players a minimum of three times a week with matches played during the season at the weekend.
- 8.147 The players from the clubs selected to attend Regional and National Representative squad training will do so at the regional centres or at the proposed Football Training Centre. It is estimated that these squad training sessions will take place approximately every six weeks and then the full squad for each age category will meet for longer training sessions prior to any matches or competitions. In this way the clubs will benefit rather than lose players.
- 8.148 It is expected that the majority of the Hong Kong National Team players will be selected from the Professional Clubs at all age groups.

Selection Process

District Teams

- 8.149 The District Youth Teams are made up of 30 players in each group. At the early stage in the process there is a need for a broad base and 30 + children at the under 12 age groups allows the districts to assess a good number of children. As the age groups increase the numbers need to be reduced to allow the coaches to deliver quality and intense coaching to the selected better players. It is recommended to reduce the number of players to a maximum of 20 players per age group from under 14 years and above.
- 8.150 The resources and funding of youth development must focus on the very best players and the average

Football Development in Hong Kong

or even good players must be eliminated from the programmes. It is understood that players develop and grow at different ages and football performance can vary. To allow for this the Districts and clubs can take young players for trial periods to assess if they have the ability to join the squads.

- 8.151 The District Youth Teams do receive funding from LCSD to support the programmes and provide training facilities. There is a need to monitor the effectiveness of the District football development programmes to ensure that the funding is being used effectively.
- 8.152 It is necessary to evaluate each young player twice a year. Any young player not meeting the required standard or has poor attendance without good reason should be eliminated from the programme.

Professional Clubs

- 8.153 The Professional Football Clubs will handle their own selection and recruitment process by inviting young players to trials and offering the best players contracts of a year or two years depending upon the players' age.
- 8.154 The recruitment of the players will follow strict guidelines established and enforced by the Hong Kong Professional Football League to protect both the young players and the clubs.

“National” Team

- 8.155 The “national” teams currently start at the under 14 age group. It is recommended that this age is the earliest age group to select a representative team.
- 8.156 HKFA will appoint a “national” team coach to select and train the senior team
- 8.157 Regional Development Officers have been recommended and they will operate in the regions and recommend young players at all age groups to attend regional squad training.
- 8.158 In between these regional squads training sessions the young players will attend regular training and play matches with their clubs, districts or schools.
- 8.159 The Regional Coaches will be expected to attend club, district and school matches to monitor the development of the players and to identify the best players and invite them to the squad training sessions.
- 8.160 The Regional Coaches will be expected to network and build up relations with the coaches at the clubs, districts and schools.
- 8.161 The best player at all categories from the regional squads will be invited to attend “national” team squad training at the proposed Football Training Centre.
- 8.162 The regional squad training will allow the “national” team coaches to select the best players for the team at each age category.
- 8.163 If the clubs and the professional league are operating at the required standard and quality then the majority of players for the “national” teams will no doubt come from the clubs. The recommended selection process identified above does not exclude players developing through other pathways and will highlight the lack of quality at the clubs if players are selected through alternative pathways such as the districts and schools. It is the responsibility of the clubs to ensure that their youth development programmes are the best in Hong Kong.

Recommendations – Football Development Programmes and Pathways

The HKFA Youth and Technical Development Task Force and the HKFA Technical Director to implement and monitor the following recommendations:

- 12. That more funding be made available for District and Representative Teams and at elite level for coaches and training facilities.**
- 13.** That LCSD monitor and scrutinise the delivery and quality of the coaching programmes and evaluate and publish the effectiveness of the programmes.
- 14.** That the HKFA provide sufficient resources for coaching children in the primary development period of 5 years to 11 years old
- 15.** That the HKFA prepare a Strategic Football Development Programme with clear targets to plan the development of football in Hong Kong
- 16. That the HKFA recruit five Regional Football Development Officers**
- 17.** That the HKFA recruit part-time Regional Development Officers
- 18.** That the Regional Hong Kong Representative Youth Teams' training be organised to allow all the young elite players an opportunity to attend and that this be coordinated with club youth academies
- 19. That LCSD ensure that facilities are available for representative team training and that this be coordinated with the new football training centre**
- 20. That Hong Kong Youth Representative Teams play international friendly matches or competitions on a regular basis**
- 21.** That the HKFA seek sponsorship to fund the Representative Teams travelling abroad
- 22.** That an annual programme of coaching courses and seminars be organised and continue to ensure that there are enough football coaches in Hong Kong for the present and future
- 23. That clubs in the professional football league operate academies for under 9 year to under 16 year-olds and play competitive matches at all age groups in an Academy League. This activity should be coordinated with the new football training centre**
- 24.** That Regional Training Centres be established to train elite young players with the potential to be introduced to professional club academies and ultimately through them (and other pathways) to the "national" football training centre programmes
- 25.** That Regional representative squads have access to regular training venues to develop their talent prior to transferring to the national training centre.
- 26.** That District Youth Teams be reduced in squad size from 30 to a maximum of 20 to improve the personal development of the better players (under 14 onwards)
- 27.** That District and representative youth team players be assessed twice a year and that those not meeting the required standard be asked to leave the programme

(IV) Facilities

Pitch Bookings and Usage

- 8.164 The booking of football pitches and training facilities has been raised as a problem by many individuals and teams during the consultation process.
- 8.165 LCSD is responsible for managing the booking of football facilities in Hong Kong. Bookings can be made at the venues, by phone or via an internet booking system.
- 8.166 LCSD has systems in place and a list of priority users such as National Sports Associations and Sports Organisations.
- 8.167 The HKFA, through LCSD, provides the football clubs with 14 sessions a month for training. LCSD also assigns pitches for the District teams, and each of the seven age categories are allocated 36 training sessions a season, a total of 252 training sessions per District.
- 8.168 The issue is related to the number and quality of training facilities. LCSD is managing the booking of pitches as efficiently as possible, but the shortage of training facilities and pitches is the cause of the problem. Until the number of football facilities is increased there will be issues and problems related to teams, clubs and public attempting to book facilities and with the quality of the grass pitches.

Playing Pitch Strategy

- 8.169 There is an obvious need to solve the problem of a lack of football facilities in Hong Kong.
- 8.170 As previously noted in the report the grass pitches are in a poor condition due to adverse weather conditions and over use due to demand exceeding supply. Part of the answer to the problem is the construction of more artificial pitches to meet the required demand and reduce the number of training sessions and matches on the natural turf pitches which will allow LCSD time to maintain the pitches and improve the quality.
- 8.171 A planned approach is required to develop artificial pitches in Hong Kong and therefore it is recommended that a Playing Pitch Strategy is undertaken.
- 8.172 Producing a playing pitch strategy for the first time can be time-consuming and labour-intensive. However, the benefits of producing a playing pitch strategy for Hong Kong are considerable:
- **It ensures a strategic approach to playing pitch provision. During times of change, a playing pitch strategy will provide direction and set priorities for pitch sports, in particular football, rugby and hockey**
 - **It provides a basis for establishing new pitch requirements arising lack of provision, increased demand, new urban developments and population growth.**
 - **It is one of the best tools for the protection of pitches threatened by development.**
 - **It provides a holistic approach to open space improvement and protection.**
- 8.173 A detailed explanation of playing pitch strategy model, methodology and a working example are outlined in appendix 7.
- 8.174 LCSD currently do not have a long term plan or playing pitch strategy. For the planning and provision of football pitches, the Department follows the population-based standards stipulated in the Hong Kong Planning and Standard Guidelines to ensure balanced provision of public recreation facilities for all ages. The standards for provision of football and mini-football pitches are 1:100 000 persons and 1:30

Football Development in Hong Kong

000 persons respectively.

