Dear

I am writing as a fan of Woking Football and the community which they serve to seek your support on a matter that could jeopardise the future of the National League for the current season and for some Clubs generally.

All the National League football clubs were, and still are, extremely grateful for all the support given to the National League back in September and October to secure the necessary funding for the three divisions of the National League to commence on the 3rd October.

You may recall that the League had sought a £20 million package to cover the 66 community clubs and the DCMS very kindly arranged for the payment of £10 million pounds to be paid as grant funds via a deal with Camelot.

At the time the League and Clubs were told that this was to cover the first three months of our season, October to December, with a review at the end but that if supporters were still not able to be admitted this would roll over for a further period. The League and Clubs commenced the season on that basis. Making a decision to commence triggered a commitment from the Clubs for the entire season, much of which is in player and staff costs.

Unfortunately the DCMS are offering to finance the League with a further £11 million to cover the current three month period, from January to March but by way of loans to clubs not grants.

All the clubs were greatly appreciative of the support they have received over the past three months but I really fear that the league and its clubs are now in a much more perilous position than they were back in September. Because of the pandemic many clubs recruited players in September with contracts that only became effective once the season kicked-off and are therefore now liable for these costs.

Clubs are obviously still losing revenue because of the Behind Closed Doors broad impact on spectator, hospitality and sponsorship revenues and judging by Ministerial comments over the weekend we are unlikely to see a return of spectators before April or even May.

This means that all the clubs currently have virtually a normal non Covid level of costs due to players and coaching staff wages but with no income. The impact on that is extremely perilous for many Clubs.

The desire of the DCMS to assist is admirable and I do appreciate that the calls on Government assistance are eye-watering. But the goal posts are being moved mid-season. The reality is that only grants not loans provide any real compensation for the actual losses incurred due to the significant impact of playing behind closed doors. These losses can never be recovered.

Unfortunately the indications from the clubs are that without grant funding many would now vote to finish the season.

Should this happen some of our community clubs would face permanent closure but at the very least the efforts of so many and the £10 million already paid in grants would effectively be wasted. Perversely if we were to stop playing nearly all the staff would be entitled to be furloughed and the National League has calculated that the furlough payments available over the next three months would exceed the £11 million being offered in loans and is estimated in excess of £14m.

As before time is not on our side. Clubs will have salary runs and HMRC payments to make over the next 10 days. I would therefore ask if you would lobby the DCMS on our behalf to prevent the whole National League crumbling before our very eyes.

Kind regards