



EFL/FSA Supporter Engagement Meeting

Date: 17 May 2024, Time: 11.30am-1.30pm

Venue: EFL Commercial Office, London

ATTENDEES

EFL Trevor Birch (Chief Executive Officer), Nick Craig (Chief Operating Officer), Ben Wright (Chief Commercial Officer), Mark Rowan (Chief Communications Officer), John Nagle (Head of Policy), Bob Eastwood (Head of Safety & Security Operations), Steve Dowson (Security and Operations Consultant), Paul Snellgrove (Head of Football Services), Andy Pomfret (Head of Supporter Services), Dave McArdle (Director of EDI)

FSA Ashley Brown, Jane Hughes, Jess Grundy, Hannah Kumari

Fan Groups Stuart Rogers (Bristol City Supporters' Club), Peter Tarbitten (Hull City Supporters' Trust) Tom Ghee (Blackpool Supporters' Trust), James Young (Cheltenham Town - Robins Trust), Sarah Turner (Reading/STAR), Ally Simcock (Port Vale)

1. Welcome & Introduction

MR welcomed everyone to the meeting, and to the new EFL office in London and noted what had, to date, been a fantastic season across the EFL, with 23 million fans attending EFL competitions in 2023/24, a 6% increase, and 21.5 million attending league games, a 2 million increase on last season. The EFL is preparing for the introduction of a new broadcast deal, to be discussed further in the meeting, and working towards the introduction of the Football Governance Bill.

The EFL reaffirmed its support of the Bill, and it was noted that the League and FSA is aligned on their position accordingly. JN thanked fan reps from the FSA for positive comments made to the Bill committee.

AB agreed the EFL & the FSA are aligned on proposed amendments.

2. Matters arising from last meeting

SGSA protocols are an ongoing piece of work. The EFL is working on communications to go out to clubs with guidance with public announcements to follow (JN).

BE confirmed a pilot scheme has been run with Community Support Officers (CSOs) working on restorative justice and he will share feedback from the project when ready.

AP flagged ongoing research regarding Clubs approach to the away fan experience, to collate various strands of work ranging from; safety & travel, ticketing, matchday experience and fan engagement, to provide updated guidance for Clubs. The FSA will be consulted as this work progresses.



3. EFL/Sky Sports Broadcasting Deal from 2024/25

BW provided a recap of the process that led to the agreement of the EFL and Sky Sports's new broadcasting deal, reiterating the EFL's aims to responsibly evolve its broadcast offering, and provide sustainable commercial support to Clubs.

The headline figures are that it is a £935 million deal five season deal, commencing in 2024/25, representing a £300 million uplift on the previous agreement.

The new deal includes a much-expanded commitment to EFL Clubs, with EFL coverage central to the creation of the new Sky Sports+ service, to complement the main broadcast output (replacing iFollow / club streaming in the UK).

In return for the increased rights fee, the number of matches shown by Sky Sports will also increase to a total of 1059 from the current 243, made up of:

- 328 Championship Matches
- 248 League One Matches
- 248 League Two Matches
- 15 Play Off Matches
- 93 Carabao Cup Matches
- 127 EFL Trophy Matches

BW explained that, while the volume of matches has increased, this has been managed both to protect key Saturday 3pm attendances and provide a far more balanced approach to club selections and broadcast notice periods.

The increased match volumes may look significant; however, Clubs currently stream 360 matches in addition to the 243 in the current Sky deal, meaning a total of 603 matches are already broadcast or streamed. There are also 202 Cup matches in the Sky proposal (93 EFL Cup, 127 EFL Trophy), meaning the actual increase of EFL league matches is 254 matches. BW confirmed therefore that, 832 matches (26 out of 36 regular weekend fixtures) will not be broadcast.

AS asked if a facility fee would still be given to clubs for streaming. There will be no additional revenue for streaming matches (BW). If a club is selected for broadcast on a main channel for a cup game an additional fee will be paid.

BW added that longer notice periods in the new deal are a significant improvement on previous and are designed to give clubs and fans certainty of planning and aid ticket sales.

BW then added further detail on selection periods, stating that within 7 days of the fixture release date, TV selections to the end of September will be announced. Further announcements will be made before the season starts, for all selections up to FA Cup round 3 and by 1 November all matches from post FA Cup Round 3 to the first weekend in March. There will then be a four-week rolling process of announcements from the beginning of February for matches in March until the end of season.

AS acknowledged this was an improvement on previous lead-in times, stating her belief that the Premier League regularly miss intended deadlines. AB asked why the EFL are confident



they will meet this new schedule. BW noted that the EFL currently has a good track record on meeting deadlines and reiterated that the new deadlines are contracted therefore has confidence they will be consistently met.

BE stated that work is undertaken with police forces to manage risk and ensure matches can be safely scheduled well in advance, particularly regarding perceived risk versus actual risk.

BW added that the EFL and Sky Sports commit to greater parity in the number of times that Clubs are selected for TV coverage across all competitions. While clubs are set to feature more than 20 times per season on Sky Sports this will not mean that all the fixtures will be moved or displaced. Midweek TV-selected fixtures will not be moved throughout the season. Opening Weekend, Final Day and Bank Holiday and International weekend matches are less subject to movement, as they won't clash with Article 48-protected fixtures. For each League One and League Two team, at least 16 of the minimum 20 matches broadcast will not be moved. For each Championship club, at least 11 of the broadcast matches will not be moved.