- 8.175 Site inspections have been carried out as part of this study, but a detailed strategy is required to identify specifically where the new football facilities should be located to meet the demand in areas of real need.
- 8.176 There are currently 11 third generation artificial pitches, with 4 artificial pitches planned to be converted from 1st or 2nd generation to 3rd generation and another 4 new 3rd generation pitches to be constructed over the next two years.
- 8.177 It is recommended that a 'Five Year Artificial Pitch Development Plan' be in place from 2010-2015. The first two years will result in the planned developments by LCSD taking place and in the years 2013-2015 an additional 5 artificial pitches a year could replace an existing natural turf pitch.
- 8.178 This phased approach will allow sufficient time to identify the correct location for the additional 15 artificial pitches and will not require new land or space to be sought as the developments will be replacing existing grass facilities.
- 8.179 The replacement of the existing 1st and 2nd generation pitches are not a part of this planned development and if resources are available they should be converted to 3rd generation, but the objective of this plan is to convert natural turf pitches to 3rd generation pitches thereby increasing the number of sessions available for booking football pitches.
- 8.180 The recommended artificial pitch development will take the number of 3rd generation pitches from the current number of 11 to a total of 34.
- 8.181 LCSD estimates that a total of 270 sessions can be booked a month on an artificial pitch versus a total of 60 sessions per month on a grass pitch. We do not believe that 60 sessions a month on a grass pitch is sustainable without a serious decline in the quality of playing surface and consequent downtime for maintenance. LCSD estimates that the artificial pitch at Kowloon Tsai Park is used 81% of the time and 100% of the time during peak periods.
- 8.182 If only the 3rd generation artificial pitches are assessed, the recommended five year plan will increase the number of available sessions per month by 5,130 which will solve many of the problems that currently exist.

First Division Home Grounds

- 8.183 A home ground or base for a football club is essential to develop the team into a 'club', and allow for the club to develop as a business, attract a fan base in the location of the ground and to encourage competition and rivalry with opposition teams.
- 8.184 In previous years, the majority of First Division matches were played at one ground, the Mong Kok Stadium. Often the matches would be played one after another with potentially four sets of supporters at the ground.
- 8.185 The Mong Kok Sports Ground is currently closed for re-development and for the next two seasons the First Division clubs have been allocated a set ground as their home venue. It is understood from the HKFA that after the re-development of Mong Kok Sports Ground it will not be available for the exclusive use for First Division matches and there will be a need to use other grounds or stadiums in Hong Kong.
- 8.186 Two of the First Division Clubs, South China and Kitchee, are to play home matches at the Hong Kong Stadium over the next two years. The HKFA have booked the Stadium for a total of 50 matches for the next two years.
- 8.187 To the football fan a home ground is much more than a stadium or a collection of stands, the home arena is classed by home team spectators as a spiritual headquarters, a field of dreams and

occasionally, a den of despair.

- 8.188 A home ground is the football supporters base and one he or she treats as their own and one to invite rival supporters. For a true football club, managers and players come and go, but the supporters and the home ground remain constant. A home ground encourages and increases a fan base of all ages, especially the younger supporters. Without a home ground the First Division is a group of teams playing in a league and not 'clubs' in the true sense.
- 8.189 A home ground allows the Clubs to develop their business, attract sponsors and commercial activities.
- 8.190 The current set of clubs in the First Division do not currently have the resources to build, manage and maintain a stadium or sports ground and it is therefore recommended that the Clubs are offered a permanent sports ground or stadium to call their home ground on a long term basis. The stadiums or sports ground will still be Government owned and leased to the clubs.
- 8.191 In countries such as Singapore, Japan and China the football clubs play in sports grounds that are owned by the Government and for the development of football the clubs are allocated a ground. Even in the English Premiership teams such as Manchester City Football Club play in a ground which is owned by the local council and the club pays a rent to use the stadium.
- 8.192 The allocation of 'home grounds' will be a prerequisite for entry into a new professional league (which is designed to meet the AFC criteria). In many cases this will require a partnership between a club and a District. This is a sustainable model because it will join-up many of the pathways and encourage clubs to work with local communities. Shared investment through Public Private Partnerships may be necessary to generate the capital required to enhance existing facilities. Some of the existing grounds do not have the minimum 3,000 seats required to meet the AFC criteria. This will need to be addressed in any future franchise situation. We would suggest a minimum of 5,000 seats for qualifying teams as without this number of seats the clubs will not be financially viable.

“National” Football Training Centre

- 8.193 The development of a football training centre in Hong Kong has long been under discussion between the HKFA and the Hong Kong Jockey Club, however, so far they have not been able to agree the way forward.
- 8.194 It is clear that the lack of a high quality and dedicated football training centre is one of the factors that prevents the development of football in Hong Kong.
- 8.195 A new Football Training Centre is a priority for football development in Hong Kong. The centre must have the following elements as a minimum:
- **Quality natural turf pitches**
 - **Artificial turf pitches**
 - **Indoor football facility**
 - **Office accommodation**
 - **Fitness centre**
 - **Swimming pool or hydro therapy pools**
 - **Lecture theatre**
 - **Class rooms**

Football Development in Hong Kong

- **Meeting room**
- **Therapist rooms**
- **Accommodation block**

- 8.196 Like the Hong Kong Sports Institute, the Football Training Centre must be a dedicated venue for elite development and must not be a sports facility that is regularly open to the public like other Hong Kong sports venues and sports grounds.
- 8.197 It is essential that the right facility mix is developed to provide a quality football centre of excellence for the present and future. The centre must be of the quality to attract visiting foreign teams and clubs as a pre-season or winter training venue.
- 8.198 An example of a recently developed football training centre is at Everton Football Club (English Premier League Club) which opened in 2007. The training centre is valued at HK\$216 million.
- 8.199 Everton Football Club training centre boast some of the finest training facilities in the world, and features 10 full-size grass pitches on three plateaus, one of which is floodlit along with an additional floodlit artificial pitch and specialist training areas for fitness work and goalkeepers. Inside the training complex there are extensive changing facilities for both the senior squad and Academy youth players.
- 8.200 The South Korean Football Association developed the National Football Centre in 2001. The football training centre is used as the training base for the Korean National Football team and the youth development teams and squads. The training centre is used for referee and coach education training and football seminars.
- 8.201 The National Training Centre is comprised of a four storey main building with conference facilities, training rooms, therapy suites and accommodation for over 100 persons. Training facilities include 6 full sized natural turf grass pitches, one full size artificial floodlit pitch, fitness club and spa.
- 8.202 It is necessary to ensure that the HKFA are the main stakeholder in the project and there is a need to recruit international expertise in the form of a **FTC Director**. There is an option for the management of the centre to be under the supervision of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Management. However if the training centre is to succeed in achieving the overall objective of improving and developing football in Hong Kong then the HKFA must be a major stakeholder and user of the facility.
- 8.203 The Hong Kong Jockey Club can be an important organisation in the development of the training centre by donating capital and providing support and expertise that they have gained developing the very successful Hong Kong Jockey Club Academy.
- 8.204 It is important to ensure that the training centre has sufficient personnel to provide the high quality service and support that is required to take football to the highest possible level in Hong Kong. A superb facility is fantastic, but the right support is critical in making the centre a success.
- 8.205 The proposed football training centre must establish a list of priority users before opening the facility to football clubs and general public. It is recommended that only the priority users have access to the natural turf pitches and other users have access to only the artificial turf pitches at the training centre.
- 8.206 Football Training Centre Priority Users:
- Hong Kong Men's & Ladies' Representative Teams**
 - Hong Kong Youth Representative Teams**
 - Hong Kong Disabled / Disadvantaged Football Teams**
 - HKFA Coaching Development Programmes**

