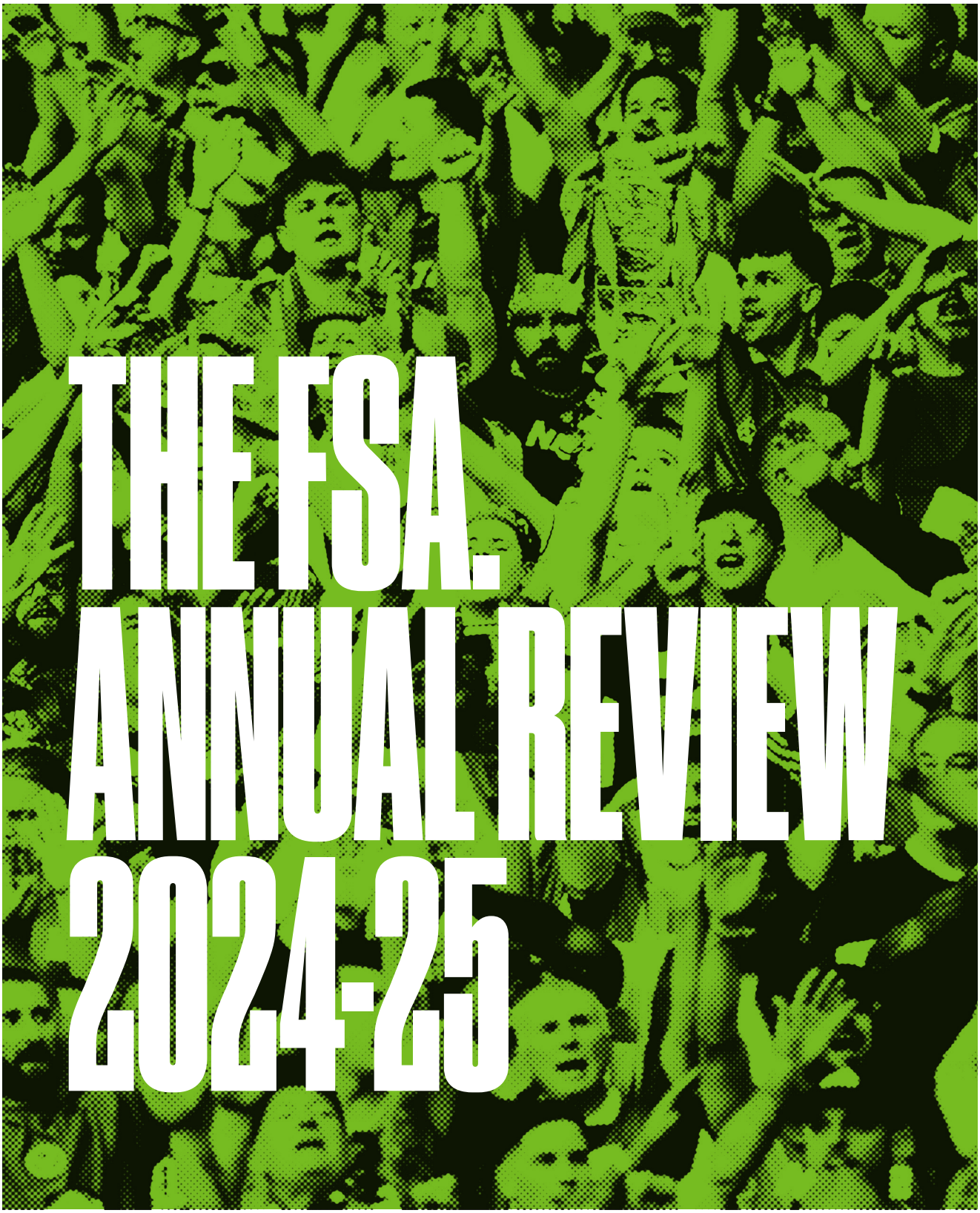
FSA.

FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION



THE FSA. ANNUAL REVIEW 2024-25



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Editor – Michael Brunskill
Editorial team – Garreth Cummins, Liam Thompson

2024-25 has been another big year with enormous amounts of time and energy going into the #StopExploitingLoyalty campaign and lobbying to ensure the best possible outcome for the Football Governance Bill - our amazing volunteers were central to that.

Fans across England and Wales have a lot to thank those people for - they give a voice to matchgoers while trying to make football better for all of us. Our Annual Review outlines as much of that work as possible, but of course there's loads more that's been going on and we always strive to cover that via www.thefsa.org.uk

Thanks as well to Solution Group for their work on this Annual Review. We go to great lengths to identify the appropriate credit for any imagery used but we're not perfect and mistakes can occur. If that has happened let us know and we'll make the appropriate changes to the digital version.

ABOUT THE FSA



Hello and welcome to our 2024-25 Annual Review, produced for the FSA AGM 2025.

Our last AGM took place just after a general election which gave the incoming Labour Government a strong mandate to legislate for a football regulator, the previous Football Governance Bill having been a casualty of an early election being called.

Despite the attempts by many of those who had tried to scupper the previous Bill to continue with the same game plan, and an astonishingly brazen shift of position on the thinnest of grounds from the Conservatives who had introduced the previous version of the legislation, we remain on track for the Bill to become law before the new season starts.

As I write this, the Bill has been through the Lords, is about to go through the Committee Stage in the Commons, and the first chair has been announced. Behind that single sentence, there has been a lot of detailed, diligent and determined work done with no little fanfare by the FSA's hybrid group of experts, and with some prospect of outstanding issues being addressed through Government amendments. What this reminds us is that while some seek to live in headlines, and view being quoted in media outlets as a measure of influence, real credibility comes through serious work not simplistic words.

Last year, the conference voted to establish a dedicated campaign to challenge the way in which many clubs, particularly in the Premier League, are increasingly exploiting the loyalty of supporters by ratcheting up the cost of attending matches. Ticket price increases way beyond inflation, reducing or removing concessions, fewer season tickets – all seemingly designed to impact disproportionately on what some revealingly referred to as 'legacy fans' in the midst of the failed Super League proposals.

Through joint action across clubs, high profile protests and some hard headed and well judged negotiation by FSA member groups, a number of clubs did listen and froze season ticket prices.

Campaigning zeal, wise tactical choices and real integrity is a hard combination to dismiss.

The FSA has also continued to build our reputation as a serious, credible and authoritative voice across the women's game, in the National League, the EFL and our network of community-owned clubs.

We will not always agree with the football authorities, but we have oftentimes helped resolve and rescue the errors made when the supporter perspective is either not considered or ignored. This is a slow burn but it is a measure of our progress that increasingly our views are sought rather than supporters always being an afterthought.

At an AGM there is also a focus on our own rules – governance matters and we need to ensure that our internal processes are fit for purpose. The changes we made during the last year helped to ensure our elected positions are better engaged with their constituencies, that emerging structures of engagement can not be gamed, and that we can be confident that the foundations of our governance are strong.

In reflecting back on the priorities that I set out as chair almost a year ago, it is clear that a lot has been done, and real progress made. All of it is down to the hard work, dedication and often persistence of our elected representatives, members and professional staff, who form a formidable team.

The campaigns will evolve, new challenges will emerge and there is always much more to do – but I am confident that thanks to the commitment of our members, the FSA is the authoritative, credible and principled voice for supporters and all that we love about our game. We will continue to use that voice for supporters, by supporters.

Tom Greatrex
Chair - the FSA

FSA NATIONAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Chair	Tom Greatrex
Vice chair	Chris Paouros
Associate organisations	Paul Rigby (Everton Fan Advisory Board), Frankie Harrington (Her Game Too)
Championship	Adam Willerton (Leeds United Supporters' Trust), Simon Colebrook (Pompey Supporters' Trust), Steve Turner (Millwall Supporters' Club)
Co-opted representative	Tony Burnett (Former chair, Kick It Out)
Community-owned clubs Network	Tim Hillyer (AFC Wimbledon), Andrew Madaras (Dunstable Town), Neil Le Milliere (Exeter City)
Fans for Diversity	Chris Paouros (Proud Lilywhites), Sachin Patel (Spurs REACH), James Laley (Rainbow Blades)
Individual representatives	Kristine Green, Kat Law, Christine Seddon, Jamie Dapaah, Alan Lau
League 1 & League 2	James Young (Robins Trust - Cheltenham Town), Heather Alderson (Charlton Athletic Supporters Trust), Adam Pendlebury (Wigan Athletic Supporters' Trust)
National Game (non-league)	Matthew Kempson (North Ferriby United), Sarah Stelling (York City Supporters' Trust), Richard Tomkins (Hereford United Supporters' Trust)
Premier League	Ciaran Barker (Wolves 1877 Trust), Joe Blott (Spirit of Shankly), Sarah Keig (Fulham Lillies)
Women's Game	Sian Wallis (Proud Lilywhites), Jude Morris-King (Manchester City Women Official Supporters Club), Rach Major (Arsenal Women Supporters Club)

Networks elect their own representatives while nine members are elected from the National Council to make up the Board alongside the chair and vice chair. Tom Greatrex and Chris Paouros also sit on the FA Council as supporter representatives.

FSA BOARD:

Tom Greatrex (chair), Chris Paouros (vice-chair), Heather Alderson, Joe Blott, Tony Burnett (co-opted), Kristine Green, Tim Hillyer, Sarah Keig, Sachin Patel, Christine Seddon.

