FA x FSA Women's Game Structured Dialogue Report
7th November 2023
12pm-2pm

In person and Online

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Actions from the last meeting
3. Independent Review into the Women's Game
4. Fan Led Review
5. CEO Working Group
6. England
7. WSL/WC
8. FAWNL
10. AOB

Attendees

Holly Murdoch (HM)	Head of Operations, Pro Game	FA
Nick Frith (NF)	Women's Leagues Operations Manager	FA
Heather Cowan (HC)	Head of League Operations	FA
James MacDougall (JM)	Head of Corporate Affairs	FA
Hannah Gascoigne (HG)	Secretariat, Women's Game Review	FA
Nikki Doucet (ND)	NewCo	FA
Joanna Manning Cooper	Director of Marketing and Public Affairs	FA
Nikki Doucet (ND)	Independent Consultant	
Louise Gear (LG)	Head of Development	FA
Hannah Buckey (HB)	Senior Facilities and Projects Manager (Professional Women's Game)	FA
David Rose (DR)	Deputy Chief Executive	FSA
Deborah Dilworth (DD)	Head of Women's Football	FSA
Richard Irving (RI)	Community Owned Clubs Network Manager	FSA
Chris Paouros (CP)	Board Member	FSA
Sian Wallis (SW)	Proud Lilywhites	WSL
Rach Major (RM)	The Gang/Arsenal Women Supporters Club	WSL
Jude Morris-King (JMK)	Manchester City Women's Official Supporters Club	WSL

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Sarah Breslin (SB)	Villa Bellas	WSL
Nicolas Andrew-Gauvain (NAG)	Wolves Women Pod/Wolves Trust	NL
Nicol Pybus (NP)	Canaries Trust	NL

Apologies: Lauren Kreamer (Charlton Supporters Trust)

Chair: FSA

1. Introductions

DR introduced the meeting and all participants introduced themselves.

2. Actions Update from the last minutes

Outstanding minutes were updated and discussed as below:

Actions Update

1. FA/FSA to hold a fans forum/FA to provide a timeline of kit, player name and number releases - OUTSTANDING

2. FA to look at target dates to be shared around broadcast fixtures - OUTSTANDING

3. FSA and Fulham Supporters Trust to send across research and to indicate next steps - IN PROGRESS

FA and FSA to plan an education session with the integrity team and supporters. - PLANNED FOR SPRING 2024

Louise Gear, Head of Development Equal Opportunities Presentation

The FA went through an update on equal opportunities and the strategic plan that ranged from 2020-24.

The FA has a strategic goal to provide equal opportunities to girls in clubs and schools by 2024. 286 partnerships so far which give access to 86% of schools. Champions across schools are helping this work happen.

ACTIONS

The FA to share package of support for clubs
The FA to come to FSA Women's Game Network Meeting

3. FAWNL

FA Update
The FA gave an update on recent changes in the running of the FAWNL.

An Executive committee has been assigned to look at the day to day running, which is a similar system to NewCo. A confirmation of the new structure will be announced soon.

A participant complimented the FA on some of the improvements seen from supporters around communications from the league. It was asked if there could be more transparency and openness around decisions being made going forward.

The FA said there is a player group now set up and now these sessions for supporters are helping to ensure voices are represented.

Another League rep raised the issue of the lack of information coming from the FA and the clubs. The FA highlighted a few elements that play into this issue. For example, facilities changes can cause a problem and so the aim is to make sure to have high quality ground to use.

For Club comms, the FA do have marketing support which is looking at this lack of information and providing clubs with more supporters, however, for some clubs that are volunteer-led this can be a hard task to keep up with.

Action

FA to feedback on central guide for supporters for the FAWNL

4. WSL/Championship

FA Season Update

The FA talked the group through a series of updates around the WSL and Championship. Stating that there had been a lot of successes so far in the season including: increasing social media activity, growing attendances etc.

The FA stated that whilst there are lots of successes to celebrate everything is still a work in progress too. The FA are keen to continue to work with more supporters groups still.