- v. HKFA Referee Development and Training Programmes**
- vi. International Football Teams Training (income)**
- vii. International Clubs Training (income)**

8.207 Secondary Users* (income generating) include:

- i. District Team Training**
- ii. First Division Football Clubs Training**
- iii. Second Division Clubs Training**
- iv. Third Division Clubs Training**
- v. Commercial Football Coaching Organisations**
- vi. Corporate Development Training**
- vii. Community & General Public Bookings**

** Note: All Secondary Users to only have access to artificial turf pitches*

8.208 It is important to note that the Football Training Centre must work in partnership with the other high performance football development programmes including professional club academies. The centre would not be a centralised permanent training venue for an elite squad of players. As described elsewhere in this report, representative age group and senior teams would attend training sessions when they are released from their usual training bases (i.e. professional clubs).

8.209 The plans for the proposed training centre are still to be finalised and it is recommended that the facility mix be reviewed and capital costs calculated. A 10 year business plan must be developed to ensure that the centre is a sustainable and viable project. There is an option for the Hong Kong Sports Institute to have a third party involvement in the football training centre by offering player support services.

Outline proposals for the Football Training Centre are included in Appendix 11

Recommendations - Facilities

- 28. That the Government allocate a 'home' ground to each First Division Team**
- 29. That the Government produce a playing pitch strategy for Hong Kong that includes the implementation of a 'Five Year 3rd Generation Artificial Pitch Development Plan'**
- 30. That the Government invite the Hong Kong Jockey Club to develop and manage a new "national" football training centre with the scale and scope required to achieve the needs of football development, including the recruitment of appropriate operational expertise.**
- 31. That the correct number of staff be employed to support the users and make the centre a success as a professional football training centre**
- 32. That the operation of the centre be based on a list of priority and secondary users to ensure that the training facility is used for the development of football players, coaches and referees**

- 33.** That the management of the national football centre involve a partnership with the HKFA and other stakeholders with a view to developing a pool of elite youth and senior players
- 34.** That the Hong Kong Sports Institute be invited to be a part of the project
- 35.** That a Business Plan be prepared for the Training Centre

(V) Hong Kong “National” Teams

- 8.210 The Hong Kong representative Teams must participate on a more regular basis in friendly matches and Asian competitions, in addition to the major international tournaments. This report has identified that the Hong Kong Men’s Senior Team is playing 50% of the number of friendly matches over a five year period that have been played by other neighbouring Asian countries such as Japan, China, Singapore and Thailand. This lack of international games fails to promote and develop the representative team. It is therefore recommended that the HKFA increase the number of friendly matches to a minimum target of 8 games a season for the Men’s Senior Team both in Hong Kong and internationally.
- 8.211 This will result in the representative squad meeting for training sessions on a more regular basis, and allow for advanced training sessions, improve team bonding and cohesion and allow the coaching staff to develop the technique and team tactics.
- 8.212 The lack of a training centre does not help the development of the representative squads and it is hoped that this matter will be resolved in the near future for the benefit of football development in Hong Kong. The HKFA need to focus attention on the representative teams and plan in advance to organise selection and training sessions prior to matches. HKFA must increase the number of friendly and competitive matches for all age categories.
- 8.213 The increase in matches and travel will obviously need funding to support the teams, training, coaching and support staff. The rate of pay for the Representative Youth Team coaches is low at \$300 per hour and will not attract quality coaches. There are quality qualified and internationally experienced coaches in Hong Kong, but they are not prepared to coach the youth teams for this level of payment.
- 8.214 It is recommended that the HKFA produce a business plan to identify the potential additional income from commercial activities, marketing opportunities, potential media and television income and estimated gates receipts, plus all the additional expenditure items. The HKFA will then be in a position to request support and funding for the Representative Teams with the ultimate aim of improving the standard of football at the elite level and improving FIFA and AFC rankings. Fundamental to this is the appointment of a national team manager/coach.

Recommendations – Hong Kong “National” Teams

- 36. That the HKFA organise more international matches for the “national” teams, including a minimum of 8 friendly matches and 6 competitive matches (depending on timing of competitions) annually for the men’s senior team**
- 37. That the HKFA organise more international matches for the representative youth teams**
- 38. That the HKFA appoint a full-time “national” team manager and other “national” representative team coaches on terms that would allow the HKFA to attract the best coaches**
- 39. That the restructured HKFA develop a business plan for international development, to include a clear estimate of any additional subvention required**

(VI) Status of Football Players - of all ages:

- 8.215 The current status of a football player is low and the career opportunities poor which does not attract young players to make the game of football a profession.
- 8.216 The status of a football player will only improve once the game as a whole has progressed from the current amateur level to a professional industry that will offer real benefits to those involved in the sport.
- 8.217 As previously mentioned within the report, there is a need to protect players and ensure that the youth players entering the game as a profession receive a full education and those within the sport have career opportunities or pathways out of the sport that provide re-training or an education to allow the players to begin a new career.
- 8.218 Football is not considered a profession or career at present and quite rightly parents are not encouraging young players to spend a great deal of their time at football training or attempting to move through the ranks within a club to make it as a professional with a First Division Club.
- 8.219 It is therefore recommended that as the sport develops in Hong Kong and the First Division becomes more professional, the clubs will form a Youth Academy. Youth team players of between 16 years and 19 years who are contracted to clubs must be allowed time during the week to attend school, college or university. It must be a role of the HKFA to monitor the clubs and ensure that all Youth Academy players are released and attend education.
- 8.220 This system will allow players to continue football training and development and ensure that they receive an education. Continuing an education is critical for a young player as he/she may not make the grade as a professional or may get an injury that prevents him/her from playing the sport at an elite level.
- 8.221 Youth team players who are not contracted of part of a future Football Club Academy should be offered scholarships at college or university similar to those students that excel in other sports. This will strengthen the quality and level of football in further and higher education institutions which encourage young players to keep developing their football skills and allow them to remain in education. Providing education scholarships for young football players will improve the status of football players in Hong Kong.
- 8.222 There are education courses at Bachelor of Arts and Science and Masters level in sports sciences and sports studies for example at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and similar courses at other Universities. These types of courses are ideal for a young footballer who may wish to continue within the football industry after finishing playing.
- 8.223 Some young footballers may not reach the educational grade to attend University and therefore courses must be made available at a further education of vocational level to support their needs. In developed football countries educational courses have been developed to meet the requirements of young footballers aged between 16 years and 19 years who are part of Football Academy programmes. Such courses include a First Diploma or National Diploma in Football Studies. These courses are modular, assessment based and no examinations are required. On completion the qualification is sufficient for the young player to attend University at foundation degree level.
- 8.224 Vocational courses include sport leaders awards, football coaching qualifications, referee courses, first aid courses etc.
- 8.225 In summary, it is essential that a young football player progressing through the development pathways has access to a good education at the level that suits him or her best to further their career after playing football or if they opt out of football they are not disadvantaged. The development of this football and education system will appease parents who may be concerned that their child will suffer educationally if they focus on becoming a footballer.