FSA MISSION STATEMENT

The FSA is an inclusive, independent, democratic organisation working with supporters, governing bodies, leagues and clubs to drive positive change in football through supporter engagement at every level of the game. We nurture and develop supporter networks at local, national and international levels, working with supporters' trusts, clubs and individuals to initiate and support campaigns on issues of concern to football supporters, encouraging good governance, supporter representation on club boards, community-ownership and sustainable stewardship of football clubs. A commitment to diversity underpins all of our activity and we oppose all forms of discrimination or violence in relation to football.



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TICKETING

Ticketing issues have been right at the top of the FSA agenda during the past season.

Our #StopExploitingLoyalty campaign caught the national media's attention while FSA-member supporters groups across the country fought battles on pricing, concessionary rates and other ticketing policy changes which some clubs tried to enact with little to no engagement.

The scene was set at last year's AGM, which took place at Wembley in June, when an important motion proposed by a variety of top-flight fan groups called for "co-ordinated action on the cost of football tickets".

This followed a wallet busting season when 19 out of 20 clubs had raised prices and supporters clearly wanted to take action in the top-flight (see EFL box-off for more on pricing in the 72).

This flowed into a range of protests across the country, starting in autumn, when Liverpool and West Ham United supporters stood together in September ahead of their side's League Cup clash.

#StopExploitingLoyalty

Members of fan groups Hammers United, Old School Hammers and Spirit of Shankly stood together behind a banner promoting the simple message "Stop Exploiting Loyalty."

That was quickly followed by a fortnight of action involving dozens of supporter groups across virtually every top-flight game.

Hammers United chair Paul Colborne said: "Fans—especially seniors, youths, and those with disabilities—are being priced out of the stadiums they've called home for years. This is more than a fight for fair ticket prices; it's about preserving the soul of football."

Nottingham Forest bumped up ticket prices by 20% and rewrote their rules on tickets for young adults meaning an



© James Nalton

18-year-old could see their ticket jump from £190 to £850 while Aston Villa charged up to £72 for a disabled ticket.

Tens of thousands signed petitions against rises at West Ham United and Wolves.

Save Our Seniors and Tottenham Hotspur Supporters' Trust fought to save concessions at their club - the £3m raised by Spurs cutting the concessionary category was just enough to cover executive chairman Daniel Levy's bonus for one year.

Protests continued through the entire season, with Manchester United fans also up in arms with matchday tickets set at £66 (and no discount for kids or OAPs). Fulham, Leicester City and Manchester United groups also spoke out against high FA Cup prices at Old Trafford.

At Manchester City supporters' groups organised a hugely effective protest in the opening minutes of their home game against Leicester City in April.

The protest was jointly coordinated by the 1894, Trade Union Blues and MCFC Fans Foodbank who cited high prices and lack of engagement from the club on ticketing policy, alongside a new deal with Viagogo.

Supporters were encouraged to stay in the concourse until the ninth minute – City have used nine different secondary ticketing agencies – and they did so in their thousands leading to near empty stands behind the goal when Jack Grealish scored the opener.


Empty seats as City fans protest at Viagogo © Alamy

The message delivered to the club's leadership was loud and clear leading to the club announcing a price freeze on season tickets and matchday admissions for the following season. At the time of writing City fans are still checking the details before claiming an outright campaign win, but their efforts deserve huge kudos.

2025-26 FREEZES

Notwithstanding the qualifier that the devil is in the detail, there are other success stories driven by our supporter groups with freezes at Brentford, Leicester City, Liverpool, Spurs, West Ham United and Wolves.

We have seen rises of between 3%-8% at Arsenal, Brighton, Everton, Manchester United, Newcastle United and Nottingham Forest. Increases seem likely at Aston Villa and Ipswich Town but have not been announced at the time of writing.

Politicians also began to pay attention as we took the issue to Westminster.

In September 2024 Ian Lavery MP, chair of the Parliamentary group to which the FSA is secretariat, tabled an Early Day Motion (EDM) criticising clubs for exploiting supporter loyalty, increasing costs and attacking concessions.


FSA chair Tom Greatrex © Parliament TV

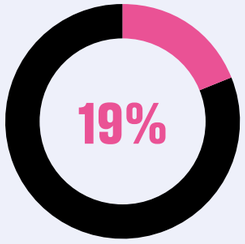
Following that FSA chair Tom Greatrex appeared in Parliament in February 2025 to outline fan concerns that clubs could use dynamic pricing to drive up costs and exploit supporter loyalty.

"At my club Fulham it's £160 for matchday tickets vs Manchester United, for the same seats against a 'smaller' team it's £100. We're worried as what we've seen over the past couple of years feels like the exploitation of supporter loyalty," said Tom.

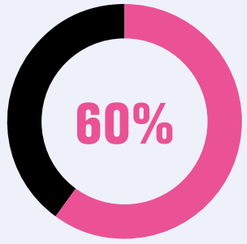
Supporter groups also reject the half-baked hypothesis that price hikes are needed to pay spiralling wages and transfer fees. Matchday incomes make up as little as 7% of a top-flight club's income and squeezing fans for every penny makes next to no difference to a club's bottom line.

Football has a spending problem, not an income problem.

STAT ATTACK



19% - the increase in ticket prices since 2020. (Premier League data)



60% of matchgoing fans think rising ticket prices are the most serious challenge to professional football. (IPSOS survey)



£4 - the cheapest ticket on Anfield's Kop in 1990, equivalent to around £10 in today's money. The cheapest ticket now is £39. (FSA research)

HIGH TICKET PRICES ARE NOT THE ANSWER TO PSR



© Alamy

While supporters' groups pushed back against price rises we noticed a bit of social media price punditry which argues that clubs have to raise prices because of profit and sustainability rules (PSR). This is not true and a basic misunderstanding of the finances involved.

No-one could seriously argue that top-flight clubs have an income problem. Their current media deal brings in about £10bn across three seasons – while clubs also generate additional revenue from sponsorship, merchandise, player trading and ticket sales.

Figures from the outstanding Swiss Ramble blog show that a Premier League club at the top, like Liverpool, generated only 13% of its overall revenue from matchday income while for the likes of Brentford, Crystal Palace and Nottingham Forest it was a mere 7% (2022-23 figures).

Under PSR Premier League clubs can't lose more than £105m across three years but a well-managed budget is what sees a club meet PSR – price hikes hit normal supporters very hard but make very little difference to the overall accounting picture.

It's actually in most Premier League clubs' wider interest to LIMIT ticket price rises as they disproportionately benefit those who are already at the top of the table – the biggest clubs can parlay their global appeal into higher matchday incomes and further boost their coffers.

Top-flight clubs have near record levels of income from broadcast and commercial deals and don't need to squeeze us for every last single penny. As former Bayern Munich club president Uli Hoeness pointed out, clubs are infuriating their fanbase to generate the type of money they spend "five minutes" on in a transfer negotiation.

FA CUP SEMIS

After FSA discussions with the FA, it was agreed that the lowest priced tickets would remain at £30. Each competing club received 4,900 tickets in this category, meaning almost 20,000 fans benefitted. In 2016 we also secured an additional 7,000 final tickets for supporters of the competing clubs. We love the FA Cup, and travelling fans are a critical part of that, but it is becoming harder than ever with kick-offs across a five-day "weekend" and occasional out of control pricing. Combine that with general calendar bloat and there's a big danger of empty away ends in the early rounds, or even the semi-final, as we saw this year in the more expensive seats.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BOEHLY

In the top-flight there is no better example of "good" than Brentford, who bucked the trend of rising prices by introducing a new concessionary rate for young fans – who will now pay no more than £10 home and away.

Brentford chief executive Jon Varney said: "Clubs have the power to make the game more affordable for everyone and to challenge rising costs for supporters and we want to play our part. We hope other clubs follow this initiative."

The bad? It shows how poorly regulated football is that only five miles across west London Chelsea Supporters' Trust had to call on the Premier League to investigate Vivid Seats - a company the league themselves list as "unauthorised ticket sellers".

It would be illegal to use Vivid Seats to buy or sell football tickets in the UK but, incredibly, their director is one Todd Boehly. So not only could Vivid Seats (director: Todd Boehly) sell you a match ticket for Stamford Bridge, but Chelsea (chairman: Todd Boehly) could also ban you from the ground for trying to use it.

WHAT ARE WE ASKING FOR?

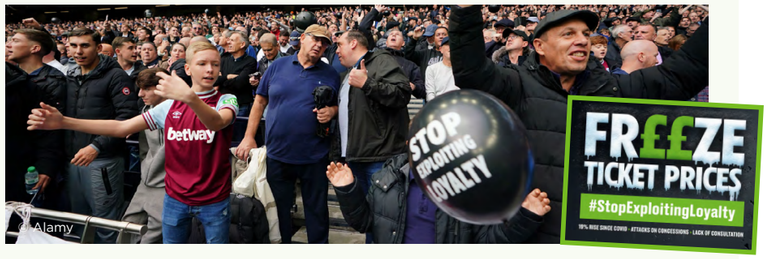
The 2024 AGM motion called for "co-ordinated action on the cost of football tickets" and was proposed by Spirit of Shankly, and seconded by Arsenal Supporters Trust, Manchester United Supporters Trust, Hammers United, Nottingham Forest Supporters Trust, Wolves 1877 Supporters Trust, 1894 Group, Talking Cherries.

