



**Supporters Meeting
Wednesday 19 August
10:00 – 12:00**

Attendees

Premier League (PL)

Richard Masters, Chief Executive (RM)
Bill Bush, Executive Director (BB)
Kat Allen, Head of Policy & Supporter Relations (KA)
Tommy Guthrie, Supporter Liaison Manager (TG)
Rachel Solich, Supporter Partnership Manager (RS)
Ash Lord, Communications Executive (AL)

Football Supporters Association (FSA)

Kevin Miles, Chief Executive (KM)
Michael Brunksill, Head of Communications (MB)
Jane Hughes, Club Liaison & Membership Support (JH)
Harpreet Robertson (HR)

Supporters Representatives

Dominic Rosso, Chelsea Supporters Trust (DR)
Tom Greatrex, Fulham Supporters Trust (TG)
Steve Moulds, Foxes Trust, Leicester City (SM)
Joe Blott, Spirit of Shankly, Liverpool (JB)
Thomas Concannon, Newcastle United Supporters Trust (TC) (NUST)
Kat Law, Tottenham Hotspur Supporters Trust (KL)

Summary Note

The Return of Supporters:

- Premier League progress update

The discussion agreed that the return of fans to football was crucial, but subject to fluid changes and external influences. The PL & the FSA wish to see supporters return in as large a number as possible while maintaining safety and health protection. There is a cautious optimism within the government that test events may soon be announced. A return to low capacity is envisaged for early October, but this is dependent on the prevalence of the virus, a high level of constraints and ongoing uncertainty. The PL and the FSA are keen to collaborate on this.

The travel implications associated with a return of fans to Premier League football is a concern for Public Health England, but the PL are working positively with DCMS, the Chief Medical to facilitate the readmittance of fans.

- **Action:** The PL & FSA to maintain open dialogue on the return of fans to football

- **Broadcast Access (Season 20/21)**

A lengthy discussion resulted from Kevin Miles' question about the situation with the broadcasters for behind closed doors games / limited return games. The PL do not believe it is not possible to maintain a free to air broadcast of each game under the current TV Matrix, the 2020/21 season will return to normal regarding the broadcast of games, with 200 / 380 matches being broadcast live and, with the return of an increasing number of fans, the issue of broadcast access will slowly dissipate.

KL & TG strongly argued that watching your team is a fundamental part of being a fan, that denying access could push fans towards illegal streaming, gathering outside of grounds and would disadvantage loyal fans who are vulnerable or still shielding. DR (CST) has been contacted Chelsea fan who has not missed a game in 50 years who, because of shielding, would not be able to access his team's games. JB confirmed that fans do not expect anything for nothing and that fans would be prepared to pay for a streaming service for PL games while there was a limited capacity on crowds at PL games.

The PL outlined the fiscal implications of the coronavirus pandemic but acknowledged the depth of feeling of fans' representatives. Any decision made on this issue will be taken in conjunction with broadcast partners; the PL recognised the importance of decision makers understanding how much this matters to people.

- **Action:** The FSA to raise the issue with fans groups, MPs and media
- **Action:** The PL to raise the feelings of fans with broadcast partners

- **Ticketing**

Following a question from SM, the PL confirmed ticketing arrangements will be left with each club unless there was a particularly egregious issue

- **Away supporters**

Kevin Miles raised concerns that with a limited capacity, clubs may be disinclined to include away fans but the presence of away fans will have a huge impact on even half full stadiums, asking that the PL feedback to clubs it is the fervent wish of supporter groups for away fans to be included in a return to stadiums. It must be part of the recommended solution.

- **Action:** The PL to convey the feelings of fans to member Clubs
- **Action:** FSA fan groups to raise the issue with their individual club

- **Code of Conduct**

The PL believes a return of fans may include an agreement to comply with a code of conduct which could reference ground regulations and ticketing terms and conditions. It was recognised that public behaviour during the pandemic had been good and agreeing to a code of conduct could help to increase stadium capacities for fans. It was agreed that central guidance on key issues would be beneficial. KL & JN reiterated that engagement with fans would be key to the success of this.

- **Action:** PL to consult FSA on key aspects of the Code of Conduct

- **Communication and Club Engagement**

Harpeet Robertson gave feedback on an FSA project looking at fan engagement throughout the Premier League. Initial reports from fan groups reflected a discrepancy in engagement; some clubs have great relationships with significant two-way dialogue, while some clubs have limited engagement.

- **Action:** Further discussion to be held between the PL and the FSA on this issue.

The PL offered continuous engagement with the FSA, particularly in the run up to a return of fans to stadiums

Newcastle United (NUFC) proposed takeover

KM outlined the depth of feeling among NUFC supporters, especially on the perceived lack of information or updates provided by the PL.

RM said he fully appreciated the concerns of fans. He reiterated the need for, and expectation of, confidentiality on commercial transactions. In reference to a recent letter to Chi Onwurah MP (which was made available in the public domain) he stated the PL did not ordinarily comment on takeover bids, including those that had been withdrawn or rejected. On this occasion, information had been released only after careful consideration, and in response to the unique circumstances.

RM outlined the Owners' & Directors' Test process, explaining that it was an objective test and not one that was open to subjective opinion. He explained the need to establish if there were links to other legal entities that would own or control the Club. When an impasse was reached in this matter, the consortium was offered a number of routes to progress the matter:

- the entity in question accepts they would have Control by completing relevant forms and processes
- an independent arbitration on the issue of Control

RM stated a belief that the matter had been dealt with as quickly as it could have been, and that it had not been unduly delayed by the global pandemic or any other issues. The matter had simply reached a point where it could not be progressed further, and ultimately PIF had withdrawn its proposal.

TC expressed the opinion of NUST members that NUFC had come last in a process in which the PL had looked after its own priorities.

TC highlighted a recent NUST survey in which 96.7% of members wanted the takeover to happen. He stressed that more needed to be done to keep fans informed and RM agreed that updates in the interests of supporters could potentially be looked at as a future development to these processes.

RM confirmed the PL was always open to amending the O&D Test and related processes and explained that a review of this area was already underway, occasioned by recent Select Committee hearings on the Bury FC case in the EFL.

TC sought reassurances that the PL does seek to protect the interests of NUFC. RM explained that the PL aims to protect all clubs from being owned by entities that are not suitable, and that a balanced view must be taken in the interests of all stakeholders.

On claims of outside influence, he clarified that the decision was solely a matter for the PL Board, and that it did not seek the opinion of anyone external to the process.

RM restated his understanding of fan concerns and thanked KM and TC for stating the views of his supporters and NUST members in such a comprehensive way.

RM explained he had gone as far as he felt he could to explain the relevant processes. It was more challenging to talk now about what could happen in the future, but there may come a time when it was appropriate to do so.

Sustain the Game – FSA initiative

Kevin Miles outlined the rationale and key tenets of the FSA's Sustain the game campaign which has cross party support; the concern at all levels of the pyramid for the sustainability of clubs; the sea change in the EFL, with the introduction of the salary cap, has seen authorities look seriously at sustainability.

There was discussion on the five principles of the campaign: 1. Protect our clubs 2. Transparency 3. Financial Controls, 4. Strengthen the Pyramid 5. Supporter Engagement

The need to address legitimate issue in football was recognised. The PL agreed there was need to discuss these 5 principles further.

Any Other Business

The issue of a return of standing at PL games was raised. This issue is ongoing but dealing with the implications of coronavirus had taken priority in recent months. It is hoped that an announcement on this issue can be made with a couple of months.

SM asked if the statistics on this season's VAR review were available and could be shared.

BB confirmed they were and could.