

International Cricket in Yorkshire

Table of contents

1	Background.....	3
2	Eligibility to host International matches	3
2.1	Venue categories.....	3
2.2	Minimum facility requirements.....	3
2.3	Facilities at Headingley	4
3	National landscape	4
3.1	Venues	4
3.2	International cricket's future	4
4	Yorkshire's status.....	5
4.1	Strong Yorkshire	5
4.2	Headingley Cricket Ground.....	6
5	Summary	6

1 Background

Throughout the twentieth century, 6 cricket venues (Lord's, The Oval, Edgbaston, Trent Bridge, Old Trafford and Headingley, hosted the vast majority of major cricket matches in England & Wales. In 1999, all county grounds were given the opportunity to host matches as part of the Cricket World Cup which took place in this country. This gave Counties and more importantly, their local stakeholders, the experience of hosting major sporting for events and created an awareness of the advantages of 'sporting tourism' to their local economies.

In the early 2000's, Hampshire, Durham and Glamorgan started to develop stadiums fit to host major matches and made compelling cases to enter the market. This provided competition for the 'traditional grounds' and resulted in significant investment being made by them in the development of stadia facilities.

Whilst the criteria for hosting major matches includes other considerations such as geography, venue operations and legacy benefits, the infrastructure within which matches are played is a key factor in determining host venues as this is becoming increasingly important in a society that has high customer experience expectations.

2 Eligibility to host International matches

2.1 Venue categories

The ECB has three categories of cricket venues:

Category	Test	ODI/T20	Tour, U19, Women's
A	✓	✓	✓
B	✗	✓	✓
C	✗	✗	✓

Headingley Cricket Ground is currently a Category A venue.

2.2 Minimum facility requirements

To be eligible for Category A venue status, a venue must comply with minimum facilities criteria including:

- An established ground development plan identifying the long-term objectives of the Club.
- High standard of playing, practice and training facilities, with pitches rated above average for major matches (including pitches which last 5 days).
- High technological infrastructure including world class electronic and written media facilities.
- Permanent floodlighting.
- High standard of public seating with a minimum 15,000 seats, the majority of which must be permanent.

2.3 Facilities at Headingley

Since 2004 Headingley has seen significant improvements in many of its facilities including those provided for spectators, sponsors, players, match officials and the written media. However, the North/South stand has deteriorated to a point where it has become barely fit for purpose. In particular, spectator facilities and those required by the electronic media are deteriorating at pace and fall some way short of the standard at other Category A venues.

3 National landscape

3.1 Venues

Currently there are nine venues with Category A status:

County	Venue	Location	Max. Capacity
Durham CCC	Emirates Riverside	Chester-le-Street	15,000
Glamorgan Cricket	SSE SWALEC	Cardiff	16,000
Hampshire Cricket	The Ageas Bowl	Southampton	22,000
Lancashire CCC	Emirates Old Trafford	Manchester	23,000
MCC	Lord's Cricket Ground	London	29,000
Nottinghamshire CCC	Trent Bridge	Nottingham	17,000
Surrey CCC	The Kia Oval	London	26,000
Warwickshire CCC	Edgbaston	Birmingham	25,000
Yorkshire CCC	Headingley	Leeds	17,000

Over the last ten years there have been significant investments made by First Class Counties to improve facilities for spectators, the media and players. Five of the Category A venues now boast capacities over 20,000.

3.2 International cricket's future

The schedule and host venues for international cricket in England and Wales has been confirmed until the end of 2019. However, from 2020 matches have not yet been awarded and it is anticipated that a process will take place within the next 12 months to award matches to venues for the period 2020 – 2022.

4 Yorkshire's status

4.1 Strong Yorkshire

More play

Yorkshire has more cricket clubs (778) and players (c. 131,000) than any other county and at one point, had more of the former than the whole of Australia! The roots of 'traditional cricket' are therefore deep and represent solid foundations on which to grow the game.

The rich diversity of the Yorkshire community represents a wonderful opportunity for cricket to grow further, with the 'Yorkshire Cricket Foundation' leading the charge to capitalise on this, through involvement in projects such as the development of Bradford Park Avenue. The 'South Asian Communities Project' is an example of best practice on a national level and is likely to be replicated by other counties, as is the 'Drax Cup', a competition open to years 3 and 4 of all primary/junior schools in the Yorkshire and Teesside region and in which more than 20,000 boys and girls participate.

Great Teams

County men's

Winners of the County Championship in 2014 and 2015, Yorkshire currently produces more players for the England teams than any other County.

County women

Winners of the County Championship in 2015 (the first County to win the men's and women's County Championship in the same year), Yorkshire were recently successful in securing 'host status' in the Kia Super League being launched in 2016.

County age-groups

Yorkshire have an extensive County age-group structure, boasting teams at U10s, 11s, 12s, 13s, 14s, 15s and over 50s. In addition junior representative cricket at a district level provides an arena where the most talented juniors can compete against each other giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their potential as future County age group players.

Inspired Fans

Despite tiring facilities at the North/South stand end of the ground, Yorkshire have significantly grown attendances in recent times, evidenced by a record 59,902 fans watching international cricket and 55,655 watching the county play in the NatWest t20 Blast in 2015. Collectively, this resulted in a 13% growth in attendances over the previous year.

The customer experience at Headingley also grew in 2015, with their satisfaction score rising to 8.5 out of 10, although by far the lowest scores came from spectators in the North/South stand.

Good Governance

Yorkshire now has one of the strongest non-executive teams in the country. Led by an extremely able chairman in Steve Denison, the Board benefits from a diversity of skills, envied by many.

The executive team also has real quality, with Mark Arthur respected by ECB and his peers throughout the country. Mark's leadership during the 'floods' earlier this year, demonstrated the tireless efforts he is making to connect the game at all levels throughout the county.

Strong Finance

In 2015 Yorkshire successfully completed a financial restructure enabling them to significantly reduce their interest payments. The club's ambition is to clear their debt in the next 10-15 years. Revenues across the business have increased enabling the club to improve all aspects of their operations. However the greatest risk to the club's financial position is the future allocation of international cricket.

4.2 Headingley Cricket Ground

Headingley has a rich heritage and is one of the most iconic cricket venues around the world. Test Match cricket has been played there since 1899, with numerous legendary occasions taking place at the ground, including the famous 'Botham's Ashes' match in 1981.

Whilst significant progress has been made in terms of facilities development since 2004, the North/South stand is now at the point where it is barely fit for purpose for spectators or the electronic media (to whom the location is fundamentally important). As eluded to in section 3, other venues around the country have made greater progress in this area and have overtaken Headingley when it comes to facilities that are appropriate for hosting major cricket matches.

5 Summary

Headingley Cricket Ground has a long tradition of hosting international cricket and Yorkshire has a proud history of producing iconic players through its extensive network of clubs. Yorkshire is also delivering important projects in the local community and is synonymous with cricket. Yorkshire is therefore strategically important to cricket in England and Wales with the old adage of 'when Yorkshire is strong, England is strong' being most apt.

Whilst the ECB is delighted with the role Yorkshire CCC is currently playing on and off the field, its facilities in the North/South stand are in need of significant upgrading if Headingley is to retain Category A status in the medium to long-term and reach parity with the other Category A venues across the country.

Gordon Hollins
Chief Operating Officer

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