Recommendations – The Status of Football

- 40. That following the establishment of a professional football league, clubs include an education programme for contracted youth players from age 16 to 19 years**
41. That the HKFA play a role in monitoring young players and in ensuring that they receive a suitable education
- 42. That universities and other educational and vocational institutions provide football scholarships**
- 43. That sports or football related educational courses be offered to support players with lower academic aptitudes**
44. That a Professional Footballers Association be established to promote and protect the rights of football players and to offer support to contracted footballers of all ages.

(VII) Education

School/Club Links

- 8.226 Hong Kong has the opportunity to establish a bespoke sports development structure which reflects its footballing needs. Given the vision to transform and develop the game from grassroots to elite, these development resources need initially to be focused on football at grassroots level, linking into, and co-ordinating existing activity in schools, local clubs and talent ID and coaching programmes, across the public and commercial sectors.

School Facilities

- 8.227 There is a need to increase the number of high quality football pitches to support the development of the game at both primary and secondary school level. This applies to both grass and synthetic pitches. A realistic option is to further develop the Schools' Village concept where a number of schools share sports facilities on site; this reduces cost, and increases participative opportunities.

Football Development in Schools

- 8.228 This should involve the appointment of District Football Development Officers, possibly employed by the HKFA. Given the geography of Hong Kong, it is recommended that there be a minimum of 1 Football Development Officer appointed per Hong Kong District i.e 18 in total. The remit of this individual will be to co-ordinate all football activity in the area, linking grassroots participation to the professional games. This will entail:

- **Auditing all current football activity in the area**
- **Auditing existing football facilities – quality and quantity**
- **Establishing a coaching programme (outreach) to develop the game in primary schools**
- **Establishing a secondary school coaching programme**
- **Linking into the existing inter-school competition, and specifically from the perspective of Talent ID**
- **Establishing a Talent ID Programme**
- **Establishing links with the local football clubs, including professional clubs, which in turn link into local schools e.g. coaching programmes, meet the professionals, developing spectators, visits to club grounds**
- **Establishing a local model for school/club links**
- **Organising out of school coaching courses, competitions, and holiday programmes (to complement and extend that provided through HKFA, and LCSD)**
- **Work with schools and clubs to develop funding allocations for new and improved football pitches**
- **Working with the Education Department to develop 'training the teachers' football courses to improve in curriculum delivery**
- **Establishing a co-ordinated programme of coach education and refereeing courses, in partnership with the HKFA, the Education Department and the LCSD**

- **Linking into higher education to optimise opportunities for football scholarships**

Football in the Education Curriculum

8.229 As the status of football is raised through this Vision and strategy, Football Scholarships should be established through a number of colleges/universities. These scholarships should be targeted at talented individuals identified through the education system and the new football development structure, to encourage them to continue studying whilst pursuing an elite football training programme. The Football Scholarships should be aligned to professional clubs and the Academy Programmes.

Recommendations – Links with Education

- 45. That the principle of establishing school to club links be accepted and promoted**
- 46. That school sports facilities be systematically improved through a strategic investment plan**
- 47. That District Football Development Officers should be employed by the HKFA to work in schools and community based football programmes to identify talent and improve the standard of coaching**
- 48. That a Football Bursary/Scholarship programme be established**
- 49. That School Representative (Age Group) Teams participate in international competitions and friendly matches and that exchange programmes be instigated**



Section 9

Summary and the Way Forward

9 Summary

- 9.1 Football in Hong Kong is a bit of an enigma. It is popular as a participant sport and as an 'entertainment' activity and yet there are real problems that hinder the development of the sport. There is a fundamental disparity between the popularity of football and the quality of facilities and performance at all levels.
- 9.2 This document suggests wide ranging and significant changes to the sport of football in Hong Kong. Reform is necessary in just about every aspect of the sport including its governance, the policy that guides it, the roles and responsibility of the main stakeholders, its funding, the performance of clubs and the national team, facilities and development programmes. Indeed a paradigm shift is required. This will mean 'revolution' in some areas and 'evolution' in others.
- 9.3 Many of the areas requiring change are factors that are interrelated if not inextricably linked. They can only be addressed in a systematic and coordinated way. Strong leadership is required from the main stakeholders especially the HKFA and Government.

The Way Forward – The Starting Point

- 9.4 The first thing that must happen is a collective agreement by all stakeholders on the extent of the problem and the vision for the future. This is set out below.

Delivering the 'Vision' for football in Hong Kong

- 9.5 It is possible to envisage a situation where in five to ten years football in Hong Kong has been transformed. So what would this vision entail? The vision is set out below:
- **An independent, strong, financially secure and well managed governing body that provides strategic leadership and direction and works with stakeholders to deliver the vision for football in Hong Kong and transform the sport into a world class product.**
 - **Appropriate, proportional and coordinated support (advice, resources and facilities) from the government at all levels to help to bring about the step change necessary.**
 - **Successful and professional Hong Kong national teams with improved FIFA ranking and performance on the international stage backed up by world class training facilities and support services.**
 - **A network of strategically located, good quality facilities (grass and synthetic) to cater for football participation (professional and amateur) and enhanced facilities and infrastructure including a new stadium and a new football training academy.**
 - **Prioritised, fair and appropriate access to these facilities that promotes the delivery of improved standards whilst preventing overuse.**
 - **A professional and independent league utilising 'home' venues that generate loyal and increasing support with the ultimate aim of having a team capable of playing in the China League.**
 - **Amateur leagues and clubs with better standards of play feeding directly into the professional level**
 - **A focus on youth development with sufficient resources to deliver improved opportunities for people to progress from beginner to elite performer backed up by rigorous systems, resources and facilities for talent identification and development.**

- **Football development programmes coordinated across all sectors including schools and club links that concentrate on both quality and quantity**
- **Significantly improved standards of coaching, coach education, officiating and access to expertise**
- **A cultural shift where the professional status of the game is enhanced such that it encourages people to pursue a career in football**

9.6 Establishing a vision is the easy part, implementing it is more difficult. The vision statements together with the recommendations contained in section 8 have been brought together in the following implementation action plan. Again the 'principal' recommendations are included in bold text.

Implementation Plan – Delivering the Vision

9.7 The table that follows is a synopsis of the plan incorporating the vision and recommendations. It also assigns roles and responsibilities, key milestones and resource requirements. This is the blueprint for developing football in Hong Kong.

