



## EFL/FSA Supporter Engagement Meeting

**Date:** 21 February 2022  
**Time:** 2.30-4:00 pm  
**Venue:** Via TEAMS Video Conference

### ATTENDEES

**EFL:** Trevor Birch (Chief Executive Officer), Mark Rowan, (Communications Director), Nick Craig (Governance and Legal Director), John Nagle (Head of Policy), Bob Eastwood (Security Advisor), David Cookson (Football Services Director), Andy Pomfret (Head of Supporter Services), Nick Roberts (Head of Media/PR)

**FSA:** Ashley Brown, Amanda Jacks, Jane Hughes

**Championship:** Grace Mckenna (Coventry - Sky Blues Trust), Tony Wilkinson (Blackpool Supporters Trust), Tom Greatrex (Fulham Supporters Trust)

**League One:** Peter Leatham (Accrington Stanley Supporters Trust), Heather Alderson (Charlton Supporters Trust), Tony Hector (Wycombe Wanderers Supporters Trust)

**League Two:** Neil Le Milliere (Exeter City Supporters Trust), Ally Simcock (Port Vale Supporters Group).

**Apologies:** Kevin Miles

### 1. Welcome & Introductions

Mark Rowan (MR) welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked Deborah Dilworth (DD), former FSA Network Manager for the EFL, for her commitment and contribution in the role.

### 2. Matters arising from last meeting

#### Action Points

Andy Pomfret (AP) shared the [EFL Summer podcast link](#) and the Season Ticket Terms and Conditions document issued to EFL Clubs as requested.

The proposed second SLO seminar of the season has not yet taken place but will likely be in April.

The EFL discussed fan engagement work with DD and will follow up with AJ & JH.

David McArdle has discussed an FSA / EFL anti-discrimination activity with Anwar Uddin.

MR provided a brief overview of the season to date, noting a number of areas including attendances, impact of COVID, and fixtures and competition matters. Part of the updated include references to ongoing attendance levels since the opening weekend.

#### Action:

- EFL to share the report on 2021/22 attendance figures

The FSA raised concerns about the several late postponements of games, highlighting the impact this has on fans and sought clarification of the process for postponing a game.

#### Action

- EFL to send out the protocols for postponing a game



David Cookson (DC) gave a brief background to the processes involved in recent fixture postponements. He explained the importance of independent assessment with input from a local authorities, SAGs or police commanders, in order to protect the integrity of the decision and challenge from Clubs within their division.

The FSA queried whether the evidence required to support a postponement could be obtained earlier to stop fans travelling, and why a red alert is not sufficient to call off a game.

DC noted that there can often be several complex factors involved, but ultimately it is for the Clubs themselves to reach the decision on their ability to stage a fixture safely. This should be done in consultation with their Safety Advisory Group and the decision relayed to the EFL. The EFL will then determine if they can support that decision. The EFL issues guidance to clubs and if there is a potential health & safety issue, asks them to alert their SAG in advance. When asked about the barriers to a club safety officer / SAG / police commander getting this information to the EFL, it was recognised that it could be a busy time for SAG and police personnel but open and constructive dialogue between Clubs and their SAGs can often expedite decisions. The EFL moves as quickly as they can when clubs provide the required evidence.

DC discussed the challenges involved in some of the recent postponements for on-pitch conditions. The EFL always encourages clubs to do all they can to get games played, including the possibility of delaying kick-off, and all parties are cognisant of supporters travelling to attend.

### **3. Fan Led Review**

John Nagle (JN) provided an EFL update on the Fan Led Review (FLR). After engaging with Tracey Crouch and her team throughout the Fan-Led Review process, the EFL reiterated the need for independent regulation and increased financial redistribution down the pyramid to move forward together through the implementation of the recommendations. The EFL would like to see a 75% / 25% (PL / EFL) split of distributable revenues. No progress has been made on negotiation with the PL on financial redistribution, but the EFL continues to engage on this issue.

The EFL are also engaging with DCMS on the government response and asking clubs to lobby their MPs in support of the EFL's aims around the implementation of the FLR. When asked how they were supporting clubs with this, the EFL indicated that they had given clubs resources and asked them to give feedback on any progress / support, a significant number of MPs have expressed support for the EFL position.

