



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION

DATE: SATURDAY 29TH JUNE 2019
TIME: 12.30 pm to 3.55 pm
LOCATION: The Royal National Hotel, 38-51 Bedford Way.
London WC1H 0DG

Present: A quorum of members and members of the board of the Football Supporters' Association

Chair: Malcolm Clarke (MC)

Vice Chair: Tom Greatrex (TG)

Officers in Attendance: Kevin Miles (KM) – Chief Executive Officer
Richard Irving (RI) – Secretary

Malcolm Clarke welcomed the members present and thanked them for their attendance.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Ally Simcock (FSA Board and Council Member), Martin O'Hara (FSA Board and Council Member), Neil Le Milliere (FSA Council Member), Jane Hughes (FSA Staff), Deborah Dilworth (FSA Staff), Nicola Cave (FSA Staff), Luke Cox (Worcester City Supporters' Trust), David Little (Swans Trust), Paul Cuffe (Huddersfield Town Supporters' Association), Chris Tymkow (Clapton Community Football Club), Gemma Teale (LGBeeT), Michael Green (Individual Member), Monica Hartland (Individual Member) and Sean Hamil (Individual Member).

MC referred in particular to the absence of Monica Hartland who was missing her first FSA (and its predecessors) AGM for 44 years.

Pam Wilkins asked that apologies from Simon Harris were also noted.

2. Standing Orders

A copy of the Standing Orders for General Meetings had been circulated to members prior to the meeting and these were duly unanimously adopted.

3. Minutes of the EGM held on 22nd November 2018

A copy of the minutes from the above meeting were also circulated prior to the meeting and these were duly adopted with no matters arising.

4. Board Report on FSA activities since the EGM

MC thanked the staff, board, council and members for their assistance in moving the organisation forward since the merger between the Football Supporters' Federation (FSF) and Supporters Direct (SD).

He also congratulated the staff on the production of the Annual Review.

A video from Deborah Dilworth, who was staffing the Fans' Embassy at the Women's World Cup in France, was then played and received an ovation from the assembled members. MC indicated that he had also sent the video to FA Council members and stated that he had already received several emails containing praise from those members.

Comments on the Annual Report were then requested and none were received.

Steven Powell from Arsenal Independent Supporters' Association (AISA) called for a vote of thanks to all concerned in bringing about a unified voice for supporters in England and Wales.

5. Regulatory Reform

MC then set out the agenda for the Regulatory Reform section of the meeting. Firstly, Chris Matheson, MP for Chester would speak to outline his Ten-Minute Rule Bill which was presented to parliament in the preceding week. This would be followed by a presentation from Ashley Brown and Roger Ellis which set out a series of the FSA's proposals and had been presented to the FA Board recently. MC extended his thanks to the team that had prepared the presentation for their work.

Chris Matheson MP

Chris emphasised in his speech that supporters regularly feel that they have nowhere to turn with their problems. The FA, EFL and the Premier League are all guilty of saying that it is another organisation's responsibility. It was his feeling that

the need for radical action, such as at Blackpool, had to change and that this could best be achieved via an independent regulator within the FA and separated from the club owners.

His Bill had received its first reading and would now need to be worked up into a full Bill which would be completed with the assistance of Kevin Miles. The ideas behind the Bill were to:

1. Return the issue of governance reform to the agenda of the FA etc.
2. Give hope to supporters of real change.
3. Bring people together around the campaign.

He reiterated that the call was for the FA to act independently of the clubs themselves and to push the views of fans higher up their agenda.

Presentation

Ashley Brown (AB) and Roger Ellis (RE) then gave a presentation which covered:

Financial fair play, a level playing field for all

Asset/ground protection and retention

Stewardship of football clubs

Protection of the pyramid & the live game

They then set out the proposals in more detail and gave a timetable of events so far and details of further meetings.

Specifically, reform proposals will focus on:

- Strengthening of Assets of Community Value (ACV) rules
- Strengthening of FA and League rules and
- Strengthening of planning regulations

The principles around this major regulatory reform are:

- Avoidance of conflicts of interest - independence from owners and directors of clubs
- Prevention and assistance first
- Targeting of clubs at risk

- Effective and progressive sanctions
- Accountability and transparency

Furthermore, Stewardship would be a key target with a focus on:

- A code of practice
- Clubs' business plans
- Annual reporting
- Funding of clubs
- Extraction of money

Finally, as regards Owners' and Directors' the focus would be on:

- The Owners' and Directors' Test being separated and strengthened
- Providing clarity on ownership structure & shadow directors
- Owners' business plans
- Directors' skills and experience
- How acquisitions are funded

Steve Clarke from the Charlton Athletic Supporters' Trust asked if it would be possible to include within the test a clause covering a situation where an owner has no regard for his club's fans.

