

# English sport must hire more women or face cuts

By Ben Rumsby

English football, rugby, and cricket could face cuts in Exchequer funding if their governing bodies fail to appoint more female directors, sports minister Helen Grant has warned.

In her first major sports interview since being promoted to what she still describes as “the best job in Government”, Grant made it clear getting more women into decision-making roles was one of her top priorities.

Britain’s sports governing bodies have been told that at least a quarter of their board members must be female by 2017 if they are not to risk losing any Exchequer funding.

The Football Association, Rugby Football Union and England and Wales Cricket Board do not rely on the Government’s largesse in order to function but still receive millions of pounds in grassroots money.

Grant told *The Daily Telegraph*: “The same approach has to be applied to absolutely everyone. We expect to see at least 25 per cent of women on sports boards that receive public money by 2017.”

Asked if that cash could be withdrawn if the FA, RFU and ECB failed to comply, she added: “Potentially.”

The Richard Scudamore sexism



**Getting tough: Sports Minister Helen Grant wants faster change**

scandal has refocused attention on whether enough is being done to ensure a bigger female presence at the highest levels of sport.

The FA currently has one such board member – Heather Rabbatts – although other women occupy senior roles in the organisation. The RFU will appoint its second female director next month, while the ECB also has two.

In each case, that is still short of the Government’s quota. And although

Grant has no direct power to force the Premier League to follow suit, she said: “I want to see a reinforced commitment from the Premier League towards women’s football and other issues, and equality and diversity in the game more generally.

“I will be raising these issues every time that we meet.”

Grant has proven herself that being a woman is no bar to being appointed to a senior sports role. She is also Britain’s first ethnic-minority sports minister.

The former under-16 judo champion said: “I don’t feel like I am paving the way as some sort of trail-blazer but I would certainly like to see sport being more diverse at all levels. And I think that it’s important that it is representative of the society that we live in.

“I think women’s sport being one of my priorities is partly down to what sport did for me as a kid and because I know the positive impact it can have for young women today.”

To that end, Grant yesterday announced a £2million investment through the Equality and Human Rights Commission in programmes designed to encourage more women and ethnic minorities to participate in sport.