



EFL/FSA Supporter Engagement Meeting

Date: 13 June 2023
Time: 1:00 – 3:00 pm
Venue: Via TEAMS Video Conference

ATTENDEES

EFL: Nick Craig (Chief Operating Officer), Ben Wright (Chief Commercial Officer), John Nagle (Head of Policy), Andy Pomfret (Head of Supporter Services), Nick Roberts (Head of Media & PR), Geoff Cunningham (Head of Legal & Regulatory Matters), Bob Eastwood (Head of Security & Safety Operations)

FSA: Ashley Brown, David Rose, Jane Hughes, Malcolm Clarke

Championship: Cliff Horrocks (Birmingham City - Blues Trust), Tony Wilkinson (Blackpool Supporters Trust), Roger Ellis (Coventry City - Sky Blues Trust)

League One: Heather Alderson (Charlton Supporters Trust), Tony Hector (Wycombe Wanderers Supporters Trust)

League Two: Nigel Davidson (Carlisle United Supporters Club), Andy Cossens (Swindon Town Supporters Club)

Apologies: Trevor Birch (Chief Executive Officer), Mark Rowan, (Communications Director), Jess Grundy (Tranmere Supporters Trust), Neil Le Milliere (Exeter City Supporters Trust)

Welcome & Introductions

JN welcomed all attendees, providing a brief introduction and overview of key highlights from the 2022/23 season. This touched on what was a successful and unique season, which included the World Cup and the extra focus this provided on Leagues One and Two, as well as the introduction of the Club Financial Reporting Unit (CFRU) and the launch of the EFL's EDI strategy. There were also developments in relation to the introduction of the independent regulator, and finally the attendance figures for the season were noted, with JN confirming the EFL enjoyed its highest League attendances for 70 years as nearly 22 million attended EFL competitions in 2022/23, the highest cumulative attendances recorded for league matches since 1953/54.

Matters arising from Last Meeting

JN referred to the list of action points from the previous EFL/FSA engagement meeting, confirming that they had been completed. In reference to one specific action, JN confirmed that John Potterill-Tilney of the Club Financial Reporting Unit, will be presenting a session at the upcoming FSE / FSA Congress Event.

Broadcasting (from 2024)

BW provided attendees with a summary of the processes and timescales involved in relation to the new EFL broadcast deal from 2024. BW confirmed that, since 2022, the EFL had carried out a transparent and thorough Request for Proposal (RFP) and Invitation to Tender (ITT) process, working with specialist advisors and incorporating a full market analysis to consider the varied options presented.

During the Rights Process, the EFL received multiple levels of engagement with different operators. There were significant bids at both stages of the process, with the responses varying in approach.



Ultimately the EFL wanted to ensure any potential new rights holder offered an innovative approach, showcased the League and its Clubs and provided sustainable commercial support for EFL clubs.

BW noted that, Sky Sports offered the best deal in the market for the EFL, giving the certainty of support from a premier partner, a rights deal that showcases, enhances and unifies all 72 clubs, offers premium coverage and a genuine commitment to build the profile of all EFL competitions.

The deal offers an innovative approach to evolve EFL output whilst helping to maintain live match attendances, providing supporters with greater clarity and certainty in relation to fixtures selections for broadcast.

It is a 5-season agreement, valued at £895 million (compared to £595M previously), giving an average of £179M per season to be distributed to EFL clubs. The overall value of the deal is £935 million, made up of £895m in rights fees plus £40m in additional marketing benefits. The deal sees the creation of a Sky Sports streaming service, accessible via the Sky home screen, which will replace iFollow and club streaming services in the UK. BW noted that the app will also be able to stream concurrent matches to a much higher standard than the current 'red button' offering. The app is set to be available on launch to existing subscribers but packaging and pricing will ultimately be a decision for Sky Sports.

BW informed attendees of the breakdown of number of matches set to be screened, confirming there will be 1059 matches broadcast or streamed by Sky Sports under the new deal. Under the agreement the 3pm blackout has also been protected and a more balanced approach to club selections and broadcast notice periods will be included.