David Barwick stated that as a Wigan fan who regularly attends matches at Accrington Stanley he wished to point out that Andy Holt at Accrington was a responsible owner who honoured his promises.

RE responded that the potential code of practice will spell out good practice and suggested that Roland Duchatelet at Charlton should visit Andy Holt at Accrington.

Shaun Wade from the Newcastle United Supporters' Trust indicated that he had recently spoken to Nick Noble at the Premier League about the Owners' and Directors' Test. He was told that, in response to a question about Mike Ashley's involvement at Rangers as well as Newcastle, there should have been an investigation but that the PL does not itself investigate unless they are prompted to do so. AB responded to this by saying this was not strictly true whilst also emphasising the need for a properly independent body since, at present, it is other club owners making the decisions.

AB further indicated that, according to the latest Deloitte report, 30-40% of all current club owners are considering selling their club.

Geoff Bielby from the Hull City Supporters' Trust stated that, whilst his club are not perceived to be in crisis their ground was only full to 40% of its capacity and his major concern was that very few supporters actually engage with the issues at the club. He believed that it was incumbent on the FSA to try to engage as many fans as possible to effect change.

Robert Whittaker from the Blackpool Supporters' Trust encouraged the FSA to be more radical in its actions since organisations such as the EFL did not appear competent.

Robert Nichols of the Middlesbrough Supporters' Forum agreed that an independent regulator was required as issues such as Financial Fair Play had failed to level the playing field.

David Beverley of the Iron Trust at Scunthorpe United asked if the German 50+1 blueprint for ownership had been considered.

Mark Jordan from the Blackpool Whites (Leeds United) felt that some fans were being excluded from FSA discussions and that the organisation should engage more to give those fans a meaningful say.

In response to all the above questions, RE stated that there were two ways to approach the problems. Firstly, legislation would take a long time so change would be best effected by agreement with the authorities. Secondly, once this is done some press coverage will be required to develop some political debate around the issue. With regard to the 50+1 question, RE stated that the FSA had talked about it but it was felt that now was not the appropriate time to push for it. AB concluded the discussion by saying that transparency was at the core of the argument and that who owns football clubs should be of the utmost concern to all present.

6. Motions

The Chair then asked for those proposing motions to do so.

Motion 1 – Club Licensing System

Proposed by Leyton Orient Fans' Trust (LOFT)

This meeting re-affirms the motion adopted at the 2017 AGM of the Football Supporters' Federation, instructing the Board and National Council to press the FA and the EFL to introduce a licensing system for clubs, overseen by an independent regulator.

This meeting further notes that since then there have been an increasing number of so-called "crisis clubs" where supporters and trusts have had to contend with negligent and irresponsible owners, and where the footballing authorities have not taken action to manage or prevent such crises.

This meeting further notes that the FA/EFL Owners' and Directors' Test is not working and is not fit for purpose.

Consequently, this meeting instructs the Board and National Council as follows:

- 1. To make it a top priority to press the FA and the EFL for an independent regulator to oversee a licensing system for all clubs*
- 2. To campaign jointly with supporters' trusts in the strongest possible terms to call for this work to be adopted.*

Tony Roome from LOFT tabled a simple amendment to the motion which stated that the independent regulator needs to be within the FA but independent of the current FA structures. He stated that if government were to be involved FIFA and UEFA would have a problem with the arrangement.

Motion 2 – Regulation and Governance

Proposed by Roger Ellis. Seconded by Malcolm Clarke

This AGM endorses the policies and proposals for strengthening the regulation and governance of clubs set out in the paper submitted to the FA Board and presented to this meeting and instructs the FSA Council and Board to continue to campaign strongly for these changes. It welcomes the 10-minute Parliamentary rule bill on this topic proposed by Chris Matheson MP, and resolves to continue to work with him and other supportive MPs and organisations to achieve the changes necessary to prevent future threats to our historic clubs.