You can read the full motion here: **bit.ly/FSA-AGM-24**

In short the motion called on the FSA to establish a ticketing campaign that could resonate at a local and national level, while educating fans and media on the scourge of high prices.

The motion passed comfortably and much of the work outlined in this chapter flowed from it, including the **#StopExploitingLoyalty** campaign and its three main asks:

1. For all clubs to agree a price freeze on all ticket prices for the 2025-26 season;
2. To support our call for the protection of concessionary tickets and to work with the FSA on reviewing the rules and guidance on ticketing in the Premier League Handbook;
3. To support our calls for urgent, meaningful dialogue between clubs and their supporter representatives on ticketing, with the utmost transparency given to representatives of FABs.



It's fair to say that we have been in near constant dialogue with the Premier League on this issue of prices, and this is on the agenda of almost every meeting. Generally speaking they have a hands off approach to home ticket pricing but some headway has been made.

In March 2025 Premier League's chief executive Richard Masters formally responded to our three main points, saying the league will review the rules around ticket policy with the member clubs in the near future.

Masters said: "We plan to hold further discussions with clubs at our shareholders' meeting at the end of March, where we intend to agree a process to review rules and ticketing policy more broadly."

Rest assured this is something we are following up as supporter input and feedback is clearly required in that process. This will continue to be a huge part of the FSA's work in 2025-26.

EFL AND NATIONAL LEAGUE PRICING

While we get far fewer complaints around ticket prices outside the top-flight, that's not to say all is rosy, and the issues we do hear about tend to be in the Championship.

It's often away supporters at the sharp end, although individual match tickets can be pricey for home supporters too, and we are always happy to raise these matters with the leagues.

We are actively collecting ticket price data in the EFL particularly, so that we can benchmark good practice and challenge bad. If you have anything you'd like to raise, get in touch.

BROAD-CASTING



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While disruption and inconvenience due to the wants of TV executives is something fans of Premier League clubs are sadly all too used to, this past year fans of clubs in other competitions have been hit harder than ever as well.

The EFL and FA Cup have been at the forefront of discontent among matchgoing supporters with media deals that have seen the number of televised games go up across a wide-range of unsociable and unpopular kick-off times.

EFL: NEW ERA

This season has been a transformative one in the EFL as its new deal with Sky Sports came into effect – allowing Sky Sports to broadcast 328 Championship matches, 248 League One matches and 248 Sky Bet League Two matches across 2024-25.

EFL "weekends" can now stretch from Thursday evening to Monday night, bringing with it significant disruption for matchgoing fans.

It was positive that the new deal ensured all TV selections from August to the beginning of January were announced at the start of the season, although the sheer volume of games moved for TV has taken its toll on matchgoing fans.

Supporters have had much less notice in the second half of the season, and for those following a big club in the Championship, it's far more likely that Saturday 3pm kick-offs will be moved.

That frustration of early or late kick-offs spilled over into the national media in February when Leeds United Daniel Farke said he had "given up hope" over the fixture schedule.

Farke's comments came after his side's visit to Fratton Park to take on Portsmouth was moved to a midday Sunday slot - a kick-off time that rendered public transport impossible for Leeds fans travelling to the game.

"If you're just thinking about TV and not the supporters who attend the stadium you will one day lose the love of our fanbase. I think this is a quite important topic. This is my first worry."
- Leeds United manager Daniel Farke

Additionally, that TV selection caused Pompey's following midweek game to be moved from Tuesday night to Wednesday evening – meaning one broadcast slot created problems for three sets of fans across two games.

Supporter groups at Leeds United and Portsmouth both spoke out about the issue. Chair of Pompey Supporters' Trust Donald Vass said: "It's still clear that little-to-no consideration is given to the impact of rearrangements on travelling fans."

Leeds United Supporters' Trust said "Fans are consistently being failed by these fixture changes".


© Alamy

Emirates FA CUP

FA CUP THIRD ROUND: EVEN CLUBS ASK FOR RETHINK

The carving up of the FA Cup third round, once a highlight of our footballing calendar, into a televisual marathon across five days is something we've criticised in previous years.

Having only 10 of the 32 ties kicking off at 3pm on a Saturday is something that will never likely sit right with matchgoing fans.

We weren't alone in that criticism with League One side Peterborough United saying they were "extremely disappointed" to have their away tie against Everton moved to a Thursday evening for BBC broadcast.

The Posh played their only ever competitive fixture at Goodison Park in the third round and the scheduling - a late Thursday night kick-off - meant many couldn't make the game at all and so urged the FA to reconsider the scheduling decision.

No train services were able to get Peterborough fans to Merseyside and back from the 7.45pm kick-off, forcing many to take additional time off work and young supporters to miss out entirely.

"To learn that the game has been arranged for a Thursday night is bitterly disappointing. Whilst we understand there are logistical challenges, we do not feel the supporters have been considered in this approach," Peterborough United chief executive Darren Gore said before the game.

Peterborough United's supporters' trust, the Posh Trust, also urged the FA to reconsider the game's new scheduling. "It is our view that TV scheduling should follow the best timing for fans, not the other way around."

To add salt into the wound, the BBC didn't even show the game on one of their main channels - broadcasting it on the red button instead. Apparently Dragons' Den was more important.

sky SPORTS

SKY SPORTS' FORGETFULNESS

Back in February Sky Sports flummoxed Burton Albion and Blackpool fans by apparently forgetting that they had planned to broadcast the match between the two sides at the Pirelli Stadium.

Chosen for broadcast in November's round of the EFL's TV selections, plans to televise the League One on a Thursday evening kick-off were ditched by Sky Sports and the game moved back to a weekend slot with just ten days notice.

Sky Sports decided it wanted all eyes on the League Cup semi-final at Anfield between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur. The broadcaster's cavalier approach to this fixture meant supporters travelling from further afield could well have been left out of pocket, even if we ended up with a kick-off at the "right" time.

FUTURE OF THE 3PM BLACKOUT

With a seemingly ever-growing desire for live televised football, and a record number of fixtures on our screens, the issue of whether to retain the 3pm blackout is a hot topic, as competition organisers seek to grow their broadcast deals.



While the next Premier League TV deal is still a couple of years away, we will engage our networks for their views - Premier League, EFL, non-league and women's football - into how the whole game is best served with regards to broadcast rights.

Over the coming year we will also work with partners in the field of academia to research the effect the blackout does or doesn't have in protecting live match attendance, and what the future could hold in this area.

GOVERNANCE

There has probably never been an FSA campaign which has been as bound up in politics as our work on the Football Governance Bill.

WHAT IS THE FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE BILL?

The previous Conservative Government launched the Fan-led Review of Football Governance as a response to six Premier League clubs trying to form a breakaway European Super League in 2021. This review flowed into the Football Governance Bill which had cross-party support during the general election in July 2024.

The Bill would block any domestic teams' involvement in a breakaway European Super League, introduce an independent regulator to offer greater financial protections to our clubs and give supporters a bigger voice in many important issues.

The Football Governance Bill has the FSA's full support.

Last spring the Football Governance Bill had been Conservative Party policy but stalled when then prime minister Rishi Sunak called a general election.

At that point we organised a joint letter, co-signed by more than 200 supporters' groups, which called on "all political parties to give a commitment to include this bill in their manifesto and to work with the FSA in a new Parliament to reintroduce legislation in the first King's Speech."

FSA open letter: "This legislation contained key principles which would block future breakaway leagues, improve financial sustainability, protect club heritage and give fans a greater say in how the game and the clubs they love are run."

All of the parties paid heed and committed to the Football Governance Bill which was reintroduced by the incoming Labour Government who promised that they would "never allow a closed league of select clubs to be siphoned off from the English football pyramid."



MPs and FSA reps in Parliament © FSA



Sports minister Stephanie Peacock © FSA

We worked closely with Labour ministers and the team at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to ensure the bill remained strong and progressed through Parliament.

In July new culture secretary Lisa Nandy visited Bury FC as a "statement of intent" and we were pleased to be invited along to that meeting.

In July new culture secretary Lisa Nandy visited Bury FC as a "statement of intent" and we were pleased to be invited along to that meeting.

The following week sports minister Stephanie Peacock's first public event was our AGM which took place at Wembley, where she told fans that the Government would deliver football reform – enhancing supporter engagement and giving crucial financial protections to clubs.

She said: "While English football is one of our greatest cultural exports, irresponsible owners, unsustainable financial models and inadequate regulation have cast a shadow over too many of our clubs.

"These risks are real and current, so we will act as quickly as the parliamentary timetable will allow to get the Regulator in place to ensure this country is the best place in the world to be a football fan."

Under Kemi Badenoch's leadership the Conservatives then pulled the handbrake and did a swift u-turn, choosing to disown the ideas that they had spent years backing. Badenoch claimed that she's "always said" she doesn't back a "waste of money" football regulator.

It was a curious turn of events as we have seen correspondence she sent to a constituent a couple of years ago when she said 'I support these reforms'. This was a political own goal, which we pointed out to the media.

Things were no less farcical in the House of Lords where Conservative peers proposed all manner of time-wasting amendments, including Lord Moynihan's idea to exempt heads of state from football club ownership tests. Who wouldn't want Kim Jong Un running their club?