Vision Statement 1		An independent, strong, well financed and well managed governing body that provides strategic leadership and direction and works with a number of stakeholders to deliver the 'vision' for football in Hong Kong and transform the sport into a world class product.							
Rationale	Related Recommendations	Priority			Responsibility		Change in Gov't Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale
		1	2	3	Lead Agency	Partners			
	1. That the HKFA agree to a transformation process (Project Phoenix)				HKFA	HAB Clubs	Revenue Budget	HKFA Agreement	Summer 2010
	2. That the restructured HKFA decide on the constitution, governance structure and organisation, that will best serve the sport and improve the level of professional expertise and experience in its secretariat.				HKFA	HAB Clubs	Revenue Budget	New Constitution New Council Appointment of CEO Appointment of Commercial Manager and Development Manager	End 2010 Spring 2011 Autumn 2010 Summer 2011
	5. That the HKFA appoint an external 'change agent' to help implement its transformation				HKFA	HAB	Revenue Budget	Appoint 'change agent'	Spring 2010
	31. That the HKFA prepare a Strategic Football Development Programme with clear targets to plan the development of football in Hong Kong				HKFA	LCSD EB Schools Clubs	Revenue Budget	Prepare Brief Methodology Complete	By Summer 2011
	47. That the restructured HKFA develop a business plan for international developments to include a clear estimate of any additional subvention required				HKFA	HAB	Revenue Budget	Prepare Brief Methodology Complete	By Summer 2011
	3. That the restructured HKFA prepare a vision that includes clear targets, strategies and development plans and draw up a five-year business plan to support this vision.				HKFA	Clubs LCSD	Revenue Budget	Corporate Plan Business Plan Development Strategy	Summer 2011 Summer 2011 Summer 2011
	4. That the restructured HKFA be established on a firm financial footing to allow it to develop a strategy for raising financial support commensurate with the approved business plan				HKFA	HAB Treasury	Revenue Budget	Funding Agreement	End 2011
	6. That a Hong Kong 'Football Family' be created through the instigation of a membership database				HKFA	Clubs Schools	Minor costs to establish Future revenue generator	10,000 'members' by 2013	2011 Launch

Vision Statement 2		Appropriate, proportional and coordinated support (advice, resources and facilities) from the government at all levels to help to bring about the step change necessary.							
Rationale		<i>Football is the most popular sport in Hong Kong. Sport impacts directly on people's lives. It is necessary therefore for the good of individuals, communities and society as a whole for football to adequately and appropriately funded. Football is however just one of many sports that need funding for facilities, development programmes etc. Football must make the case for funding and it must be linked to quantitative outputs and outcomes. The football fraternity must use this strategy to formulate a budget and make a case for public sector funding through HAB, LCSD, EB etc.</i>							
		Priority	Responsibility		Resources	Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale	
Related Recommendations	1	2	3	Lead Agency	Partners	Resources	Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale
28. That the Government allocate a 'home' ground to each First Division team				LCSD	Clubs	Revenue Budget	Yes	Each first division allocated a home ground	2010 – 2011 season (permanent)
12. That more funding be made available for District and Representative Teams and at elite level for coaches and training facilities.				HAB/LCSD	HKFA	Revenue Budget	Yes	Budget allocation	End 2010
19. That LCSD ensure that facilities are available for representative team training and that this be coordinated with the new football training centre				LCSD	HKFA Clubs	Revenue Budget	No	All teams allocated regular training facilities	2010
13. That LCSD monitor and scrutinise the delivery and quality of the coaching programmes and evaluate and publish the effectiveness of the programmes.				LCSD	HKFA Districts	Revenue Budget	No	All programmes assessed annually	2010

Vision Statement 3		A successful and professional "national" team with improved FIFA ranking and performance on the international stage backed up by world class training facilities and support services.									
Rationale	Related Recommendations	Priority			Responsibility		Resources	Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale	
		1	2	3	Lead Agency	Partners					
	30. That the Government invite the Hong Kong Jockey Club to develop and manage a new "national" football training centre with the scale and scope required to achieve the needs of football development, including the recruitment of appropriate operational expertise				HAB	HKFA HKJC LCSD Ex. Advisor	Capital Budget Revenue Budget	Yes	Football Training Centre Open 2012	Feasibility Study 2010 Business Case 2010 Facility Plans 2010 Construction 2011 Facility Open 2012	
	35. That a Business Plan be prepared for the Training Centre				HAB	Ex Advisor	Revenue Budget	No	Business Plan	2010	
	36. That the HKFA organise more international matches for the "national" teams, including a minimum of 8 friendly matches and 6 competitive matches (depending on the timing of competitions) annually for the men's senior team				HKFA	None	Revenue Budget	No	A minimum of 8 matches per season	2011-12 season and onwards	
	34. That the Hong Kong Sports Institute be invited to be a part of the project				HAB	HKFA HKJC	Revenue Budget	No	HKSI provide support services	2012	
	20. That Hong Kong Youth Representative Teams play international friendly matches or competitions on a regular basis				HKFA	Clubs	Revenue Budget	No	A minimum of 8 matches per season for all age groups from under 14's to senior representative team (friendly and competitive matches)	2011-12 season and onwards	
	21. That the HKFA seek sponsorship to fund the Representative Teams travelling abroad				HKFA	None	Human Resource	No	New Representative team sponsor for 2011 onwards	Finalise contract in 2010 and aim for minimum 3 year contract	
	37. That the HKFA organise more international matches for the representative youth teams				HKFA	None	Revenue Budget	No	A minimum of 8 games per season for all youth teams from under 14 – under 21's	2011-12 season and onwards	

Vision Statement 4		A network of strategically located, good quality facilities (grass and synthetic) to cater for football participation (professional and amateur) and enhanced facilities and infrastructure including a new stadium and a new football training centre.							
Related Recommendations	Priority			Responsibility		Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale	
	1	2	3	Lead Agency	Partners				
<p><i>There are particular problems associated with providing sufficient facilities for football in Hong Kong including the climate and the cost and availability of land. The lack of facilities leads to further problems for example overuse and a deterioration in the quality of facilities which in turn places a burden on other facilities. Particular strategies must be found to dealing with these issues such as prioritising and limiting use and providing synthetic surfaces.</i></p>									
<p>24. That Regional Training Centres be established to train elite young players with the potential to be introduced to professional club academies and ultimately through them (and other pathways) to the "National" football training centre programmes</p>				HKFA	Districts Clubs LCSD	Revenue Budget Human Resource	Yes	Regional / District Representative Centres established and operational	2011, one year in advance of Football Training Centre opening
<p>25. That Regional representative squads have access to regular training venues to develop their talent prior to transferring to the national training centre.</p>				HKFA	Districts Clubs LCSD	Revenue Budget	No	Regular Training for regional / district squads	2011, one year in advance of Football Training Centre opening

