

## Sky Bet's partnership with the EFL set to mark a decade of success

### Steve Birch, CEO Sky Betting & Gaming

It is often said that a week is a long time in football, so with excitement building ahead of this weekend's opening round of EFL fixtures, I feel an enormous sense of pride as Sky Bet enters its tenth consecutive season as title sponsors of the league – one of the longest and most significant partnerships in professional sport. This relationship has undoubtedly been a positive force for Sky Bet, which has grown to become the UK's most popular betting brand, but it has also seen us support EFL clubs, educate their players and coaches, and better protect at risk customers when it comes to safer gambling.

Having first been agreed in 2013, the partnership is centred around a clear memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two organisations that sets out how to deliver our joint objectives in a socially responsible way. This has always and rightly placed safer gambling at its heart, while also establishing a framework that allows us to engage the millions of EFL fans and connect them with the teams, players, and communities that they passionately support.

And if last year's footballing drama is anything to go by, they are in for another treat this season. Back to full capacity following the pandemic, Wembley hosted close to 200,000 football fans across three exciting league finals in May, whereby two sleeping giants of English football – Nottingham Forest and Sunderland – were promoted from the Championship and League One respectively, with Port Vale coming up from League Two.

With both attendances at, and viewership of, last year's EFL finals and play-offs close to record highs, Sky Bet was pleased to have access to its largest sponsorship inventory to date. In keeping with our well-established commitment to use these assets to relay safer gambling messages, we allocated more than 70% of this inventory toward the industry's 'Take Time to Think' safer gambling campaign as well as encouraging customers to set deposit limits and consider other protective tools.

This season will see a continuation of the approach clearly set out in the MOU, with the promotion of safer gambling the core tenet in how we work together with the EFL. In addition to highlighting 'Take Time to Think' via updated LED advertising boards, updated sleeve badges for all 72 clubs will now promote the campaign alongside every matchday programme and big screen advertisement allocated to Sky Bet.

What's more, we will be using these assets to continue to raise awareness of 'TalkBanStop' – a collaboration between GamCare, Gamban and GamStop that combines practical tools with support to help vulnerable customers stop gambling and kick-start their recovery journey. Funded and supported by the Gambling Commission, this initiative brings together the important combination of blocking software, self-exclusion and ongoing support for vulnerable customers and is fully backed by Sky Bet as well as other UK brands owned by Flutter, our parent company and the global leader in safer gambling.

Our partnership with the EFL will also involve us both working closely with EPIC Risk Management, the leading independent harm minimisation consultancy in the UK, with whom we have a £1m multi-year agreement to educate players and staff from every one of the 72 EFL clubs about gambling-related harm. Now in its fifth year, this season will see us build on the work we initially did with the first teams of each club, delivering a more refined programme shaped by the voices and personal experiences of those impacted by gambling-related harm in and around their club, whether it is fans or family members.

And finally, we will continue to co-develop quality content for the Sky Bet EFL's 'League Of 72' YouTube channel, which marks its one-year anniversary this season and leverages Sky Bet's extensive and wide-reaching array of social assets. This content hub is the dedicated home of exclusive interviews, insider access and tactical analysis across the EFL, allowing clubs with tighter marketing budgets to interact with their fans and communities without having to make a substantial investment in high-end production and specialist digital talent.

These initiatives demonstrate how both Sky Bet and the EFL have pioneered what a collaborative and constructive partnership can look like between a betting company and a sporting organisation. As part of Flutter, one of the largest-listed sports betting and gaming companies in the world, we've been able to use these learnings to establish similar commercial relationships with leading sports bodies such as the NFL and NBA in the US and the NRL in Australia, while also developing standards around areas such as betting integrity. While these partnerships should not escape scrutiny, neither should their benefits be wilfully ignored. So like the thousands of football fans cheering on their team this weekend, I'll be supporting the EFL and our long-standing partnership, all of us hoping for another successful season.

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