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS (APPG)

Our APPG was hosted in Parliament on Tuesday 3rd September 2024 as around 30 new MPs and peers met to discuss the incoming legislation – joined by EFL chair Rick Parry and FSA chair Tom Greatrex.

The event looked at ways in which MPs, Peers, clubs and football supporters can help ensure the Bill delivers upon its promises by protecting the game and strengthening the fans' voice.

"This is a huge, generational opportunity to change football for the better and we look forward to working with MPs and peers across all parties to deliver upon that promise," said FSA chair Tom Greatrex.

Previous APPG chair Ian Mearns stepped down at the last Parliament and MPs elected Ian Lavery MP as the new chair.

appg All Party Group for Football Supporters



West Ham United vice chair Baroness Brady © Parliament

Baroness Brady attacked the Bill relentlessly while telling the Lords that "season ticket holders are the beating heart of football clubs. They are not just customers; they are custodians of the club's heritage and identity. They represent generations of loyalty, support and community spirit."

Magnificent words from a club executive who shocked Hammers in the close season by attacking kids' and OAP concessions, leading to a season of price protests from West Ham United supporters' groups.

The Government's majority is large though so there is no current threat to the legislation which continues to pass through Parliament. At the time of writing it is due to start the Committee Stage where MPs can look at the legislation in detail and take evidence from external experts.

While this offers scope for some amendments to the Bill it will not stall progress with the legislation expected to become law in summer 2025.

WHAT DOES THE GOVERNMENT SAY?

The Government said the legislation came at a "critical juncture for English football" following the threatened European Super League and high profile collapses at Bury and Macclesfield.

"These cases came about as a result of fundamental governance problems in the game that have led to excessive and reckless risk-taking, with many clubs living way beyond their means," said the Government in October 2024.

"The Bill, which delivers on the Government's manifesto commitments, will establish an Independent Football Regulator and a new set of rules to protect clubs, empower fans and keep clubs at the heart of their communities.

"The Regulator will tackle rogue owners and directors, implement a club licensing regime to help ensure a more consistent approach in how clubs are run, monitor club finances and improve fan engagement throughout the football pyramid – from the Premier League to the National League."

Parachute payments would also be included in the Regulator's remit "so it will have full oversight to tackle financial sustainability across the football pyramid" should the Premier League and EFL fail to reach an agreement on redistribution.

The Labour administration also said it had "strengthened" the Conservatives' Bill by adding new powers to consult fans on ticket pricing and home stadium relocations.

AMENDMENTS

While we felt the new legislation was beefed up, especially in relation to parachute payments and the regulator's powers to intervene, there are still a number of areas we have been lobbying on and we'd like to see progress in these areas, whether that's via amendments to the Bill itself or further commitments from the minister.

We would encourage all supporters groups, MPs and peers to support these ideas:

1. Supporter engagement – at present the regulator would only be required to engage with clubs, owners and competition organisers. Supporters and supporters' organisations should be added to that list.
2. Assessment – supporter engagement should be independently assessed and include supporters' trusts within any fan engagement process.
3. Relocation of "home games" – clarity is needed on what is a "home" game and clauses within the bill may need tightening. Games played abroad as a designated "home" game should never be allowed.
4. "Relevant revenue" for distribution – Government must ensure that clubs do not find loopholes to exploit e.g. if broadcast revenues were paid directly to clubs rather than via the Premier League they may not fall under "relevant revenue".
5. Independent non-executive directors – they should be in place at every club to provide proper scrutiny and challenge to club owners with a particular responsibility to represent the interest of fans and the local community.

WHAT NEXT?

We will continue to work with MPs, ministers and DCMS to ensure the legislation passes and offers the protections that our clubs deserve.

Once the independent regulator is formally established, we will liaise closely with them to ensure that the supporters' voice is heard and the promise of this legislation is delivered.

CASE STUDIES: CRISIS CLUBS

This isn't an exhaustive list as lower down the pyramid all manner of incidents take place, and we are often there to support our members, but it's worth remembering some of the high profile cases in the past 12 months which might have been prevented by stronger regulation.

Reading are probably the most high profile case in the past few years as owner Dai Yongge has seemingly run the club in the ground, despite some interventions from the EFL and super campaign work from local groups Sell Before We Dai and STAR. Thankfully there is light at the end of the tunnel as a new owner has purchased the club.

Over at **Morecambe** FSA members the Shrimps Trust staged a protest ahead of their League Two fixture against Port Vale to highlight ongoing ownership problems. It's more than two years since club owners the Bond Group put Morecambe up for sale and supporters have watched their club plummet towards relegation to the National League.

While it's the nature of a league system that someone must be at the bottom, it's the manner of the collapse which has caused the most concern for supporters. The Shrimps Trust point out that the club has gone from making a profit in League One to being relegated back to League Two, while twice failing to pay wages on time, and failing to meet EFL financial deposit obligations, which led to a points deduction.

Elsewhere **We Are The Rovers (Blackburn)** and **Sheffield Wednesday Supporters' Trust** joined forces to make a joint stand against their owners at their Championship clash in April.



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In happier news **Southend United** finally moved out of the category of crisis club after years of strife with ex-owner Ron Martin. "I, like those around me, was given strength and courage from the trust's support from the FSA. That there would be a tomorrow, whatever it looked like," wrote All At Sea fanzine co-editor Liam Ager.

SUPPORTER ENGAGEMENT

Defining what good supporter engagement looks like is a challenge in written form, although we are in constant discussions with various clubs and leagues, as well civil servants, the shadow regulator and politicians as the Football Governance Bill continues its progress through Parliament.

Nonetheless many supporters' groups know what good engagement feels like and Fan Advisory Boards (FABs) can play an important role in the engagement process.

Nothing should be "off the table" for FABs to discuss and we envisage the best run FABs as bodies which have consultation on and/or input into things like financial strategy, club governance, heritage (kit colours, crests, stadium moves), as well as the matchday experience issues you'd expect.

Given the range of clubs among the 116 covered by the Independent Football Regulator (IFR) it's impossible to have a "one size fits all" approach to FABs composition.

Rewind back to the Fan-led Review of Football Governance which started all of this and its chair Dame Tracey Crouch wrote: "As a uniquely important stakeholder, supporters should be properly consulted by their clubs in taking key decisions by means of a FAB."

The report identified three essential principles to guide this - that the mechanism for selecting FAB members should be independent of the club, it should be democratic, and it should have reserved seats for representatives of key fan groups (e.g. supporters' trusts).

The proposed new chair of the IFR is David Kogan and he backed up the points made by Crouch. Kogan told Parliament: "What we must do is create the process by which that fan engagement is reinforced, and the legislation does that. There are a whole series of things that the fans have a right to ask questions about."

FAB BASICS

FABs should consist of around 5-12 members, depending on local circumstances, with members from supporter groups (including any supporters' trust) and other representatives where appropriate. There should be a rotation of members and elected officers within the group (e.g. chair, secretary) which should have at least quarterly meetings with club executives.

CLUB ROLE

Clubs have a role to play in the formation of a FAB, although fan representatives should also be involved in that process from day one, to show credibility and independence. The FSA is happy to assist.

A club is not necessarily a member of a FAB, but rather the entity with which it meets. A FAB might also have multiple meetings every year without the club being present, to share opinions and build consensus.

Supporter representatives should be public facing and contactable via the club or an appropriate website. The club might assist with this and support in other areas such as secretariat duties or venue provision.

The club is likely to be required to assist in some elements of the secretariat, particularly in relation to elections due to GDPR considerations. Provision of a meeting venue is another obvious area in which a club can help.

REPRESENTATION

Undoubtedly, the trickiest area in creating a FAB is deciding on representation, and we recommend working with recognised supporter groups and perhaps the FSA to help define the model.

An absolute red line is for clubs to be seen to hand pick members or to hold a veto without good reason (valid veto reasons might be a Football Banning Order or someone who has shared illegal material in relation to protected characteristics).

The most common areas of FAB appointment are direct appointment from recognised democratic supporter groups, elections or appointment following an interview by an independent panel.

FAB representatives have a constituent of fans that they are directly responsible to, but broadly they are also a representative of all fans, while those joining from supporter groups will also have a responsibility to their members.

SUPPORTER GROUPS

Every FAB should have a number of places reserved for democratic supporter groups and the Fan-Led Review recommended that if a supporters' trust exists and is functioning, it should have at least one seat. This is something we strongly support and continue to lobby for.

Additional seats can be allocated to other groups who are democratic, transparent and open to all. This means each supporter group representative has already been democratically elected and subsequently selected as a FAB representative by their own board.

FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE BILL

The Football Governance Bill will have a big impact on how clubs approach supporter engagement, as it is specifically referenced within the legislation.

Clubs will be expected to consult their fanbases and show that they "take the views of fans into account when making decisions" relating to the club's strategic direction and business priorities, operational and matchday issues, fan engagement plans, and heritage.

Heritage includes things such as a club's home ground, emblems and crests, home shirt colours, and team names. We have seen cases in the past at, for instance, Cardiff City and Hull City where this legislation would have come into play.

We also welcomed amendments made in the House of Lords which added players and fans to the list of the IFR statutory consultees.

