

FA x FSA Structured Dialogue Meeting

Monday 22 May, 3pm – 5pm

Wembley Stadium

FSA Attendees:

Melissa Fallon (Spirit of Shankly)

Dave Pennington (Manchester United Supporters' Trust)

Heather Alderson (Charlton Athletic Supporters' Trust)

Roger Ellis (Sky Blue Trust)

Tim Scott (Dulwich Hamlet Supporters' Trust)

John Needham (Scunthorpe United Supporters' Trust)

Sian Wallis (Tottenham Hotspur Women Supporters Group)

Kerrie Evans (Chelsea Women Supporters Group)

Deborah Dilworth (Free Lionesses)

Thomas Concannon (Free Lions)

Kevin Miles (FSA CEO)

Tom Greatrex (FSA Vice Chair and FA Councillor)

Chris Paouros (FSA Board Member and FA Councillor)

Andy Walsh (FSA Head of National Game and Community Ownership)

Katrina Law (FSA Structured Dialogue Lead)

FA Attendees:

Sophie Levin (FA Structured Dialogue Lead)

James MacDougall

Mark Bullingham

Joanna Manning-Cooper

Polly Handford

David Newton

Liam Boylan

Chris Bryant

Andy Ambler

Tom Legg

MEETING REPORT

The meeting began with the circulation of the Terms of Reference written by the FA and FSA Structured Dialogue Leads to underpin the process and clearly define the purpose, scope and logistics of these meetings. It is intended that the ToR will evolve as the relationship develops and is a positive commitment to genuine supporter dialogue from both parties. The

[ToR can be read here.](#)

International

The meeting proper began with a summary of updates across all upcoming Men's and Women's International tournaments. In the Women's Game, plans for supporting fans travelling to the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand were raised, however, numbers were anticipated to be low given the location and timescales, with FIFA leading communications and on-the-ground FA liaison from the quarter-final stage. The Free Lionesses will be present and would welcome FA support at future tournaments where there are larger numbers of England fans in attendance.

ACTION: Meeting to be arranged with England Women's fan reps and the FA to explore how best to support England Women fans at tournaments including Euro 2025 in Switzerland and the World Cup 2027.

The FA reps expressed their support for the European bid of the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2027.

A brief summary of experiences throughout qualifiers for the Men's Euro 2024 followed, with the FSA continuing to work closely with the FA around fan behaviour. With numbers of England fans at the Euros next summer expected to be high, there is a commitment from both parties to plan thoroughly for the best possible outcome with quarterly meetings in place.

The FA then shared the Euro 2028 bid brochure, [which can be read here](#). There is an ambition to make Euro 2028 a record-breaking tournament across 10 stadia, 68 training facilities, and with 5 FAs working together. Connectivity between host cities, safety, security, sustainability, and fan experience beyond the stadia all featured in the bid presentation.

A decision is expected on 10 October, with the UK and Ireland bidding against Turkey to host the tournament. Turkey is also bidding for Euro 2032 against Italy. Should the Home Nations bid be successful, the FSA and FA would hope to work closely together on tournament planning.

Wembley is hosting the UEFA Champions League Final in 2024 and it was agreed to include this item on future FA x FSA Structured Dialogue agendas for consultation and information around match planning, including learnings from the Casey Report and, specifically, effective outer-perimeter solutions following the events in Paris last year.

ACTION: Include planning for the UCL Final 2024 at Wembley on future FA x FSA Structured Dialogue agendas.

FSA reps wanted to better understand how the FA works in advocating fans' interests with other organisations at international level. The FA was asked to describe the structure of how the FA works with UEFA and FIFA, and how that relationship works in practice. A list of UEFA committees with FA representation was provided and will be circulated shortly.

The FA has two representatives on the UEFA ExCo, the main decision-making body, and a presence on various footballing, medical and media committees. The FA also has a place on the FIFA Council, but that is not of the same level of influence as the UEFA ExCo. In addition, The FA sends a crowd advisor to every European fixture featuring an English team.

The FA has a series of working relationships with UEFA which can help in circumstances such as the Paris UCL Final. Communications with Liverpool FC and fan representatives in the wake of the 2022 UCL final were reported as being constructive and positive, with The FA committing to continued communications with fans in future.

FA Cup

Attention then turned to the upcoming Men's FA Cup Final, amid a problematic train strike. 120 coaches have been provided by The FA, with lots of space still available. Staggered entry times were causing concerns for fans, and there was some discontent around the concessionary discounts offered on tickets, also.

ACTION: Meeting to be arranged on communications around ticketing, travel and access with LB, TL from The FA with Manchester United and Manchester City fan reps ahead of the FA Cup Final on 3 June.

ACTION: Follow on meeting to be arranged with FSA reps and AA around FA Cup ticketing, pricing, concessions and allocations for 2024 onwards.