BW highlighted that most of the increase in screened games will come via the streamed match options. For example, all EFL closing and opening day, Easter, Boxing Day & New Year's Day matches, if not shown on a main broadcasting channel, will be streamed. All scheduled midweek matches will be streamed. Leagues 1 & 2 will have 3 additional streaming windows during international weekends and each weekend, two Championship, two League 1 and two League 2 games will be streamed (at 12:30pm or 17:30pm). All EFL Cup & Trophy matches will be streamed, if not shown on a main broadcast channel.

BW then reiterated the commitment to provide notification of match selections at the earliest opportunity, with all games up to FA Cup Round 3 to be chosen for broadcast before the season commences.

In summary, the EFL believes the deal provides Clubs with financial sustainability, evolves and further enhances EFL output, requires only one TV subscription, protecting Article 48 (the 3pm Blackout) and it gives significant advance notice periods and a greater balance of selections for Clubs and fans.

TW thanked BW for the presentation and asked the EFL, considering the advanced planning fans must do to travel to games, to work with its clubs to communicate with fans on the process and notice periods, particularly during March, April & May when 4 weeks' notice is given for televised games.

TH congratulated the EFL on the terms of the broadcast deal and then asked about financial distribution across EFL clubs, raising concerns that the reported model would just reinforce the dominance of the championship clubs, asking how the EFL would ensure that this additional funding would not end up in the hands of agents and inflate player wages.

JN acknowledged ongoing discussions with the Premier League on financial redistribution and the forthcoming implications of the government White Paper. Once these negotiations are concluded, there may be further discussions with clubs on distribution of revenues within the EFL but ultimately this is a matter that will be determined by EFL clubs.

In response to questions from AC & HA, BW understands that streaming matches will be part of the existing Sky Sports subscription and confirmed EFL clubs will not have the right to video stream any live matches themselves in the UK from 2024. Clubs may choose to continue with additional content,



particularly as highlight packages will be able to be shown from the earlier time of 6pm on the evening of a 3pm kick off.

The FSA is pleased to see the 3pm blackout stay and welcomed the announcement of extended notice periods covering two-thirds of the season. DR asked if the 4-week rolling programme March – May would be affected by Premier League match selections, which he believes currently causes considerable issues for fans of PL clubs.

BW recognises it is up to EFL to work with Sky to mitigate any issues and believes it is a positive of having a single broadcaster deal.

With more games not being played at 3pm on a Saturday, attending games becomes more challenging to fans; DR asked if there would be any consideration for fans, particularly away fans, when fixtures are moved for TV broadcast, suggesting a ticket price reduction for games rescheduled for broadcast: a genuine help in these challenging economic times.

The EFL's position, while conscious and supportive of Clubs acknowledging the costs for supporters, has been to let Clubs themselves determine the right financial model and ticket pricing structure for their supporters. This is mainly due to the fact that gate represents a highly important revenue stream to Clubs within the League, and that Clubs themselves are ultimately best placed to understand their fanbases and ticketing structures that work for them. JN noted it is something the EFL can come back to and reconsider once the broader discussions around financial distribution have been finalised.

Although the pandemic halted previous work in this particular area, AP noted that improving the away fan experience is something the EFL are looking closely at, in order to further work with Clubs on ways to enhance the matchday environment for travelling supporters.

Action – EFL and FSA to remain engaged on matters linked to the Away Fan experience.

Independent Regulator & Fan Engagement

JN placed on record his thanks to FSA Chief Executive, Kevin Miles, for attending the recent EFL annual Summer Conference where discussion on a range of topics took place with member Clubs.

Part of the Conference included an update on the Independent Regulator, and JN reiterated that clubs have responded to DCMS, supporting the legislation proposed and that the EFL continues to look towards implementation and the next steps in the reform process.

The EFL is currently reviewing the structured dialogue requirements placed on Clubs and sees benefit in engaging with FSA representatives to discuss this further. The FSA noted it is building a framework to improve fan engagement and welcomed the meeting suggestion.

MC asked how many EFL clubs have responded to the White Paper and if clubs would be sharing those responses with their fans.

JN was not able to share specific numbers or content due to the confidential nature of the process.

While the information could be obtained through a freedom of information request, MC believes fans would be pleased to know their club had responded positively during the consultation period.