The engagement regime established under the Bill should be robust, appropriate for the different circumstances facing all clubs and based on democratic principles - and that should include the involvement of any existing supporters' trust in a club's engagement process.

How this works in practice will be heavily shaped by the IFR.



FSA SUPPORT

We're in the process of building a large suite of FSA guidance documents and templates which will be of use to our member groups. This will cover:

- **General engagement guidance**
- **General FAB guidance**
- **FAB Terms of Reference template**
- **FAB Confidentiality template**
- **FAB Code of Conduct template**
- **FAB Election Policy template**
- **What does good engagement look like?**
- **Glossary of engagement terms**

FSA staff members also run periodic training sessions on the principle and practice of supporter engagement. Contact us for more information.

Visit **thefsa.org.uk/our-work/supporter-engagement**

WOMEN'S GAME

As first reported in the Guardian earlier this year, the Women's Professional League Limited (WPLL), the company which runs the Women's Super League (WSL) and Championship, has been in consultation with clubs on a range of options to increase the profile, profitability and sustainability of the women's game.


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The most eye-catching of these was the possibility of pausing relegation from the leagues as a way of increasing their size, as the WPLL looked for innovative ways in which they could improve women's football.

There were proposals from the FA, too, with mooted changes including allowing development teams (B-teams) in the FA Women's National League (FAWNL), to support the development of the talent pathway for players.

The chief executive of WPLL, Nikki Doucet, told the Guardian, "We fundamentally believe promotion and relegation is an important differentiator and an important competitive advantage for us, relative to other women's sport leagues globally."

As a result, the FSA launched a consultation among its member fans in the women's game to get their feedback on the proposals, and a few other issues within the game, to feed back to the WPLL.



Fans were steadfast in their opposition to pausing relegation - with nine out of ten fans surveyed (90.2%) agreeing that 'promotion and relegation are a vital part of the integrity of the football pyramid'.

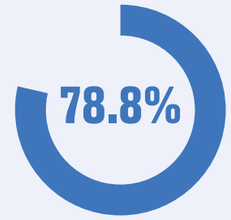
While there was widespread agreement that expanding the WSL and Championship to 16 teams would benefit the game (84% of fans were in favour), the majority (53.8%) said they were opposed to pausing relegation for a season or two to achieve that aim.

The findings show that the idea of end-of-season games having little to no jeopardy could also result in not only the attendances at fixtures dropping, but also a drop in TV audiences.

With a hypothetical pause to relegation a third of respondents (35.1%) said they envisaged themselves watching fewer games on TV, and a quarter (25.8%) said they thought it would result in them attending fewer games in person.

OTHER STATS:

Three-quarters of respondents (78.8%) said they were opposed to the idea of a closed league with two divisions of 16, as operates in some other sports.

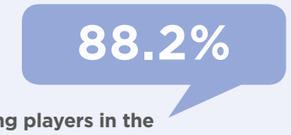


INNOVATION



Eight in ten fans (79.1%) said that innovation was necessary to make the women's game more successful.

Nine in ten (88.2%) agreed that providing competitive matches for young players in the pyramid is important to the development of the game, however around half (48.5%) are opposed to the introduction of B-teams.



There's widespread support for a dedicated TV broadcast slot for the women's game, with 89.4% of fans in favour.



Head of women's football at the FSA, Deborah Dilworth, said: "We thank those fans who took the time to provide us with their feedback on these vital issues, and will ensure that the fans' voice is heard by the game's decision makers as the consultation process continues.

"While it's clear that supporters are in favour of an expanded top two tiers, they've been equally clear that it can't come at the expense of competitive football and the principles of earning your spot at the top of the pyramid."


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MORE FROM THE SURVEY

78.6%

Three-quarters of fans (78.6%) were concerned at the potential concentration of power at the top WSL clubs

More than eight in ten (83.7%) told us they thought TV has too much say over kick-off times.



More than half of respondents (55.2%) said they had noticed an increase in abuse directed at players, coaches and officials in recent seasons.



While there is still strong support for the national team (83.2% said their success was important to them), their interests should not outweigh those of the wider pyramid, with just one in nine fans (11.2%) saying the national interest should come first.



This comes against the backdrop, however, of a huge majority (93.1%) saying they felt safe attending their team's home fixtures.



ENGAGING FANS

At the beginning of 2025 the FSA and the WPLL agreed a new Terms of Reference to help ensure strong engagement between supporters and the elite leagues in the women's game.

The WPLL was established in August 2024, and it is responsible for running the WSL and Women's Championship.

Nine representatives from across the women's game will attend the bi-annual meetings – made up of supporters from WSL, Championship and National League clubs – alongside staff and executives from both the FSA and WPLL.

The supporter engagement meetings will give WPLL an opportunity to consult supporters on specific projects while, in turn, supporters will have the opportunity to raise club-specific and national issues.

Minutes will be published on the WPLL and FSA websites.


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STADIUM DRINKING PILOT

Four clubs in the women's Championship have been taking part in a trial which has seen supporters allowed to drink alcohol in the stands.

Bristol City, Southampton, Birmingham City and Newcastle United were part of the pilot for four or five matches in the second half of the 2024-25 season.

Supporters at Ashton Gate, St Andrew's, Kingston Park and St Mary's were able to consume alcohol in view of the pitch – something which is banned in the top five tiers of the men's game. The current legislation around drinking within sight of the pitch doesn't cover women's football.

Chief executive of the WPLL Nikki Doucet confirmed that trials would be taking place back in October.

She said: "I think ultimately it's about being able to give our fans choices, while obviously maintaining the safety and what we need to do in terms of being responsible."


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The first games in the trial were Bristol City's match against London City Lionesses and Southampton facing Sunderland, both on Sunday 19th January 2025.

In the months leading up to the pilot, the FSA has been working with the WPLL and consulting with supporter groups in our women's game network about the proposals.

Head of women's football at the FSA Deborah Dilworth said: "Women's football has a real chance to lead the way on this. It's a chance to be innovative, creative and offer more choice for supporters at the match.

"It's important that the pilot is thorough and any expansion of the scheme has the best interests of supporters at its core.

"Fans should be front and centre – maintaining a positive and welcoming atmosphere at women's football is one of our central aims and we look forward to working with the WPLL on this."

LET US BE YOUR GUIDE...

The FSA and FA partnered to produce a supporters guide for the 2024-25 season, covering 72 teams playing in the FAWNL.

It was the first publication of its type in the women's game, and aimed to showcase the brilliant things on offer in the FAWNL, while making it easier for supporters to plan and travel to watch their team.

The guide was offered as a free download, and was created with the help of match-going FAWNL supporters, clubs and students at the University Campus of Football Business.

It covers all clubs in the Northern and Southern Premier divisions, along with Division One North, Midlands, South East and South West.

The guide 2024-25 featured many FSA-member supporter groups although not every club has one – if you'd like to set one up please contact Deborah Dilworth.

Download the Guide!

bit.ly/FAWNL-fan-guide



CRISIS CLUBS

While there is much to shout about in terms of the growth of the women's game in recent years, it has not always been smooth sailing and there are cautionary tales which show that there is still much to be done to make the game sustainable and to ensure the stability in the running of our clubs.

In the summer of 2024 it was announced that Reading would be withdrawing from the Championship as a result of (now ex-) Reading men's team owner Dai Yongge's mismanagement of the club, and this summer it seems it's the turn of Hull City Ladies to suffer a similar fate.

In April the club's chairman, Daniel Johnson, submitted a request to relegate the club from the third tier amid allegations of financial mismanagement. Humberside Police confirmed its economic crime unit was investigating the club.

The club, who are not affiliated with the men's team Hull City, who play in the Championship, had avoided relegation and finished eighth in the league, but look as though they will be dropping through the divisions as a result of a reported £200,000 'black hole' in the club's finances.

At the time of writing, Blackburn Rovers' women's team were reported to be in major doubt at being able to fulfil their place in WSL 2 (formerly the Championship) for next season, with funding likely to fall short of the new licence requirements. They would be the second club to fall short of this requirement, after Wolves did not apply for promotion to WSL 2, despite finishing second in their division this season.

SO WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP?

The FSA are involved in the implementation group of the Carney Review and we believe that legislation following the Fan-led Review should enable a future government to add the professional part of the women's game to the remit of the independent football regulator if circumstances make that necessary.

Head of women's football at the FSA Deborah Dilworth said: "There is an opportunity to create a sustainable model for women's football that learns from the harsh lessons of crisis clubs in the men's game but forges its own way forward, building upon what makes the women's game unique.

"Ultimately we need all football stakeholders working together to help with solutions. It's why implementation of the Carney Review is so important."



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It's been a busy year at the FSA as we continue to assist supporters who need help with ticketing problems, appealing sometimes unfair club bans and signposting to legal representation where necessary.

FOOTBALL-ARRESTS: CAN YOU BELIEVE THEM?

Every Autumn the Home Office releases the statistics for football-related arrests and once again the definition of what is "football-related" is being stretched.

The 2023-24 arrests stats show a slight increase, as they did for the previous season, but this year's data set included arrests made nowhere near a football match.

11% of the 2023-24 were made up of people watching Euro 2024 on the TV in England or Wales (aka not matchgoers). Many of them have probably never been to a game in their lives.

