
Expert Panel

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Purpose

1. The Expert Panel was established by the Independent Football Regulator ('IFR') under the Football Governance Act 2025 ('the Act') to act as an independent decision-making body to add extra scrutiny to regulatory decisions made by the IFR.
2. Its primary function is to conduct internal reviews of certain reviewable decisions (as outlined below and listed in Schedule 10 of the Act).
3. With certain limited exceptions (which may only be delegated to a committee established by the Board), the Board may also delegate any of its functions to the Expert Panel in conjunction with the IFRs Delegation Policy and Scheme of Delegations.

Membership

4. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) holds responsibility for the appointment of the Expert Panel. The Expert Panel is recruited via direct appointments and through open competition for their skills, knowledge and experience in the operation, organisation or governance of football clubs or competitions, financial or other regulation and legal proceedings.
5. The members of the Expert Panel are:
 - a. Expert Panel Chair: Martin Coleman (appointed 08/12/2025, eligible for renewal on 08/12/2029)
 - b. Expert Panel Members:
 - i. Anna Rossington (appointed 15/12/2025, eligible for renewal on 15/12/2029)
 - ii. David Rule (appointed 15/12/2025, eligible for renewal on 15/12/2029)
 - iii. Gemma White KC (appointed 15/12/2025, eligible for renewal on 15/12/2029)
 - iv. Ian Rogers KC (appointed 15/12/2025, eligible for renewal on 15/12/2029)
 - v. Jessica Simor KC (appointed 15/12/2025, eligible for renewal on 15/12/2029)
 - vi. John Sutherland (appointed 15/12/2025, eligible for renewal on 15/12/2029)
 - vii. Mark Ives (appointed 15/12/2025, eligible for renewal on 15/12/2029)
 - viii. Martin Stewart (appointed 15/12/2025, eligible for renewal on 15/12/2029)
 - ix. Rhodri Thompson KC (appointed 15/12/2025, eligible for renewal on 15/12/2029)
 - c. The Expert Panel will be provided with a secretariat function by the IFR Governance Team.
6. The Expert Panel Chair and Expert Panel Members will serve a four-year term with the option of serving an additional four-year term.

7. There is no maximum for how many Expert Panel Members may be in situ, but there must be no fewer than six at any one time.

Expert Panel Responsibilities

8. The CEO will agree a committee of the Expert Panel consisting of no fewer than three Expert Panel Members (which will include a committee Chair) to conduct Internal Reviews on 18 out of 27 reviewable decisions as listed in Schedule 10 of the Act. The CEO will make this decision through engagement with the Expert Panel Chair. These decisions are as follows:
 - a. to refuse to grant a provisional operating licence under section 17
 - b. to specify a further period for which a provisional operating licence is to have effect under section 18(6)(b)
 - c. to attach a discretionary licence condition, to vary or remove, or to not vary or remove, a discretionary licence condition attached, to an operating licence under section 21
 - d. to accept, or not to accept, a commitment mentioned in section 23(3)(c)(ii)
 - e. to release, or not release, a specified competition organiser from a commitment mentioned in section 23(3)(c)(ii)
 - f. to give a direction under section 39 or 40 (removal directions)
 - g. to give a direction under section 41 (directions relating to unsuitable owners and officers)
 - h. to give a direction, or make an order, under section 42 (orders and directions effecting alternative officer arrangements)
 - i. to approve, or not to approve, the taking of any step mentioned in section 46(1) (duty not to dispose etc of home ground without approval)
 - j. to approve, or not to approve, the appointment of an administrator under section 47
 - k. to approve, or not to approve, the entering into of arrangements mentioned in section 48(1) (duty not to relocate without approval)
 - l. not to approve, or to approve with modifications, a personnel statement under section 52
 - m. to appoint an expert reporter under section 66
 - n. not to release a person from a commitment accepted under section 70
 - o. to give an urgent direction for breaches of licence conditions under section 79
 - p. to prepare and publish a censure statement under paragraph 2 or 4 of Schedule 9
 - q. to require the appointment of a skilled person under paragraph 5 of Schedule 9
 - r. to impose a financial penalty under paragraph 3 or 6 of Schedule 9

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9. The Expert Panel is responsible for determining the procedure for and nature and extent of any internal reviews it conducts, having regard to the IFR's published procedural framework for conducting those reviews.
 10. A committee of the Expert Panel will ordinarily be required to reach a decision within 28 days from the date it is established (unless a 14-day extension "special reasons" extension has been applied). The Expert Panel may:
 - a. Uphold the decision;
 - b. Vary the decision; or
 - c. Cancel the decision.
 11. There are instances where an IFR decision (such as finding an incumbent owner to be unsuitable and taking steps to require their removal) involves multiple Reviewable Decisions (some of which are reviewable by a committee of the Board and others by the Expert Panel). In those cases, the IFR Board and Expert Panel will be required to consider how this can be streamlined (for instance, by having one Expert Panel member sit across both committees).

IFR Responsibilities

12. The IFR must:
 - a. Decide whether or not to carry out a review, in line with Section 82 of the Act;
 - i. Any member of IFR staff who was involved in the original decision may not be involved in the process of deciding whether to conduct a review of that decision.
 - b. Notify each concerned person of the applicable reviewer's decision, and the reasons for that decision;
 - c. As soon as is reasonably practicable, publish the decision; and
 - d. Establish and maintain a system for the declaration and registration of relevant interests of Expert Panel Members.

Accountability

13. The Board's oversight role does not extend into the substance of decisions by a Committee of the Expert Panel. Committees of the Expert Panel make their decisions independently of the Board.
14. The Expert Panel shall review its own terms of reference and recommend any changes it considers necessary to the IFR's Board for approval.