Vision Statement 5		Prioritised, equitable and appropriate access to these facilities that promotes the delivery of improved standards whilst preventing overuse						
Rationale	Related Recommendations	There are particular problems associated with providing sufficient facilities for football in Hong Kong including the climate and the cost and availability of land. The lack of facilities leads to further problems for example overuse and a deterioration in the quality of facilities which in turn places a burden on other facilities. Particular strategies must be found to dealing with these issues such as prioritising and limiting use and providing synthetic surfaces.						
		Priority	Responsibility		Resources	Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale
1	2	3	Lead Agency	Partners				
	28. That the Government produce a playing pitch strategy for Hong Kong that includes the implementation of a 'Five Year 3 rd Generation Artificial Pitch Development Plan'		LCSD	HAB Ex Advisor	Revenue Budget	No	Hong Kong Playing Pitch Strategy	2010
	19. That LCSD ensures that facilities are available for the representative team training and that this be coordinated with the new football training centre		LCSD	HAB HKFA	Revenue Budget	Yes	Increase in availability of training facilities for representative teams	2010

Vision Statement 6		A fully professional and independent league utilising 'home' venues that generate loyal and increasing support with the ultimate aim of having a team capable of playing in the China League. Enhanced amateur leagues and clubs with better standards of play feeding directly into the professional game							
		As stated above, success at the elite end of the sport has a knock on effect at the bottom. Success at the top will not be achieved unless the standards of professionalism improve. The ultimate aim is to have a fully professional league with high levels of spectator support and as the 'icing on the cake' a team playing in the China League as an 'anchor tenant' in the new Stadium.							
Related Recommendations	Priority			Responsibility		Resources	Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale
	1	2	3	Lead Agency	Partners				
7. That the principle of establishing a professional football league in Hong Kong within three to five years be agreed and that the criteria for clubs entering the league be linked to the AFC (and emerging FIFA) criteria.				HKFA	Clubs	HKFA : Revenue Budget Capital Budget	No	New league criteria and implementation plans produced	2010
8. That a more detailed study should be commissioned into the feasibility and potential arrangements for a professional football league in Hong Kong (Stage 1)				HKFA	Ex Advisor Clubs	Revenue Budget	No	Feasibility study and business case for new league developed	2010
9. That the 'new' HKFA and the new league encourage clubs to move towards fully meeting the AFC criteria and in particular a focus on youth development through the introduction of club 'academies'				HKFA	Clubs	Revenue Budget	No	Clubs identified for inclusion in inaugural season	2010
10. That the potential for the future participation of a Hong Kong team in the China Super League be recognised and that this be further considered when developing the new professional league and planning the new multi-purpose stadium complex at Kai Tak				HKFA	Clubs	Revenue Budget	No	HK representative club in China League	2015
28. That the Government allocate a 'home' ground to each First Division Team				LCSD	HKFA Clubs	Revenue Budget	Yes	Each First Division Club allocated a home ground for season Recommendation implemented for 2009-10 season	2009-10 and to continue for following seasons
11. That the HKFA play a greater role in the development of amateur clubs and investigate the introduction of an accreditation scheme (similar to the UK Club Mark scheme)				HKFA	Clubs	Revenue Budget	No	Investigation Evaluation Introduction	2011 2012 2012

Vision Statement 7		A focus on youth development with sufficient resources to deliver improved opportunities for people to progress from beginner to elite performer backed up by rigorous systems, resources and facilities for talent identification and development.							
Related Recommendations	Priority		Responsibility		Resources	Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale	
	1	2	3	Lead Agency					Partners
Rationale	<i>Development programmes and pathways and the ease with which they can be navigated are a fundamental building block in the success of a sport. Many of the 'usual' programmes and pathways exist in Hong Kong whilst others are less transparent. Some specific interventions are required to reduce the fragmented nature of the development continuum.</i>								
14. That the HKFA providesufficient resources for coaching children in the primary development period of 5 years to 11 years old				HKFA	Clubs Schools Districts	Revenue Budget	No	Programmes, pathways and links established	2010
15. That the HKFA prepare a Strategic Football Development Programme with clear targets to plan the development of football in Hong Kong				HKFA	Ex Advisor	Revenue Budget	No	Production and implementation of Strategic Football Development Programme	2010
16. That the HKFA recruit five Regional Football Development Officers				HKFA	LCSD	Revenue Budget	No	Posts appointed	2010
38. That the HKFA appoint a full-time "national" team manager and other "national" representative team coaches on terms that would allow the HKFA to attract the best coaches				HKFA	LCSD	Revenue Budget	No	Posts appointed	2010/11
40. That following the establishment of a professional football league clubs include an education programme for contracted youth players from age 16 to 19 years				HKFA	HKPFA Clubs	Revenue Budget	No	Education programmes established for young contracted footballers and monitoring and evaluation process in place	2012
41. That the HKFA play a role in monitoring young players and in ensuring that they receive an appropriate education				HKFA	HKPFA Clubs	Revenue Budget	No	Education programmes established for young contracted footballers and monitoring and evaluation process in place	2012
18. That the Regional Hong Kong Representative Youth Teams' training be organised to allow all the young elite players an opportunity to attend and that this be coordinated with youth academies				HKFA	Clubs LCSD	Revenue Budget	No	Training camps in operation and annual plans and venues arranged	2010
37. That the HKFA organise more international matches for the representative youth teams				HKFA	None	Revenue Budget	No	A minimum of 8 games per season for all youth teams from under 14 – under 21's	2011-12 season and onwards

Football development programmes coordinated across all sectors including school and club links that concentrate as much on quality as they do on quantity									
Vision Statement 8									
Rationale									
Most people's first experience of sport is at school. This must be a positive experience and talent must be identified at an early age if it is to blossom. Talented youngsters must be put into the system and follow a structured development pathway as far as their ability will take them. Coaching skills are paramount if talent is to be nurtured to its full potential.									
Related Recommendations	Priority			Responsibility		Resources	Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale
	1	2	3	Lead Agency	Partners				
13. That LCSD monitor and scrutinise the delivery and quality of the coaching programmes and evaluate and publish the effectiveness of the programmes.				LCSD	HKFA HAB	Revenue Budget	No	All programmes provided with subvention are scrutinised and monitored to ensure 'best value' and effective use of subvention	2010
23. That clubs in the professional leagues operate academies for under 16 year-olds and play competitive matches at all age groups in an Academy League. This activity should be coordinated with the new football training centre				HKFA	Clubs HKPFA	Club Budgets	No	Establishment of Football Club Academies Establishment of Football Club Academy League	2012
45. That the principle of establishing school to club links be accepted and promoted				HKFA	HKSSF Clubs EDB	Revenue Budget	No	HKFA Strategic Development Plans Implementation of plans Links established and in place	2010
47. That District Football Development Officers should be employed by the HKFA to work in schools and community based football programmes to identify talent and improve the standard of coaching				HKFA	EDB HKSSF Clubs	Revenue Budget	No	Football Development Officers in post and operational	2010
46. That school sports facilities be systematically improved through a strategic investment plan				EDB	HAB	Capital budget	No	An assessment of school football pitch and facilities is undertaken and a plan of action for replacement and improvement produced and implemented	2011
26. That District Youth Teams be reduced in squad size from 30 to a maximum of 20 to improve personal development of the better players (under 14 onwards)				Districts	HKFA LCSD	Revenue Budget	No	Reduce squads from under 14 years. Programmes to be monitored and evaluated by LCSD	2010
43. That sports or football related educational courses be offered to support players with lower educational aptitudes				EDB	Universities Colleges Further Education	Revenue Budget	No	A range of course at all educational levels on offer for young footballers	2012