It begs the question - what is a legitimate "football arrest"? This expansion of "football-related" arrests to include anyone looking at a TV undermines the credibility of the data.

Football supporters should be reassured by the data as it once again shows that football is overwhelmingly safe. 47 million-plus people attended domestic and international matches last season and there were 2,563 arrests – 5.5 arrests per 100,000 attendees.

Despite the slight uptick in arrests, football still compares favourably to other mass participation events, such the major music festivals, horse racing and beyond.

If we take out people arrested watching tournaments overseas (reminder: they never used to be counted) arrests are roughly where they were ten years ago but we suppose that wouldn't get as much sensational news coverage.

Negative perceptions of supporters lead to bad law and poor treatment of matchgoers – and that's something we'll always push back on.

SEE THE FULL FOOTBALL-ARRESTS DATA HERE

bit.ly/football-arrests


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YORK CITY FANS CHALLENGE CLEVELAND POLICE

This year York City Supporters Trust demonstrated why strong supporter groups matter, particularly when it comes to challenging the treatment of matchgoing fans by regional police forces.

It started last season when the Ministermen's visit to Victoria Park to take on Hartlepool United was marred by policing issues as York City supporters reported mistreatment at the hands of Cleveland Police. Congestion, crowd problems and arrests were made after the game - with issues coming to a head at the local train station.

York City Supporters Trust said Cleveland Police's handling of the fixture was inappropriate, "particularly their use of significant force and confrontational tactics."

The trust, who called for an independent investigation into the organisation of the game, said that the volume and behaviour of Cleveland Police officers at key locations raised tensions ahead of the game, describing the force's approach as overly hostile towards travelling football supporters.

Their evidence gathering revealed a number of shocking incidents, including one where a child was struck by a police officer trying to separate supporters. The trust also accused Cleveland Police of delaying the trust's own investigation into the game and refusing to accept responsibility for the events of the matchday.

The trust's work led to new measures being put into place around the fixture after working with both clubs and local authorities - such as designated away pubs, routes for away fans to the train station and an escort to Victoria Park.

TAILGATING

Tailgating is set to become a specific criminal offence as legislation - the Unauthorised Entry to Football Matches Bill - goes through Parliament. The genesis for this was the pretty shocking scenes we saw at the men's Euro final at Wembley in 2021.

While it's understandable the authorities are looking at measures to prevent a repeat, as no supporter should be doing this, we are inherently uncomfortable with laws which specifically target football fans above and beyond other forms of entertainment.

Lawyers at Football Law Associates tell us that typically they see fans charged with fraud for this offence, which usually results in a fine. A fraud conviction can still allow courts to jail or prohibit offenders from attending football matches, but they cannot hand out a Football Banning Order (FBO).

In future FBOs could be handed out to anyone found guilty of this - so those who commit an offence will have their passports confiscated whenever England/Wales or their club team plays abroad. It's a serious piece of legislation and raises civil liberties questions.

CLUB BANS: PROBLEMS PERSIST

This year the FSA's casework inbox has been full of fans getting in touch with us seeking help after receiving a club ban, bans which they often feel have been dished out unfairly.

Clubs work on the 'balance of probability' rather than a burden of proof, so we often see supporters being banned by clubs, despite no further action being taken by courts or even not guilty verdicts passed. The threshold of evidence is lower in civil matters so, legally speaking, clubs are entitled to act in such a way even if it feels very unfair on occasion.

Ticketing is also a big trigger for club bans as they look to tighten up their rules around passing tickets on and enforce them much more strictly - with the problem being particularly noticeable at Premier League clubs where demand for matchday tickets is highest.

INDEPENDENT FOOTBALL OMBUDSMAN

It was also another busy year for the Independent Football Ombudsman (IFO) - a free to use service for supporters which adjudicates on unresolved complaints against clubs.

The IFO's latest annual review shows they received 471 complaints from supporters, 158 of which were accepted for full investigation.

The FSA has long promoted the IFO as an avenue for supporters when they have exhausted the complaints process at their own clubs and are still seeking redress.

FSA caseworker Vicki Goodfellow said: "The IFO service is totally free and a huge benefit to supporters who we'd always encourage to use the IFO when needed – they will listen to your complaint and they will take it seriously."

FSA AWARDS 2024



















Chelsea's Cole Palmer was crowned Men's Player of the Year at the Football Supporters' Association Awards ceremony in London in December – while Manchester City's Lauren Hemp picked up Women's Player of the Year.

With more than a quarter of a million votes cast, the FSA Awards are the largest supporter-led awards in the country and Palmer topped the fans' vote, holding off competition from Manchester City duo Erling Haaland and Rodri, as well as Bukayo Saka, Ollie Watkins and three-time winner Mohamed Salah.

Cole Palmer said: "Thank you to everyone who voted for me, it's an honour to be the first Chelsea player to win this award."

Palmer is also the first Englishman to scoop the award since Harry Kane won the popular vote back in 2017. Manchester City and Lionesses forward Lauren Hemp topped the vote in the Women's Player of the Year category, ending Arsenal's domination of the category.

Hemp saw off competition from fellow nominees Grace Clinton (Manchester United), Erin Cuthbert (Chelsea), Lauren James (Chelsea) Khadija Shaw (Manchester City) and Lotte Wubben-Moy (Arsenal).

Lauren Hemp said: "I just wanted to say a massive thank you for this award. Looking back at the season we were unfortunate to come so narrowly close to winning the league but we did qualify for the Champions League. I can't wait for – hopefully – many trophies coming our way."

Elsewhere Gary Neville picked up the trophy for TV/Radio Pundit of the Year, beating previous nominees Alan Shearer and Rachel Brown-Finnis. Jobi McAnuff, Nedum Onuoha and Izzy Christiansen rounded out the shortlist.







The winners of the 2024 FSA Awards:

MEN'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR
sponsored by Football Life
Cole Palmer (Chelsea)

GOAL OF THE YEAR
Patrick Bamford (Leeds United)
Peterborough United vs Leeds United (January)

TV/RADIO PUNDIT OF THE YEAR
sponsored by Elysium Marbella
Gary Neville

COMMENTATOR OF THE YEAR
Peter Drury

FAN MEDIA OF THE YEAR
Not The Top 20

MEN'S FOOTBALL MEDIA OF THE YEAR
The Athletic

SOCIAL MEDIA OF THE YEAR
Away Days

NON-LEAGUE AWARD
The Non-League Paper

SUPPORTER ENGAGEMENT AWARD
Portsmouth FC

WOMEN'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR
sponsored by Toyota UK
Lauren Hemp (Manchester City)

CLIMATE ACTION AWARD
sponsored by Football Life
David Wheeler (PFA and Wycombe Wanderers)

CLUB PODCAST OF THE YEAR
Fearless in Devotion (Wrexham)

FANS FOR DIVERSITY AWARD
SWFC Women's Supporters Group

FANZINE OF THE YEAR
My Only Desire (Charlton Athletic)

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL MEDIA OF THE YEAR
The Women's Football Show

PODCAST OF THE YEAR
The Football Ramble

SUPPORTER LIAISON OFFICER OF THE YEAR
Hannah Powis (AFC Bournemouth)

WRITER OF THE YEAR
Jonathan Wilson

NON-LEAGUE CLUBS



Bromley players celebrate winning the National League play-off final at Wembley Stadium in May 2024 © Alamy

3UP CAMPAIGN

The National League announced the launch of its '3UP Campaign' back in January, as all 72 clubs which make up the competition's three divisions wrote to the board of the EFL demanding an increase in the number of promotion and relegation places between the two leagues from next season.

At present, two clubs are promoted from the National League to League Two, with two clubs heading in the opposite direction into the fifth tier of English football.

The National League's Mark Ives told BBC Sport at the launch of the campaign: "There is a blockage in the jump between National League and the EFL. Two-up, two-down is simply unfair.

"I would think the vast majority of fans, looking at it objectively, would see the unfairness. We want a fairer system."

At the beginning of March, 1,980 fans gave their opinions in an FSA survey prompted by the launch of the 3UP campaign.

Nine out of ten fans back the principle of increasing the promotion and relegation spaces between the EFL and the National League from two to three.

An overwhelming 92.5% of all fans said they supported the idea, with just over eight in ten (83%) fans of EFL clubs backing the proposal.

The most popular reasons fans gave for their support of the proposals was the idea that three up, three down was fairer than the current system (91.1%).

There was also strong support for the idea that it would enhance the sporting attractiveness of the football pyramid, with 90.4% agreeing with that sentiment.

Of those who were against the proposal (6.4%) the main concerns were the idea that it would jeopardise the financial futures of more clubs/ make it harder to run them sustainably (56.5%) and that there were bigger problems in the game that needed fixing (53.2%).

National League CEO Mark Ives welcomed the FSA survey and noted the fans' opinions with interest.

"We believe the 3UP campaign goal is vital to the overall health of the game," Ives said. "It's highly encouraging to see that fans of all divisions appear to feel the same – we have always believed that to be the case.

"We also think that 3UP ties directly into the Government's overall objectives for football and therefore should be as high on the game's agenda as anything else this year – and not linked to wider regulatory matters that could potentially take years to conclude.

"We are lucky to have one of the best domestic football structures in the world but hopefully there is now the opportunity to make it even fairer by introducing 3UP."



