
Club invited to develop community football

CHELSEA Football Club are set to snap up talented youngsters from under Wycombe Wanderers' nose.

The Division Two Blues were left feeling snubbed this week after it was revealed that South Bucks District Council has invited the Premiership club to put together a Football in the Community project for schools in the south Buckinghamshire area.

Wycombe's youth development officer Jim Melvin was surprised that the council had not approached Wanderers to develop such a scheme. "We are the only professional club in Buckinghamshire and we already run soccer schools in the Gerrards Cross, Stoke Poges and Farnham areas. I would have thought if the council wanted to set something like this up, that we would have been their first port of call."

Sean Gore, Chelsea's football and community officer,

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confirmed the Premiership Blues' interest in setting up soccer schools in south Buckinghamshire.

"South Bucks is very untouched. The council approached us to put something together," he said.

Wycombe have run their own Football in the Community schemes since Jim Kelman was manager in the late 1980s, but they have expanded such projects in the last two to three years to complement, and act as a feeder, for their centres of excellence.

District councillors will consider Chelsea's proposals, which include the introduction of soccer academies, at a meeting today. Hamish Pringle, the council's principal leisure assistant, said: "At the moment we're asking Chelsea to come into partnership with

us and they will be approaching certain schools in the district. It will be a continuous thing."

If proposals are passed for a one-year trial period, a development officer would be appointed in September, funded partly by the council.

The officer would arrange initial free coaching sessions for between six and ten schools in the district, and the programme would then move onto other schools.

The club also intend to target girls, those with learning difficulties and underprivileged children for the football scheme. Other proposals include a Saturday morning soccer club, teacher training days and advanced academies.

If Chelsea's players are to be involved in the scheme, if it is given the go-ahead, they will not have far to travel as many of them, including Mark Hughes, Dennis Wise, and John Spencer, now live in the Gerrards Cross area.