Vision Statement 8		Football development programmes coordinated across all sectors including school and club links that concentrate as much on quality as they do on quantity									
Related Recommendations	Rationale	Priority			Responsibility		Resources	Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale	
		1	2	3	Lead Agency	Partners					
42. That universities and other educational and vocational institutions provide football scholarships					EDB	Universities Colleges Further Education HKFA HKPFA	Revenue Budget	No	Young players on contracts combining education and football development	2012	
27. That District and representative youth team players be assessed twice a year and those not meeting the required standard be asked to leave the programme					Districts	HKFA LCSD	Revenue Budget	No	Evaluation process established and implemented. Exit pathways made available for young players released	2010	
48. That a Football Bursary/Scholarship programme be established					EDB	Universities Colleges Further Education HKFA HKPFA	Revenue Budget	No	Young players on contracts combining education and football development	2012	
49. That School Representative (Age Group) Football Teams participate in international competitions and friendly matches and that exchange programmes be instigated					HKSSF	HKFA EDB	Revenue Budget	No	An international HKSSF fixture list developed and implemented with the co-operation of HKFA	2011	

Vision Statement 9		Significantly improved standards of coaching, coach education, officiating and access to expertise									
Rationale	Related Recommendations	Priority			Responsibility		Resources	Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale	
		1	2	3	Lead Agency	Partners					
	22. That an annual programme of coaching courses and seminars be organised and continue to ensure that there are enough football coaches in Hong Kong for the present and future				HKFA	LCSD	Human Resource	No	Increase in the number of qualified coaches in each coaching class	Annual review	
	36. That the HKFA organise more international matches for the “national” teams, including a minimum of 8 friendly matches and 6 competitive matches (depending on the timing of competitions) for the men’s senior team				HKFA	None	Revenue Budget	No	A minimum of 8 matches per season	2011-12 season and onwards	
	37. That the HKFA organise more international matches for the representative youth teams				HKFA	None	Revenue Budget	No	A minimum of 8 games per season for all youth teams from under 14 – under 21’s	2011-12 season and onwards	
	31. That the correct number of suitably qualified staff be employed to support the users and make the [football training] centre a success as a professional football training centre				TBC	HKFA HKJC LCSD Ex Advisor	Revenue Budget	No	Efficient operation	2012	
	32. That the operation of the centre be based on a list of priority and secondary users to ensure that the training facility is used for the development of football players, coaches and referees				TBC	HKFA HKJC LCSD	Budget	No	Efficient operation	2012	

Football in Hong Kong suffers from inadequate numbers of appropriately qualified coaches and administrators. Those that have the requisite skills and experience are not always used as effectively as they might be. The quality of play is dependent on the quality of teaching.

Vision Statement 10		A cultural shift where the professional status of the game is enhanced such that it encourages people to pursue a career in football							
Related Recommendations	Rationale	Priority			Responsibility		Change in Policy (Yes/No)	Targets Measures of Success	Timescale
		1	2	3	Lead Agency	Partners			
<p>44. That a Professional Footballers Association be established to promote and protect the rights of football players and to offer support to contracted footballers of all ages.</p>	<p><i>In some cultures a young person's dream is to be a footballer. Undoubtedly this is because of the fame and fortune that follows a career in football. This is not the case in Hong Kong and much talent is being channelled into other sports, pastimes and careers.</i></p>				New body: HKPFA	HKFA Clubs	HKFA Revenue Budget	Establish HKPFA	2012

9.8 The Vision is deliberately aspirational but not beyond the bounds of possibility. The sub-title of this strategy is 'We are Hong Kong' – dare to dream. We make no apology for that. This statement recognises the new 'mantra' adopted by the sell-out crowd when Hong Kong beat Japan in the East Asian games. It seems an appropriate 'strap line' for the Strategy.

Measures of Success – Key Targets

9.9 The implementation table includes a number of targets for the delivery of the actions. What is important is that these changes result in some measurable differences to football in Hong Kong. Some of the headline indicators of success together with a desired outcome are set out below.

Target/Measure	Existing Level	Future Target	Date
“National” Team FIFA world ranking (men)	143 (Dec 09)	120	2012
		100	2015
		Maintain Top 80	2020
“National” Team FIFA Asia ranking (men)	26 (Dec 09)	20	2012
		15	2015
		Maintain Top 10	2020
“National” Team FIFA world ranking (ladies)	60 (Dec 09)	50	2012
		40	2015
		Maintain Top 35	2020
“National” Team FIFA Asia ranking (ladies)	13 (Dec 09)	11	2012
		9	2015
		Maintain Top 8	2020
Annual Number of International Matches (Senior)	5 (Average of last 5 years)	8 Friendlies (minimum) 6 Competitive (depending on competitions)	2010
Number of Registered Players	N/A	280,000*	2014
Average spectator numbers Division 1	Circa 1,000	5,000	2015
Football ‘Family’ Members	N/A	10,000*	2012
% of Population Playing	2.16%	4%*	2014
Number of Affiliated Clubs	82	120*	2014
Clubs with Quality Accreditation	N/A	25%	2014
		50%	2016
Registered Officials	1016	1,500	2015
Football Development Programmes	2,129	2,500+	2012
		3,000+	2015
		3,500+	2020
Number of Synthetic Pitches	11	34	2015
Delivery of National Training Centre		Operational by	2012
Sports Scholarship Bursaries	N/A	15 per annum	2012 onwards

* No current accurate measures. HKFA to establish strategy and database of registered players, affiliated clubs etc.

+ Requires additional subvention

The Way Forward – Implementation

9.10 During the course of this study there have been a number of very encouraging signs – ‘green shoots of recovery’ one might say. There have been very large crowds at two recent matches involving local teams and of course the stunning victory in the East Asian Games.



'We are Hong Kong'

'It was as if Hong Kong had won the World Cup. The fans were united as one, from the high and mighty to the humble'

- 9.11 It is critical for the future of football in Hong Kong that the momentum that has been generated by these recent successes is harnessed and channelled into positive action. There can be no doubt that the enthusiasm and appetite for the sport is alive and well. There is no truth in the commonly held perception that the local game has no future because of the media focus on European Football.
- 9.12 It is equally important to avoid complacency. It would be naïve and dangerous to assume that these encouraging signs are indicative of a general upturn in the fortunes of football in Hong Kong and that the halcyon days will return automatically and without intervention. If only it were as simple as that. The success of the national team in the East Asian Games needs to be seen in context. If viewed as a barometer of the current health of the sport and its potential, the arrow is certainly pointing in the right direction. However there is still a long way to go.
- 9.13 Once there has been 'buy-in' to the Vision, there must be concerted action to make sure it happens. To capitalise on the enthusiasm that will have been generated by the discussion and debate, it is important to 'score an early goal' to use football parlance.
- 9.14 The HKFA must play a leading role in the implementation of the strategy. This report recommends that that the organisation is re-established but on very different lines. This could be the early goal required

to kick start the process of transformation. The Government will need to play a role in this process but to avoid any issues with FIFA, it will need to 'facilitate' the process and not unduly influence it. For this reason it may be better for an outside agency to undertake this role but this will need the support of the Government in monetary and human resource terms.