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UP FOR THE CUP... REPLAYS

The FA Cup retains its importance to fans of the non-league game, who are overwhelmingly in favour of retaining replays in the competition's qualifying rounds, according to an FSA survey.

A total of 754 fans from all levels of the non-league game – from the National League to Step 6 and below – took part, with nine in ten (91%) respondents in favour of retaining replays up to and including the FA Cup fourth qualifying round, the last stage before clubs from the EFL enter the competition at the first round.

Just over a third of fans (35%) said the FA Cup was the most important competition that their side plays in, while a further 45% said it was more important than others.

As one respondent said: "There's no competition on the planet that gets close to the level of jeopardy and excitement."

Supporters back replays because of the extra revenue opportunities they offer to clubs (90%) and the role that tradition plays in the oldest cup competition in the world (85%).

Six in ten fans (60%) supported them because of the fairness inherent in having replays.

Only around one in 20 fans surveyed (6%) wanted to scrap replays, with the burden of short-notice fixture arrangements (55%) and an already too crowded fixture list (52%) the most popular reasons given for doing so.

The survey followed the FA and Premier League's joint announcement in April 2024 that replays would be dropped from the first round onwards.

"If decisions are to be made on the earlier rounds of the competition, we feel it is vital that fans have a voice in that process," said FSA National Council member Matthew Kempson.

"The results are conclusive and show that non-league football fans overwhelmingly value the importance of FA Cup replays. These games create lifelong memories for fans," added Matthew.

The results of the survey were shared with the FA as part of the FSA's Structured Dialogue process. The FA committed to consult its member clubs in non-league on the issue, and results of that consultation are expected ahead of next season.

COMMUNITY-OWNED CLUBS



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TORQUAY CROWDFUNDER

Too often there are stories of woe at non-league, so it was nice to have good news to share at the start of the season, as Torquay United Supporters Trust (TUST) announced they had secured a minority stake in the Devon club, as they took steps towards significant protections of key club assets.

The club, which came close to relegation after entering administration last season, was eventually taken over by the Bryn Consortium of local businessmen. The trust worked with the new owners to improve the governance of the club and to ensure a supporter stake within it.

In August 2024, they agreed new Articles of Association, which guaranteed the trust a seat on the club's board following its acquisition of £50,000 worth of shares, with the aim to increase the shareholding with a community share offer.

If successful, this would give them a second seat on the board, and trigger special 'heritage' rights enshrined in the club's articles, giving the trust a veto on any changes to the club's name, badge, home kit colours and home stadium.

In October, the Trust were able to announce that their share offer had raised more than twice its original target, with £222,201 raised by investors and donations, resulting in TUST now taking a 28.6% stake in the club, and ensuring their veto on the heritage items.

TUST chair Nick Brodrick said: "It's been an amazing response and we can't thank our 534 investors enough for helping to raise these fantastic sums. It just shows what wonderful fans the club has, and their love for Torquay United."

Club co-chairman Michael Westcott said: "We are thrilled to formalise the role of the Torquay United Supporters Trust in our governance structure.

"This move not only strengthens our corporate governance, but also ensures that the voices of our loyal supporters are protected in the future."

NEW GROUPS AT BLYTH AND BILSTON

In November, Blyth Spartans announced that the club was to move into community ownership with immediate effect, ending a period of uncertainty under previous owner Irfan Liaquat which led to home games being postponed following the resignation of key club officials and volunteers.


© Alamy

A not-for-profit Community Interest Company, Blyth Spartans 2024 CIC, was established by a group of local businessmen and long-term club sponsors alongside a representative from the club's supporters group the Green Army, which was converted into a supporters trust.

Martin Trinder, a club sponsor, one of the local businessmen involved in the CIC, and interim club chairman, said:

"The famous Blyth Spartans club is a hugely important asset for its fans and the whole community, and as supporters ourselves we want to secure its future as part of the community.

"This is a case of existing sponsors with a proven track record of commitment to the club stepping up and taking responsibility for building its future."

Kevin Miles, chief executive of the Football Supporters' Association, added: "Community ownership of a football club through a CIC, with the involvement of fans and the local community, is the best guarantee of a permanent future for a club.

"Even club owners, like players and managers, come and go, but the fans and the community are with a club for life. Having grown up in Blyth myself, I know just how important the Spartans are, and I am delighted a new era of community and supporter ownership of the club has begun."

Kevin was also invited to be chair of Blyth Spartans, a role he was proud to take on alongside his day job at the FSA.

Blyth were not the only new members of the community-owned fraternity this year, however, as hot on their heels were Bilston Town, who joined our ranks in December and became the first community-owned club in the West Midlands.

Bilston FC club chair, Denise Frankham, said: "We have always believed our club belonged to our fans and community, and our decision to convert to a legal form of community ownership is the best way to ensure that will remain the case.

"Becoming an owner of Bilston Town FC will help towards protecting and securing its future.

"We are also grateful to the FSA for their support to get the CBS up and running. It marks a historic day for the club."

COMMUNITY-OWNED CLUB ROUND UP

With some issues still to be resolved at the time of writing (including a possible play-off final for AFC Wimbledon and a play-off final against Scunthorpe United for Chester), there were some notable triumphs and close calls for clubs in our community-owned network this season.

Bury FC and Merthyr Town led the way winning the North West Counties League Premier Division and Southern League Premier South Division respectively; with Bury's title sealed on the last day of the season (read more on p42 about their incredible attendance) while Merthyr outran rivals AFC Totton by three points.

There was a near miss in the Southern Counties East Premier Division where Fisher fell to a late goal against VCD Athletic in their play off final, while there may be another promotion, for Redhill, whose situation in the Combined Counties League Premier Division South is still to be resolved.



REFEREEING

The FSA is committed to dialogue between supporter representatives and refereeing organisations to improve understanding of officiating and explore ways in which fans can learn more about refereeing and decision-making.

Back in 2024, a working group was created between Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL) and the FSA which brings together referees and supporter representatives.

Over the last 12 months, that work has continued and culminated in a delegation of supporter representations once again visiting Stockley Park to meet senior refereeing officials.

Stockley Park is the headquarters of PGMOL - the body responsible for referee training and development - and the location of its video assistant referee (VAR) suites used in English football.

Supporter representatives from 18 of the 20 Premier League clubs met with PGMOL's chief refereeing officer Howard Webb, as well as match officials Stuart Attwell, Chris Kavanagh, Sian Massey-Ellis and Graham Scott.



"It was great to welcome the FSA and representatives of Premier League clubs to the VAR Hub as we continue to evolve our relationship and work together regarding refereeing matters across the professional game in England.

"We are fully committed to ongoing dialogue with the FSA and their Premier League, EFL and Women's Game networks, widening that understanding between supporters and match officials for the benefit of the game."
PGMOL chief executive Howard Webb

Supporters discussed the development of VAR, in-stadium announcements and more - as well as having a trial run of VAR itself.

FSA Premier League network manager Thomas Concannon said: "We've been developing dialogue with PGMOL over the last few years, covering refereeing across the pyramid, but naturally there has been a keen focus on the Premier League with the introduction of VAR. We are under no illusions about the views of matchgoing supporters and their frustrations with VAR and relay those regularly to the Premier League and PGMOL.

"However, we are hugely appreciative of the open dialogue and honesty from both the league and PGMOL every time we meet, giving us insights which help us understand the processes, something we are keen to reach as wide an audience as possible."

REFEREEING HISTORY

History was made this year during the League Cup semi-final between Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool as referee Stuart Attwell announced a VAR decision inside the ground.

It was the first time it had happened in English football, with Attwell explaining why Dominic Solanke's late goal for Spurs was ruled out.

"After a review, Dominic Solanke was in an offside position," he said over the stadium's PA system.

Elsewhere, the Premier League's first woman referee Rebecca Welch was inducted into the National Football Museum's Hall of Fame. Welch, who became a referee in 2010, was also the first woman to referee a men's game in the Championship back in January 2023.



FSA GOVERNANCE

FSA training and governance manager Nicola Cave has been working hard as ever to support our member groups and make sure we have our own house in order when it comes to governance. Nicola explains more below...



We have continued to provide support to our members on a variety of matters, from assisting boards with finding their purpose and voice through to some really very niche constitutional riddles which have kept us very busy indeed!

We have helped members through a lot of rule updates this year and been working our way through conducting governance audits for our Affiliate members to ensure their rules, policies and processes are up to date and fit for purpose.

Talking of rules, we are in the process of redrafting a brand-new version of our model rules which we hope to be registered and available for use later this year. The intent is to develop a more accessible set of rules which is shorter, easier to understand and simpler to operate under and to accompany these rules with a new suite of updated policies.

We have been developing resources for groups which are not constituted as Community Benefit Societies (CBS), recently updating our template constitution for Independent Supporters' Associations (ISA) as well as the accompanying operational policy templates.

There has been plenty going on with the internal governance at the FSA this year, at a general meeting back in February our members voted in changes to the FSA's articles to ensure that the organisation remains professional and representative of supporters in what is the ever-evolving world of supporter engagement and involvement.

The main changes sought to raise the bar of eligibility to our group membership categories, encouraging members to demonstrate good governance practices in order to give further credibility to a movement which in turn challenges clubs and those institutions at the highest levels of the game to reflect the same attitudes and practices.