Before moving the second motion (which was similar to the first and therefore moved at the same time) MC thanked Chris Matheson for his input and the work done thus far. He then went on to explain how an independent regulator within the FA would work. This would need to cover three issues. Firstly, who makes the rules, secondly, who prosecutes them and finally who would hear the case. He reiterated Tony Roome's point about government involvement and FIFA and UEFA's reactions.

MC also stated that the FA had ceded power to the leagues which are run by the club owners and that that needs to change. Football does currently have an ombudsman but this is "not a productive channel". He then talked about the Hull City name change application by the Allam family as such a change cannot be made without FA approval and MC sits on that particular FA committee. He further advised that, in his opinion, traditional FA Council members understood the issues. With regard to the Wimbledon/MK Dons situation, this was a good example of the decision being given to an external committee and that, if the decision had been an internal FA one, the ruling would have been different.

MC stressed the importance of the FA acting as a proper regulator that does not delegate decisions to the leagues. He then asked the floor to debate the motions.

Steve Clarke from the Charlton Athletic Supporters' Trust asked MC whether he thought it was likely that such an independent regulator would be forthcoming and Malcolm Hirst from the Port Vale Supporters' Club stated that he backed the majority of what was said in the two motions.

Christine Seddon from Blackpool Supporters' Trust informed the meeting that following the ousting of the Oyston family, she had met with Nick Vaughan and David Newton from the FA at parliament where she highlighted the inconsistencies and the fact that the governing bodies do not communicate with each other.

Steve Powell from the Arsenal Independent Supporters' Association highlighted the ownership situation at Arsenal where, since Stan Kroenke became the majority shareholder, there had been no engagement and no meetings with fans. He also pointed to the law in Spain that saw the majority of clubs converted into private enterprises with just Barcelona, Real Madrid, Athletic Bilbao and Osasuna remaining member owned. The consensus of opinion in Spain is that the conversion to private ownership hasn't worked and that debt has subsequently increased. He said he believed that lessons could be learned from North America where regulation of owners is much stricter and that on this issue the FA needs to show real leadership.

Simon Cope from Scarborough Athletic stressed that the lower leagues and non-league football need to be consulted on this issue too.

Peter Lloyd from the Posh Supporters' Trust at Peterborough United made three

points. Firstly, that the FA do indeed need to put an independent regulator in place. Secondly, that legislation would be difficult to achieve and that there was no appetite in politics for it. He did feel, however, that the DCMS should be part of the discussion. Finally, he stated that regulation needed to be understood in the light of the exploitation of the fact that there is currently no regulation. Self-regulation, in his view, has been in disrepute previously.

Geoff Moody from LOFT indicated his support for an independent regulator as at present very little has happened and the situation, in many cases, appears dire. He stated that any new regulator will need to have teeth and able to hold the clubs to account.

Mat Roper from LOFT in his right of reply then thanked all those supporters who had passed the trust condolences on the recent passing of the club's manager, Justin Edinburgh. He then said that he saw licensing, as indicated in the motion, as a means to an end.

MC was then offered his right to reply and he remarked that, in his opinion, there was no option to do nothing. There were some barriers to cross in both the professional and national game but in talking to all the leagues he felt progress would be made. He also emphasised that he would attempt to have Tom Greatrex installed on the Football Regulatory Authority board.

Tom Greatrex then asked for the members present to vote on Motions 1 and 2.

Motion 1 was passed unanimously.

Motion 2 was passed unanimously.

Motion 3 - European Competition Reform (Motion 5 on the agenda)

Proposed by: The National Council

This conference notes with concern the reported proposals by UEFA and the European Club Association to restructure European club competitions from the 2024-2025 season onwards. These proposals as they seem to be currently constituted imply a significant increase in the number of European fixtures and a dramatic shift of status and revenues from domestic leagues to European competitions.

This conference believes that any proposals to reform European club competitions must be subject to consultation with other stakeholders, and in particular with supporters and their representatives at national and European levels.