- 9.15 Once re-established the HKFA can then instigate many of the other changes including planning for a new professional league, developing facility and development strategies and strengthening the national team.
- 9.16 Simultaneous with this the other stakeholders can work with the HKFA to address other areas. For example LCSD can make prioritised investment in facilities in preparation for a new professional league and to provide better and more sustainable facilities for the wider community.

Critical Path

- 9.17 Strategic Leisure believes that some of the implementation issues are fundamental and an immediate priority. Many of these actions can be implemented simultaneously. These are summarised in five main areas as follows:

- **Governance and Structure**
 - The HKFA to lead the development of football subject to embracing the need for change
 - The HKFA to start re-constitution by-
 - ▲ Appointing a 'change' agent
 - ▲ Agreeing a new governance structure
 - ▲ Providing more clarity on roles and responsibilities
 - ▲ Recruiting new Officials – Chief Executive, Commercial Manager, Football Development Manager and National Team Coach
 - ▲ Preparing a Development Strategy and five year Business Plan
 - ▲ Securing appropriate funding (public and commercial)
 - ▲ Recruiting and training Regional and District Football Development Officers
- **Professionalisation of Football**
 - Starting the process of establishing a new Professional League (to AFC and future FIFA criteria)
 - Working with clubs and providing them with the 'tools' to meet the AFC criteria and in particular the development of youth programmes and academies
 - Linking existing and future clubs to Districts to form 'Home' grounds and putting in place plans and finance to enhance facilities where necessary
- **Facilities**
 - Drawing up a strategy for enhancement of facilities including the conversion of a number of grass pitches to synthetic
 - Preparing a playing pitch strategy to find a better match between supply and demand
- **"National" Football Training Centre (FTC)**
 - Preparing a specification and business case for the National Training Centre
 - Securing funding for the FTC
 - Appointment of FTC Director
 - Determining the Management Arrangements for the FTC and procuring building works
 - In partnership with other organisations and especially coordinated with emerging professional club academies, developing a pool of talented youth squads
- **Football Development Programmes and Pathways**
 - The appointment of Regional and District Football Development Officers
 - The earmarking of additional funding for programmes
 - Establishing systems for programme monitoring and evaluation
 - Scholarships and links with the clubs and the Football Training Centre

Football Development in Hong Kong

- 9.18 The implementation of the above in a coordinated way will not be easy. To maintain the momentum and drive the process forward it will be necessary to create a **football taskforce**. This should include representatives of stakeholders with the authority to make decisions and see them through.
- 9.19 Strategic Leisure believes that some external expertise and representation on this taskforce is not only desirable but also essential. Independent input is often required to ensure that vested interests do not dominate. Expertise and knowledge of what happens elsewhere in the world can be invaluable.

Resource Requirements

- 9.20 This report has noted the fact that football is under-funded at all levels. The decline of the sport has led to a reduction in income for the sport arising from gate receipts and commercial sponsorship.
- 9.21 The HKFA currently has minimal reserves on which to draw and the current government subvention per capita is low. The fact that football is not an elite sport means that other sources of funding and support are unobtainable.
- 9.22 The current Government subvention given to football is circa HK\$7.5m. This supplements other money derived by the sport from FIFA/AFC, gate receipts, media, programme income etc. Despite this injection of cash, it will be impossible to implement the critical path described above without an injection of additional human and financial resources. The table below sets out the order of magnitude (indicative only) required for the human resources required to be the catalyst for the development of football in Hong Kong.

Area/Task	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
HKFA	HK\$	HK\$	HK\$	HK\$	HK\$
Chief Executive (1)	500,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000
Commercial Manager (2)	-	750,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
Development Manager (3)	-	500,000	1,200,000	1,200,000	1,200,000
National Team Coach (4)	-	1,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000
Regional Development Officers x 5 (5)	-	2,000,000	2,800,000	2,800,000	2,800,000
District Development Officers x 18 (6)	-	1,200,000	2,600,000	4,000,000	5,400,000
Total	500,000	7,450,000	10,100,000	13,500,000	14,900,000
Football Training Centre	HK\$	HK\$	HK\$	HK\$	HK\$
FTC Director (7)	-	-	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000

- 1. Chief Executive appointed Autumn 2010 circa HK\$1.5m per annum plus on-costs and bonuses**
- 2. Commercial manager appointed mid 2011 circa HK\$1.2m per annum plus on-costs and bonuses**
- 3. Development Manager appointed mid 2011 circa HK\$1m per annum plus on-costs**
- 4. National Team Coach appointed Early 2011 circa HK\$1.2m per annum plus on-costs and bonuses**
- 5. Regional Development Officers appointed early 2011 circa HK\$450-500k per annum plus on-costs**
- 6. District Development Officers appointed in phases from 2011 circa HK\$ 300k per annum**
- 7. NTC Director appointed in 2012 circa HK\$1.2m plus on-costs and bonuses**

- 9.23 In addition to this there will be a need for additional money to pay for other aspects of the strategy. For example a feasibility study for the Football Training Centre (circa HK\$1m). The total capital to develop the FTC could be circa HK\$300m.
- 9.24 Additional funding will be required for pathway development, football coaching programmes, talent

Football Development in Hong Kong

identification schemes and squad training and matches circa HK\$5-10m per annum.

- 9.25 Considerably more money will be required to pay for facility developments such as the conversion of grass pitches to synthetic and associated improvement in the infrastructure e.g. changing rooms. These would be around HK\$5m per pitch. Some of this investment could come from existing budgets.
- 9.26 Ultimately the development of grounds for 'home' venues for a professional league will also require investment but it would be hoped that much of this could come from the clubs themselves and other commercial sources.
- 9.27 What is apparent is that implementing the strategy will not be cheap and it is certainly beyond the scope of the HKFA alone. Government enabling funding will be required until the strategy brings about the change necessary for football to generate more income and make the sport more self-sufficient. This should therefore be seen as pump prime funding that over a period of time will yield significant socio-economic benefits and a return on the investment.

Summary and Conclusion

- 9.28 Football in Hong Kong is at a major crossroads. It is not an over exaggeration to say that now is one of the most crucial stages in the development of the sport. The major plus factor is the enormous public interest and pride that has been generated by the East Asian games and other recent high profile domestic games.
- 9.29 However there is no guarantee that this interest will continue and unless the strategy is implemented there is a probability that the sport will continue to struggle and decline despite these recent encouraging developments.
- 9.30 With a concerted and coordinated effort and an injection of additional funding in the right areas, the sport can flourish once again. The consultants have recommended a way forward, and the strategic vision and action plans will achieve their full effect only if all stakeholders agree on the way forward. Fundamental to all of this is the position of the HKFA.
- 9.31 The HKFA should lead the development of the sport. A voluntary transformation backed up by proportional political and financial support from the government is the best way to deliver the strategy.
- 9.32 Recent events have demonstrated that Football in Hong has huge potential, now is the time to deliver.



Making your visiona reality



Strategic Leisure
3rd Floor
Rutherford House
Warrington Road
Birchwood Science Park
Warrington
WA3 6ZH

Tel: 01925 855 550
Fax: 01928 585 769

E-mail: info@strategicleisure.co.uk
Web: www.strategicleisure.co.uk