The FSA asked whether the EFL would support the all the recommendations, including the golden share in respect of the intangible assets such as names, logos, team colours, etc.

The EFL and FSA representatives acknowledged that there was much common ground between our respective positions on this issue, including the Golden Share, and that we would continue to work collaboratively in the period ahead to deliver an outcome that was good for clubs and good for supporters.

#### **Action**

- **EFL and FSA to continue to work together on issues relating to the FLR**

### **4. Fan Behaviour/Stadium Safety**

Bob Eastwood (BE) provided an update on current safety matters linked to in-stadia behaviour. The EFL set out the current challenges involved for Clubs, and a number of stakeholders were working



together to discuss the increase in matchday assaults, pyrotechnics use, missiles, pitch incursions, alcohol and fan protests. The FSA stated it always recommends any fan protest be conducted legally.

The FSA agreed many fans had witnessed poor behaviour this season and asked how the EFL were supporting clubs to recruit and retain suitably qualified and appropriately trained stewards. The EFL acknowledges that crowd management can provide a range of challenges for Clubs but does not believe that safety is compromised at EFL matches by the standard of stewarding. Rather it is compromised by the actions of a small number of supporters. BE confirmed that the EFL has undertaken a survey on clubs' matchday security, and this will help inform the conversation moving forward.

Acknowledging the role supporter groups can play in influencing positive behaviour and that poor behaviour should have consequences, either via the club or the courts, the FSA asked what was being done to encourage clubs to be more proactive with their supporters, potentially through club Foundations, to find solutions that are more holistic and not purely punitive. Football as an industry must look at a variety of ways to address these issues.

The EFL believes bans should be used sparingly in proportion to other available action. There will be instances where a ban is necessary, but there will also be opportunities where Clubs can work with supporters to encourage reform and reintegration. The EFL has undertaken a range of work relating to the impact of Club Community Trusts, and in particular the positive ways they can influence behaviour.

AJ raised that a lack of SIA stewards, the use of stewards who don't know the ground and confusion over their security or customer service role can inflame a situation; the FSA suggested trying to find a way to promote the positive football experience that can be ruined by the actions of a few, creating an inclusive crowd appropriate for a family day out. Most fans want to leave a positive legacy for future fans.

The EFL briefly referenced a potential new campaign that would seek to support Clubs in appealing to fans to promote positive behaviour. The EFL also cited some positive activity, whereby some clubs invited senior leaders from local schools to meet before a potentially volatile game, with the intention of influencing poor behaviour by their pupils.

The EFL then shared some visuals for a potential fan-facing campaign, to address and highlight the consequences of poor behaviour at football matches, asking the FSA for feedback.

The FSA agreed that alerting young people to the consequences of their actions, such as getting a criminal record, could help more than the consequence of receiving a lifetime ban for certain behaviour, encouraging the EFL to make the campaign meaningful, to welcome all fans and then address the trigger points.

## Resources

The FSA provided a link following the meeting to - [Brazil Club Mothers Stewards Stop Violence. The Guardian](#)

## Action

- EFL to work with the FSA to promote the forthcoming Women's weekend of games
- EFL to engage further with the FSA on how club foundations could be involved in intervention work to tackle poor behaviour at games
- EFL to feedback FSA input to their advertising partner, and work with FSA as ideas develop

## 5. EFL Supporters Survey 2022



AP informed the group that the EFL are to release a new Supporters Survey at the beginning of March 2022. The previous largescale survey, run in 2019, attracted 30,000 responses, and this year's survey will again seek fan opinion on a broad range of matters impacting on the League, Clubs and competitions. The FSA were encouraged to feedback on some of the survey questions and support its promotion.

**Action**

- EFL to ask for FSA views on survey content
- EFL to share top line results from the survey at the next meeting with the FSA

**6. AOB**

The FSA asked the EFL to clarify its position, or that of its clubs, on entering partnerships with entities using crypto-currencies, fan tokens or NFTs and how support of crypto-currencies fit in with the push for greater regulation of gambling. The EFL are waiting to see how the market develops and agreed to follow this up after the meeting.