Action

- **Meeting to be arranged in the next 4 weeks to look at process and scope of work regarding fan engagement.**

Crowd Behaviour Review

BE provided attendees with a summary of work undertaken over the last season relating to Crowd Behaviour. The EFL now has 12 months of data from matchday incidents, for internal review. BE noted that, the biggest issue reported by Clubs this season has been missile throwing at football matches, and there remains concern that someone will be seriously injured.



A safety officer conference will take place in June which will include discussion with Clubs around fan sanctions, data recording and restorative justice.

The point was made that the EFL, Clubs included, needs the support of fan groups to eliminate the appalling behaviour of a minority of fans and wants to place an emphasis on self-policing and the action of fans groups to encourage families and fans from more diverse backgrounds to attend EFL games. BE also raised that misogyny remains a huge problem in football and he is keen to work in partnership with the FSA on this.

BE finished by referencing that the Play-Offs were peaceful; with no major crowd issues reported, and reiterated the importance of Clubs and fans continuing to work together on these issues as we move ahead.

ND concurred, recognising that the FSA and the EFL had much they can work together on MC thinks supporters can help with communications and encouraged safety officers to use fan groups to communicate, particularly with away fans.

NR noted that, in March, EFL and FSA ran an online interactive virtual Match Experience Fan Forum, to raise the profile of ongoing work around crowd behaviour challenges and importance of supporter engagement. For the season run-in, campaign activity focussed on pitch incursions, emphasising the illegality and consequences and reiterating that the pitch is for participants & the stands are for spectators.

DR noted the success of the online Match Experience Fan Forum, and wondered if there were plans for another event. He stated his view that there is a lot of work that can be done with atmosphere groups and finding a way of facilitating best practice sharing around matchday initiatives.

NR agreed other topics could be covered and summarised the work of the EFL in relation to Crowd Behaviour throughout 2022/23, emphasising the collaboration between The EFL, FA, PL, FSA and SGSA in launching 'Love Football. Protect The Game' (LFPTG). NR noted the various spikes of activity throughout the season, focus on pyrotechnics and the dangers / life-changing injuries, educating fans and stakeholders of the repercussions, issuing new sanctioning guidelines in November to help Clubs manage supporters who breach the terms/conditions of entry and ground regulations.

NR noted that for the 2023/24 Season there will be a re-focus of the LFPTG campaign via MarComms channels across the game, which will be extended to incorporate Participant Behaviour, Fan Behaviour and Tragedy Chanting.

NC asked for suggestions from fan representatives in the meeting on how to further modify the behaviour of a minority of fans. There should be a continued focus on the human consequences of behaviour, and this can be particularly powerful when it relates to fans of your Club. HA believes more stories that resonate with fans are needed to highlight the impact of poor behaviour within the campaign.

NR responded to say that consequences of actions had been a focus of the LFPTG campaign (like For Football's Sake previously) and would remain a key part of focus next season. RE noted various participant behaviour matters being looked at within the game and suggested the FSA & EFL work together further. JN agreed to further discuss.

Action

- BE attend an in-person meeting with the FSA to discuss this further. DR to arrange.

Regulations Update

GC outlined the changes recently agreed at the EFL AGM, which included various updates including amendments to the Owners' and Directors' test, new regulations regarding insolvency events, updates to HMRC reporting, changes to Future Financial Information reporting and other matchday matters including multi-ball and towel use by players.



EFL Supporters Survey

AP advised that the EFL are preparing for their bi-annual survey of supporter views. Results will be published in 2024, with data collected in Autumn 2023 and will include many issues discussed in the meeting. The data should allow clubs time to incorporate findings into their planning for the 2024/25 season. AP suggested it would be beneficial to again share question set with the FSA for input.

CH asked if there was an obligation on clubs to share the results with their fans. The EFL encourages clubs to discuss the findings with its supporters but ultimately it is left for them to determine precisely what they share, and how they use the data the survey provides. AP noted that the EFL will again recommend transparency and sharing of results when engaging Clubs.

Action

- **The EFL to engage the FSA at an appropriate point in the survey process.**

JN thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.