TOP UK FEMALE FOOTBALL COACH SET TO WORK WITH LOCAL GIRLS

Efforts to encourage girls intensify with specialist help

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 25 - SAINT LUCIA, Castries: Leading UK female football coach and sports lecturer Hannah Dingley will be in Saint Lucia as part of a new child safeguarding and public education programme, where UK sports personalities work closely with Eastern Caribbean coaches and youth.

Ms. Dingley will work with a number of local girls programmes around the island and assist the Sacred Sports Foundation as it delivers the recently launched programme. The top UK coach holds a UEFA "A" license and is expected to work with girls and their coaches as she helps outline a longer term programme to assist girls development in Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Grenada moving forward.

Ms. Dingley, a sports coaching lecturer at the University of Wolverhampton is a Nirvana FC coach and former coach of Nottingham Forest Ladies and ex-first team coach of Lincoln Ladies Football Club, who play in the UK Football Association’s Women’s Super League. “It is fantastic to be in Saint Lucia helping develop this exciting programme,” said Ms. Dingley. “I hope to assist in any way I can and get a feel for the Eastern Caribbean as part of a programme of long term development.”

Ms. Dingley’s coaching and mentorship efforts follow the launch of the programme in October by new Resident British Commissioner Ms. Annie McGee. The Female Sports Diplomacy & Child Safeguarding (FemDip) programme is working with partners in Saint Lucia and neighbouring St. Vincent and Grenada on child safeguarding issues and encouraging more young women to participate in physical activity.

The programme run by the Sacred Sports Foundation is supported by FIFA’s Football for Hope Initiative and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and seeks to identify best practice in communities working directly with affected local youth, peer mentors and coaches to help re-educate and register coaches and officials as child safe mentors. A advocacy campaign raising awareness of child safeguarding practices, voicing the concerns of local youth is also underway.

“We are delighted to have Hannah with us,” said Nova Alexander, the executive director of Sacred Sports Foundation. “Her work here is part of efforts to assist local girls and raise the profile important child safeguarding initiatives already underway. We must thank the SLFA and all our local partners for their assistance.

Working in local communities, the UK coach will add her voice to efforts to encourage local girls to engage in more physical activity. This weekend she will work with a number of girls at the Soufriere mini-stadium and is also scheduled to assist programmes at St. Joseph's Convent and the Marchand-based Girls Rule Sports Academy. On Friday, November 26, Ms. Dingley is expected to partner with the St. Lucia Football Association in working with the senior U23 team, which recently completed Olympic qualifiers against Trinidad & Tobago.

Efforts on the programme began in October with a train the trainers’ workshop in St. Lucia, designed to help increase the number of skilled female coaches/youth mentors and young girls equipped with effective tools to tackle child safeguarding issues. Substantial health and education benefits are expected to accrue from the subsequent increase in participation in sport, and increased number of girls that will continue to play sport as they get older.