JY asked about the capacity of Sky to cover all these games, particularly regarding commentary. BW accepted it was a challenge for the broadcaster but that they are ready and committed to enhancing their output further, adding that they believe it also creates exciting opportunities for young journalists.

The details for national radio commentary have not been finalised, but changes to the current provision are not anticipated. Local radio rights remain with each club to arrange.

In view of the significant increase in revenue going to clubs because of this broadcast deal, PT asked about the consideration and support that is going to be given to fans.

JN acknowledged work is being done on the ticketing landscape and data is being analysed; however, added that any review of ticket pricing cannot be taken in isolation, and it is linked to other matters such as the deal with the Premier League.

JG noted that the FSA has been tracking away ticket prices across the EFL this season, with their figures indicating the average ticket price for the Championship is £28, ranging from £20 to £47. £24 in League 1, with a range of £15 - £30, and £21.65, in League 2, £15 - £27.

MR added that ticket pricing remains a live matter, and discussions will continue as part of broader conversations, adding that Clubs have also incurred increased costs and there must be an element of balance to the discussion. JH noted that fans also face increases in costs and added that, in her view, Clubs should continue to consider the impact on supporters.

SR concurred, stressing that for fans of some Clubs who charge higher prices, it is certainly more of a prominent matter and one that should continue to be discussed.

4. EFL Fixture Schedule 2024/25

PS provided some information relating to the EFL fixture calendar for the 2024/25 season, noting that changes to UEFA competitions have had an impact.

The season starts on the weekend of 10 August 2024 and finishes on the weekend of 3 May 2025. There will be 9 midweeks for the Championship and 6 midweeks for League One and Two. Most midweeks will be staggered across divisions.



All Clubs will be home / away or vice versa over opening and closing weekends.

The Play-off Finals will now retain the Spring Bank Holiday weekend going forward.

The Carabao Cup Round 3 will be split over two midweeks. This is due to a clash with the Champions League matchday 1. It will be a standalone date on 17/18 September. The Europa League matchday 1 standalone date will be on 24/25 September. That means Europa League clubs will play on 17/18 September and Champions League clubs will play on 24/25 September. The Round 3 draw will be seeded to ensure Clubs competing in UEFA Cup Competition do not draw each other.

The Bristol Street Motors Trophy group match days will be scheduled during the midweeks of international breaks with flexibility dates identified to clubs should they wish to re-date these. The knockout rounds will follow a familiar pattern and are on fixed midweeks.

PS then noted that the precise scheduling of League 1 and 2 fixtures to be broadcast on Thursdays is to be ironed out. The fixture could be taken from the midweek fixture schedule or the following weekend. Teams whose game is broadcast on a Thursday, would see any weekend game moved to the Sunday.

AS, the FSA rep on the EFL Fixtures Working group, raised her concerns that there had, to date, been no fan involvement regarding the fixture process for next season. Fans are a key stakeholder and should be involved as such. It is important to be able to relay details of the process to fellow fans (AS).

PS noted that ongoing discussions with the PL and FA had disrupted the usual intended consultation process, and a full Working Party Meeting had not yet taken place as scheduling and competition format matters were part of the broader ongoing financial discussions between the PL, EFL and FA.

PS acknowledged that while this hadn't been ideal for all parties, AS would be invited to the forthcoming wider EFL Fixtures meeting that had since been scheduled.

AS reiterated that avenues of communication remain open and should be used to pass on updates on these issues.

ACTION – AS to attend EFL fixtures working party group meeting later in June.

5. EFL Together Strategy

DM outlined the EFL's Together Strategy, now in its second year of a five-year plan and noted that a review would be issued in coming months outlining further Club activity.

The strategy aims to establish a best-in-class provision, uniting football to ensure inclusive and welcoming opportunities across the EFL environment through sustainable and effective change to ensure the EFL and its clubs are reflective and representative of the communities in which they serve at all levels of the game.

Campaign strategies include the Rainbow Ball, Together for the Love of the Game and Together Against Racism, working with Her Game Too, Level Playing Field and the FSA's Fans For Diversity.



DM also noted that compliance with the EFL EDI Code of Practice is a regulatory requirement (R129), with 30 clubs having achieved Bronze, 8 having achieved Silver and 2, Gold. There are currently 22 clubs working towards submission or resubmission and only 5 clubs are non-compliant.

Supporters can be involved in a club's work in this area. The Code of Practice includes a range of reporting areas such as, Reporting Communication, Banning Orders, Abuse Support, Email Service, Rehabilitation Education, Fan Equality Monitoring, Disability Access Officer, Fan Base and Autism & Dementia Training.

Most incidents are logged through club reporting systems, with a significant increase in the reporting of online abuse. The EFL works with social media platforms to seek to address this, and the monitoring system in place allows the League to pre-warn clubs of a tracked increase in abuse being directed to a particular player or from a particular group.

A Together Panel has been established, acting as advocates for the EFL's work in National and International settings, providing advice on key strategic documents, including the Corporate Plan, Together Strategy and the sector strategies developed by the core business units, ensuring the EFL is kept informed of major developments in the equality and diversity domain in relation to football and its business objectives.

DM acknowledged the work of the Fans For Diversity campaign and staff involved, along with the contribution of the FSA's National Council in supporting EDI work at the EFL.

Due to an extended discussion regarding the new Broadcasting deal, the meeting ended with the agreement that the two outstanding agenda items (Fan Engagement and Supporters Survey) be covered in a separate online meeting the following week.

MR thanked all for their contribution and attendance and the meeting was concluded.