We reaffirm our commitment to the following principles, against which we will measure any future reform proposals:

- Promotion and relegation based on sporting performance - from the bottom of the pyramid to qualification for Europe*
- No to closed leagues or franchise football – qualify on results, not through history or heritage*
- Weekends are for domestic leagues – protect fan culture, home and away. No live broadcasts on Saturdays at 3:00pm*
- We want competitive leagues – no to even more concentration of wealth and on-going domination by a fixed few top clubs*
- Protect the pyramid - and cup competitions; domestic football comes first*
- Share the wealth – the money from elite football should be shared across the whole game*

This conference believes that the current UEFA/ECA proposals would undermine several of the above principles, and we therefore resolve to commit the FSA and its members to campaign against them.

We also commit FSA to seeking to develop this campaign across Europe in partnership with our colleagues in Football Supporters Europe, and we will seek to raise this issue as a matter of urgency at the 2019 FSE Congress in Lisbon.

Kevin Miles (KM) spoke on behalf of the motion proposed.

He emphasised that the proposals, or a slightly amended version of them, were very likely to be pushed through and they will have a potential impact across Europe as potentially damaging as the Premier League had been to the level playing field of English football. The top clubs' proposals will effectively Hoover up most of the revenue currently generated by the top 5 leagues.

The intention was to provide “stability of competition” or, in other words, an effectively closed league with little or no relegation. In KM’s view this was in complete contrast to his own idea of sporting competition. It would further distort a competitive balance that is already badly distorted.

He emphasised that this issue was not about defending the status quo as it would give the opportunity to lambast the Premier League for not investing in the football pyramid in this country.

The result of such a reorganisation will be weekend matches with Premier League matches moved to midweek along with the FA Cup and the likely demise of the League Cup and a loss of a major revenue generator for lower league clubs. He believed it was time to launch a campaign against the plans that would have to engage with those fans that would potentially be of a mind to allow the clubs to go and form their own league, without realising the potential consequences. It would, he reiterated, have a destructive effect. He also emphasised that there has not been a great deal of public information available and that with the plans likely to come into effect in the 2024-25 season and with broadcasting deals expiring in the next couple of years, time was, in fact, short. There is an urgent need to engage as the next meetings are being held in July with an attempt to finalise plans on 11th September 2019.

The planned campaign would focus on the defence of the six key principles in the motion which the leagues would be encouraged to endorse and support. KM further emphasised that he will be encouraging FSE, at its conference in Lisbon the following week, to support the campaign. Much of the protest action will be planned to take place at the end of August or the beginning of September 2019. He felt that, as a major issue, this was a real chance for the FSA to assert itself.

Dave Kelly from the Blue Union supported the idea of a campaign and suggested a walkout at games at that time.

Robert Whittaker from the Blackpool Supporters' Trust said he thought that focusing on the teams likely to finish in 7th, 8th and 9th place in the Premier League would be a good idea as they would be directly affected. A boycott should also be considered.

Steve Powell from AISA recommended talking to league sponsors emphasising to them what a bad idea it was and the adverse reaction they can expect from fans. He felt that opposition should be expressed to broadcasting companies too.

Mat Roper from LOFT stated that he was fully behind a campaign and that if trusts put their weight behind it there would be a large-scale mobilisation.

Roy Hinchliffe from the Chelsea Supporters' Club warned the meeting that this was nothing new and that, if this attempt did not succeed, it would keep coming back.

KM then asked the meeting's assembled affiliate members to assist with campaigning by starting to talk about the issue. The Premier League had, for example, advised that banners will be allowed into grounds.

The Chair then asked members present to vote on the motion.

Motion 3 was passed unanimously.

Motion 4 – Environmental Sustainability (Motion 3 on the agenda)

Proposed by: Simon Colebrooke, Pompey Supporters' Trust.

The FSA notes that there is a real environmental emergency affecting our planet and that football clubs and their supporters could potentially make an important contribution to tackling that. The Association should support, develop and lead projects across football that look to improve the environmental impact of the game and work with supporters to raise awareness of environmental sustainability.

Simon Colebrooke was asked if he had anything further to add to the above and he confirmed that he did not.

Hannah Kitcher from the Dons Trust at AFC Wimbledon pointed to the work being carried out in cricket as an exemplar. She felt that football could learn a lot from other sports when rolling environmental policies out.

Geoff Moody from LOFT pointed to the Glastonbury Festival taking place over the weekend where single-use plastics had already been banned. He felt that clubs need to instil a culture of recycling throughout their operations.

Margaret Wittich from Chelsea Supporters' Club agreed and pointed to recyclable beer cups as an example.

