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University of Birmingham partners with Birmingham and West Midlands Ladies Football Club

University of Birmingham and Birmingham and West Midlands Ladies Football Club (BWMLFC) formally announced their partnership this week, in which the University coaches will take an active role in leading the club's training, and players will have an increased games programme to enhance their development.

The University of Birmingham will be bringing the FA Women's National League Division 1 team back to its roots; for the club that formed as the University of Birmingham Club back in 2001, the partnership will merge the two programmes over time and enable the University to host a Sunday league in addition to the Wednesday BUCS programme. As well as enabling each to benefit from the other's infrastructures, connections, committee and staff, both parties will benefit from experienced University coaching staff, an easier pathway for both high-level players and at a community level, and an expanded reach into the National Women's Football pyramid through the Wednesday and Sunday leagues.

The University will aim to demonstrate the partnership over the next year through coaching, facilities and recruitment. The University coaches have been working with the BUCS teams on campus for years, volunteering at all levels and really developing the game for young girls and women. Last year, the University was selected as an official FA High Performance Hub, enabling the University to develop as a central facility of excellence for women's football by pulling all of the region's resources together to push the boundaries of the sport, and the coaches are supported to lead and inspire player development by this programme. The High Performance status, and this latest partnership with BWMLFC, will mean that the University can hopefully expand its reach even further to attract the best young players in the country to the region, for both BUCS and Sunday league.

The partnership will also provide development opportunities for students who want to get club experience, and integrate them into the BWMLFC programme as well as the University's. Gemma Davies, Head of Women's Football at the University, says it's so exciting to be partnering with BWMLFC:

'Not only does it allow us to offer more competitive playing opportunities for our current student players, but it has also provided us with the opportunity to work with an ambitious and forward-thinking club within our local area. Now we can enhance the opportunities open to local players and strengthen our region further by providing world-class training facilities, development opportunities and the right environment for people who want to start coaching. We also hope see club sessions moved to our lovely pitches on campus very soon!'

General Manager of BWMLFC, Helen Carver, says it's a fantastic time to be partnering with the institution where it all started.

'The club has gone through significant change and a number of successful seasons have passed since it started in 2001 and we're now at a fantastic stage, where we find ourselves in the FA Women's National League when there's no better time to support and be involved in women's football. Now is the time for us as a club to progress and push on once again, both on and off the pitch.'

The University and BWMLFC have released a date for an open training session at the Club's home ground of Castle Vale, which will take place on Thursday 21 June between 7-9pm, and encourage all aspiring players to get in touch, to be a part of this exciting development.

ENDS

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Notes to the editor:

- The University of Birmingham is currently ranked in the top ten universities for sport in the UK.
- The University have invested in new indoor and outdoor sport facilities, including the £55 million Sport & Fitness Club which opened May 2017, new pitches and a pavilion.
- The University of Birmingham is ranked amongst the world's top 100 institutions, its work brings people from across the world to Birmingham, including researchers and teachers and more than 5,000 international students from over 150 countries.
- University of Birmingham Women's Football Alumni include Izzy Christiansen and Emma Follis, who play for Manchester City Women and Birmingham City Ladies respectively.
- The eight students and alumni who play for Premier League teams are Alison Hall, Elizabeth Steele, Laura Cooper, Katie Sorenson, Sharone Buckle, Nadia Bacciochi, Pip Harmison and Jess Howard. Ellen Martin was also selected for the Aston Villa Tier 2 Super League team earlier this year.
- The High Performance Centre initiative from the FA provides an educational and community-based setting to recruit, develop and deploy coaches, who will lead and inspire player development specifically in the women's and girls' game. The High Performance status enables the University to develop as a central facility of excellence for women's football, pulling all of the region's resources together to push the boundaries of the sport.

Details of trials for players:

- First date of open trials (on registering interest they will be sent further dates):
 - Thursday 21st June– between 7-9pm
 - Location will be Castle Vale Stadium, Farnborough Road, Castle Vale, B35 7NH.
- Email address they must contact to register for the open trials
 - bwmfcb@hotmail.com
 - Name, DOB, position & playing experience/previous clubs