Football Operations
The FA went through a series of updates on the operational running of the league.

AWSL rep talked through the partnership that is forming with the PGMOL and the FSA, then raised the discussions in the network around the red card ban being disproportionate and how that connects to an expanded league.

The FA stated it was an interesting point and not one that had come up from clubs. The FA stated that the competition does not choose the length of ban, and this is a question for the FA disciplinary team.

Action

FA to invite FA disciplinary team into a future meetings

Safety and Security

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The FSA talked through discussions in the network around the continued appearance of begging signs and crowd movement towards the edge of the pitch to access players. RM expressed some supporters' concerns about safety and particularly the blocking of front rows/accessible seats

The FA was asked about possible solutions including:

- Removal of featuring of signs in promotional materials
- More stadium announcements and clearer messaging for supporters in the stadium.

The group talked through the Manchester City introduction of autograph alley and how that is working positively on many levels, with just a few minor tweaks needed and consistent communication with the supporters group to help better the experience.

The FA stated they've seen a change of behaviour from fans to players and thus the cost implications are increasing from a safety and security perspective.

Playing into this difficulty is that women's teams are split across two venues so experience varies - supporters are either really close to the play or not and not all venues suit all solutions. So the FA are learning and watching around fans behaviour all the time in consultation with the FSA.

The FA confirmed that the League is working on safety and security standards. Players and clubs have been consulted and clubs will be making further risk assessments. The FA added that fan safety is the utmost priority and experience is positive, and feedback is important for the FA to gain. The FA is also looking at this from an international perspective too.

Accessible Seating

The group reported that several supporter group representatives have expressed concern around accessibility seating (i.e seats are either at the front or right at the back and both caused a problem) and the manner in which clubs are dealing with these concerns isn't helpful.

The FA appreciated the feedback and stated this work is ongoing.

Away Ticketing

The group asked the FA how the away ticketing policy was going and what lessons to be learnt so far? There were some concerns over some clubs using the word 'segregation' or treating this policy as segregation.

Case Study - Bristol City originally were not offering this however this picture has moved on now with the club responding to explain the process they are dealing with.

FSA rep stated that when clubs clearly explain the processes and difficulties it helps supporters understand things are being worked on but can take time.

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Explanations and communication from clubs to supporters groups is pivotal

The FA stated the league were pleased with the policy and that it has been well received by fans and most of the clubs too.

The FA reinforced this is the start of the ticketing journey. Different clubs have viewed this in different ways - some clubs don't feel ready and some clubs felt the policy didn't go far enough. This is a reflection of where clubs are at and FA are treading a line to manage all expectations

The FA confirmed that the compliance team are just going out for mid season checks and thus the FA will start to request sight of ticketing policies etc

Actions

The FA to send actual working of the rule
The FSA to feedback continuously on this to The FA on this policy

Broadcast Deal

The FSA asked for an update on the current tender process and asked the FA for clarification on the accuracy of the viewing numbers in a recent article indicating numbers being down for TV.

NewCo talked through that the broadcast tender is out and should be agreed by January. NewCo confirmed that the numbers are more positive than the article suggests. From a BBC perspective - Arsenal and Villa was second most watched WSL game ever

Competitions structure

The FA stated they are continually reviewing the competitions structures and what links or works with what.

For the next two seasons there will be work on this and fans will be consulted.

5. New Co Update

NewCo updated the group on its transition process. In September there was a meeting with all 24 clubs, discussing governance and how it will be run. Broad agreement on things but the CEO working group were asked to do more work on a few things

More club consultation has happened now and there will be a vote soon.

Refereeing

NewCo stated they are working with PGMOL on what the aims are and right funding models to impact referees

FA and FSA to organise a meeting to look at what the next steps of the referee system look like

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7. AOB

Due to timing a number of topics were not covered in the meeting. Including

- Scams
- FA Player
- Licensing
- Women's Game Review

Action

FA/FSA to plan a smaller meeting to review missing agenda items.

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