Reports on ticketing issues around the Women's Final were raised, with 50,000 tickets being pre-sold for the final resulting in lower allocations for fans, and some unable to sit in the preferred end once finalists were known. There was a desire to maximise attendance, however, the FA acknowledged there were a number of no-shows and wants to work with fans to address this.

ACTION: FA to work with reps of the Women's Game to improve the ticketing process ahead of next season's FA Cup Final.

Respect Referees

There was a campaign update from The FA on the work to address the increase in declining behaviour from players, managers and coaches towards referees, from the top of the pyramid through to grassroots, in conjunction with PGMOL with the objective of the whole game empowering referees to enforce without criticism and abuse. This would be a main focus for The FA over the coming months as they look to protect the referees coming through the pathway as well as those at the top of the game. An educational plan is underway which will be shared with supporters shortly.

ACTION: The FSA asked for data showing current trends in the Men's v Women's game. AA will explore any trends and will share if available.

ACTION: Include investment in quality of referees in the agenda for the next Women's Game Structured Dialogue session

On a related note, IFAB had approved the explanation of VAR decisions and that will be rolled out at the Women's World Cup with a view to a further roll out if successful.

Regulations and Governance

Following the Fan-Led Review, the FSA asked for an update on how the heritage items and ground protection rules were progressing. The FA reported that Aston Villa had provided a perfect case study on how to consult with supporters during a recent badge change, which had been extremely positive.

In terms of ground protection, this was still under review with IREF assuming responsibility up to Step 1 of the National League. Protecting club stadia through legislation via the DCMS was the preferred outcome but legal challenges were being explored, further complicated by over 50% of existing clubs not owning their stadia at this point in time.

ACTION: The FSA was encouraged to assist in lobbying for legislation around ground protection

The group was then updated by the FSA on issues surrounding the ownership of Scunthorpe United. The FSA highlighted their concern about the lack of accountability from the leagues and competition organisers, and that the concerns of supporters were not being adequately addressed.

The Premier League and EFL are currently updating their OADT rules, and the FA expressed their intention to review their own OADT for lower league clubs once that work is completed, with an aim of enhancing current regulations.

ACTION: AW to provide a paper outlining the issues at Scunthorpe United and overarching proposals for strengthening the Owners and Directors Test, including ID verification measures, for FA consideration. An SLA to manage communications and knowledge flow should also be considered

Match Operations and Fan Behaviour

The end of the season and the play-off semi-finals had seen another round of pitch invasions by jubilant supporters which were a cause for concern for the FA, who had a responsibility to protect players, stewards, and staff. Pitch incursions are illegal, and the FA is left with little choice other than to issue fines to clubs under "strict liability" clauses. There was a risk of injury that could not be ignored. Working together with fan groups to reemphasise the consequences of pitch invasions was needed, but the messaging was difficult without sounding like 'killjoys'. There was a need to stop this behaviour being normalised, with the consequences currently on the clubs and not the fans.

The FSA noted the worrying trend of matches being rescheduled at the insistence of the police this season; mainly the Metropolitan Police who are now refusing to police any high risk matches in the capital with a kick off later than 4.45pm at weekends. This has caused issues for fans of the teams involved, resulted in reduced away allocations and created a great deal of ill feeling throughout the supporter base. Had the FA seen an increased impact on match scheduling at Wembley over the past season owing to police push back, and what did the FA think can be done about the overall flexing of police muscle in the game?

The FA responded that the Cup Final was at 3pm this year owing to police push back. There had been a notable hardening of approach by the police at SAG level, and the reclassification of “high risk” games, meaning more matches can’t be played after 4.45pm.

It was agreed to keep a watch on how this develops over the coming months.

ACTION: Include policing of football as a standing item on future FA x FSA Structured Dialogue agendas

Affiliate groups of The FSA have been investigating infant policies at various grounds including Wembley. The FA explained the rationale behind their policy of no Under 2s at football matches at Wembley, which was firmly based on child safety and welfare. The stadium, especially Level 5 with tight concourses and regular congestion, was not deemed appropriate for Under 2s. This was a localised decision. No child under 5 is permitted to concerts at Wembley on medical advice regarding the damage to hearing caused by excessively loud noise.

The FSA explained how the localised regulations made for confusion amongst followers of the Women’s Game, in particular, when they are encouraged to bring children into a family friendly environment at one stadium, only to be faced with different rules when they move to the Men’s stadium or play one-off matches at Wembley for example.

ACTION: FSA and FA to discuss improving communications on infant policies at Wembley and across the Women’s and Men’s game separate to this meeting

At the close of the meeting, The FA invited the FSA CEO and one of the FA Council Supporter Reps to present a summary of the Structured Dialogue meetings to The FA Board on 4 July, as per the Terms of Reference.

The next FA x FSA Structured Dialogue meeting is to be scheduled for October 2023.