Emily Fawcus of Gateshead Soul asked members to consider the use of balloons and their environmental impact.

Simon Cope from Scarborough Athletic felt that planning regulations allowing out-of-town stadia were having an adverse environmental impact.

Roy Hinchliffe from Chelsea Supporters' Club informed the meeting that at the recent Europa League Final in Baku, water fountains at the stadium had been turned off.

The Chair then asked the members present to vote on the motion.

The motion was passed with an overwhelming majority with one vote against.

Motion 5 – Various (Motion 4 on the agenda)

Proposed by: Mark Jordan, Blackpool Whites

All scheduled network meetings and AGMs to be alternated regionally. (Both of the

previous AGMs and the others have been in London so there is a bias towards the latter)

Any travel/rail fares for attendees to be limited to £20 as per the '20s plenty' campaign and if necessary subsidised from FSF funds.

Any democratically and such constructed group is entitled to Affiliate membership providing it meets with basic good governance parameters and includes regular match going fans.

All divisional representatives must make reasonable attempts to engage with their clubs matchgoing fans, and make sure their opinions are included at EFL and EPL meetings.

No affiliate groups must ban fans without due and fair cause, and where necessary have an open and independent adjudicator to settle issues that arise. There shall be no requirement for any costs to be paid by the complainant and any expenses shall be paid from FSF central funds.

The proposer and the Chair agreed that the issues would be raised with Board and the National Council.

Emergency Motion – Socios at West Ham United

Proposed by: Sue Watson, WHUISA

The FSA notes with concern the new partnership between West ham United and socios.com to provide an on-line supporter engagement tool that among other services provides for supporter opinion to be gathered based on 'votes' that supporters who want to participate are required to purchase. In launching the platform, WHU has expressly ignored collective representations from their independent supporter bodies.

The FSA should:

- Agree a policy position that reiterates the engagement role of recognised independent supporter groups and opposes the Socios model of consultation with supporters that requires the payment of a fee to participate.
- Mandate the FSA executive team to take appropriate actions to deliver this position.

Sue Watson spoke on behalf of the motion and explained that under the scheme fans buy tokens to enable them to have a say in minor decisions at the club. The more tokens you buy, the louder your voice will be. She believed it was a way of

monetising supporter involvement and it should not be supported. She also informed the meeting that the club had not consulted fans (including the supporters' board) before rolling out the scheme. She believed that the scheme was already under consideration by Paris Saint Germain and Juventus.

A short debate with contributions from Martin Cloake of Tottenham Hotspur Supporters' Trust, Roger Ellis from the Sky Blue Trust, Rick Duniec from the National Council, Hannah Kitcher from the Dons Trust, Amanda Jacks from the FSA staff team and Kieran Jones from the Cardiff City Supporters' Trust concluded that an amendment to the penultimate paragraph should read:

...opposes the socios model of consultation and anything similar to that.

Pete Daykin of the National Council then gave a brief explanation of the use of Blockchain and its potentially good uses in the area of secondary ticketing etc.

The Chair then asked the members present to vote on the motion.

The motion was passed unanimously with four abstentions.

Richard Lillicrap Award

The Richard Lillicrap Award, in memory of Supporters Direct's former treasurer and a founder of Swansea City's Swans trust, was awarded to Nick Hawker of for his work this season for Exeter City Supporters' Trust. It was presented to Jim Shepherd in Nick's absence.

The Jacqui Forster Memorial Award

The Jacqui Forster Memorial Award was presented to Christine Seddon, co-chair of Blackpool Supporters' Trust for her tireless work on the Oyston Out campaign. The award was presented by Jacqui's partner, Pete Baker.

7. Any Other Business

The Chair informed the meeting of the following:

New appointments to the Council since the EGM in November:

Richard Tomkins	Hereford FC	National Game Representative
Simon Cope	Scarborough Athletic	National Game Representative
Nick Duckett	FC United of Manchester	Community Owned Clubs Rep

Interim Board members

It was agreed at the last Board meeting that members of the SD/FSF Interim Board will continue until the next Council meeting which will take place in September at which point elections from the Council will be held.

The Chair, after agreement with the CEO and the Secretary, stated that there would be no National Council meeting following the AGM.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 3.55 pm.

Richard Irving
Secretary
5th July 2019