In addition to our Affiliate and Associate group membership categories, a third category named "Allied" has been created for those groups who don't fit the criteria for the other categories but still want to be part of the FSA family, access our resources, support, and be part of the conversation to shape the game.
To find out more about the changes to the FSA articles and what this means for your membership visit:
www.thefsa.org.uk



FSA FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION

TRAINING SESSIONS

Our regular training sessions for board members are held quarterly, are very well attended, and consist of four sessions over the course of a month. In addition, we have a number of role specific sessions and specialist skill sessions being added to our training calendar.

FANS FOR DIVERSITY

After celebrating its tenth birthday last summer, the Fans for Diversity campaign has continued to help supporters around the country promote diversity and inclusion at the match.

Fan groups at club level are what have always made the Fans for Diversity campaign tick – and this season has been no different.

Not only have long-established supporter groups continued their good work, but new organisations continue to emerge up and down the country, at all levels of the game.


© Anthony Dunn

SOUTH ASIAN REPRESENTATION

This season we were pleased to help establish new fan groups at Preston North End (The North End Crescent) at an Iftar event on 22nd March and the Muslim Gooners at Arsenal.

We've also been supporting the work of Northants Fans United, a fledgling South Asian supporters' group proudly backing Northampton Town Football Club.

Fans for Diversity campaign manager Hannah Kumari said: "One of the remarkable things about the campaign is the depth and breadth of different fan groups taking up the mantle.

"It's great to see traditional fan groups supporting newer groups that are emerging from under-represented communities."

For South Asian Heritage month we were delighted to see the Punjabi O's, helped off the ground by the Fans for Diversity fund, become an official supporters club at Leyton Orient.

Punjabi O's activity started a few seasons back when group founder Arvi Sahota and others saw a gap in representation and as a result started setting up social media accounts and matchday activities to promote the club to under-represented communities.

Orient chief executive Mark Devlin said: "We want as many people from Leyton – and beyond – to feel welcome and safe here. Arvi and his team have done a fantastic job so far."

LGBT+ HISTORY MONTH

The Rainbow Ball, which first debuted last season, returned for LGBT+ History Month this February and its comeback was marked by some of our Fans for Diversity groups.

Two supporter groups on either side of the Steel City Derby – the Rainbow Owls and the Rainbow Blades – came together to launch the EFL and Puma's Rainbow Ball with a grassroots football match.

The five-a-side contest between the two members of our Fans for Diversity network was a fitting launch for the Rainbow Ball in 2025 and was captured by the EFL in a special promotional film.

This is the second season the Rainbow Ball has featured in two match rounds in the EFL and this year raised £10,000 for initiatives during LGBT+ History Month.

Fans for Diversity campaign manager Nilesh Chauhan said: "This funding has given Fans for Diversity supporter groups the opportunity to do more for the game.

"Puma's Rainbow Ball match with the EFL wasn't just the game; it was a statement. A statement that football is, and always should be, for all."

CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR LGBT+ GROUPS

Beyond LGBT+ History Month we have continued to offer support to LGBT+ fan groups across the country - many of whom are now well-established.

One such group is Sheffield United's Rainbow Blades who celebrated their fifth birthday this season, having been founded in 2020 with the help of our campaign.

Those five years of work, and growth – the Rainbow Blades now have 800 members – will be marked with a special dinner in Sheffield in May – more details here.

Rainbow Blades founder James Laley said: "The Fans for Diversity fund enables and empowers supporters' groups to create lasting campaigns, initiatives and events. This is crucial so we can build inclusive communities."

Across Sheffield, the Rainbow Owls have continued to participate in the regional alliance of LGBT+ supporter groups and deliver a range of activities for their membership since their launch in 2023.

Coventry City's Proud Sky Blues celebrated their first birthday this season by making a short film which highlighted the impact belonging to the group has had on its members, reducing loneliness and positively affecting mental health and self-esteem.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Back in October we marked Black History Month with a special Fans for Diversity day at the New Den, which honoured one of the EFL's first black players Trevor Lee.

Lee made his debut for the Lions in 1975 and went on to make 125 appearances, scoring 26 goals. Billed as one of the first black footballers to make an impact in the game, he made his name with the club before going on to play for a number of others including Colchester United, AFC Bournemouth and Cardiff City.

At the Millwall v Plymouth Argyle match the club and fans paid tribute to Trevor, with Hannah and Nilesh in attendance for a pre-match event in collaboration with Show Racism The Red Card where Trevor met and spoke to people about his experiences on and off-the-pitch.

Hannah said: "Seeing young players of the future completely in awe of Trevor, asking questions about his favourite game, goal and the best player he played against, was really moving. It's so important to celebrate trailblazers who have paved the way for the next generation."

RECOGNITION FOR OUR SUPPORTER GROUPS

At the annual FSA Awards back in December we handed out our sixth Fans for Diversity award - to recognise those supporter groups that put in the hard graft to promote the campaign.

The nominations were whittled down into a shortlist of just six: Fulham Lillies, Leicester 4 All, Proud and Palace, Punjabi Whites, Rovers SAS and SWFC Women's Supporter Group (SWFCWSG).

Our panel of judges eventually chose SWFCWSG as the winners and the group were delighted to receive the award at our ceremony in London.

SWFCWSG's Bethany Patrick said: "It's been crazy, we've grown from a starting point of around 10 members to hundreds today. We're so grateful for all the support we've had from other groups and our network managers at the FSA."

"Setting up a women's supporters group is one of the best things you can possibly do – we implore anyone who's thinking about it to just do it."


© FSA/Matter Walder



© Punjabi Villans

FSA members the Bangla Bantams, Blues 4 All, and Punjabi Villans were also recognised at the Asian Football Awards held in October. Punjabi Villans eventually crowned as Fan Group of the Year in a category decided by public vote.

MY CLUB, MY SHIRT - MIDDLESBROUGH

Middlesbrough joined our ‘My Club, My Shirt’ catalogue, celebrating the depth and breadth of their supporters with an exhibition at the Riverside Stadium ahead of the 2024-25 season.

The Championship side unveiled an exhibition of 15 different fan portraits on Teesside to showcase diversity among the Boro’s supporter base. Co-ordinated by Rob Nichols and Ellen Sowerby from the Middlesbrough Supporters Forum, and backed by the Fans for Diversity campaign, the exhibition was housed in the Dorman Museum for two weeks back in August



before touring other community venues in the region.

Rob said: “The message is simply that we are all Boro in our replica Boro shirts, we are all a part of the Boro, Middlesbrough and Tees communities. We all belong.

Boro’s My Club, My Shirt project is the 15th such exhibition using the format originally started at Cardiff City back in 2020.



“ALL DIFFERENT. ALL TOGETHER. ALL CHARLTON.”

Charlton Athletic Supporters’ Trust (CAST) launched a new exhibition celebrating the club’s fan base in May, ahead of the club’s EFL match against Burton Albion.

CAST worked with Fans for Diversity on the event which featured supporter portraits under the banner “All Different. All Together. All Charlton.”

The campaign celebrates the diverse background of matchgoers and makes clear that The Valley is for all – whether that’s lifelong supporters or those new to the area who’d like to get behind their local team.

CAST said: “Charlton is the original community club – founded not by a school, church or factory, but by a group of mates who just wanted to play football. Since then, at its best the club has led the way on community values including anti-racism.”



The exhibition features 30 Addicks’ fans on enlarged football stickers, each with their own story – a Syrian refugee whose family never misses a game, the captain of LGBT+ team Charlton Invicta, a young group of boys starting their football journey, and many, many more.

Photographer Rhea Spencer-Newell followed the men’s and women’s team through the 2024-25 season, taking candid shots of fans which designer Oliver Watts turned into retro style football stickers.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Our friends at Kick It Out who are partners on the Fans for Diversity campaign also published a new resource that is a handy starting point for anyone looking to set up a new fan group from an under-represented community – it’s free to use on Kick It Out’s online academy here: theacademy.kickitout.org

FANS FOR DIVERSITY AROUND THE COUNTRY





















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The FSA is a member of Football Supporters Europe (FSE) alongside many other national supporter organisations from across the continent. FSE was founded in 2008, has members in 48 UEFA nations and is the sole, democratic voice of European football supporters. Find out what they've been up to this season...

TICKET PRICE WIN

At the beginning of the season came an announcement from UEFA that the price cap on UEFA Champions League, Europa League, and Conference League away ticket prices will reduce from this season, following a decision taken by UEFA's Club Competitions Committee after lobbying from FSE and fans across the continent.

FSE paid tribute to the many supporters groups across Europe that have tirelessly campaigned for fairer ticket prices for all away fans, with both in-stadium actions and ticket price monitoring.

Responding to the announcement, FSE's executive director, Ronan Evain, said: "The revised price caps are further recognition of how integral away fans are to the atmosphere of European club fixtures. This decision illustrates another positive achievement in FSE's joint work with UEFA and clubs on improving conditions for fans traveling across Europe."

The cap on away tickets for UCL games from the league phase will reduce maximum prices by almost 30% to €50 over the next two seasons. The cap on away tickets for UEL and UECL will reduce to €35 and €20 respectively, reductions of 20% or more.

PREPARATIONS FOR WOMEN'S EURO 2025

In April, FSE and UEFA co-hosted the Women's Euro 2025 Fan Forum, as preparations continue for this summer's tournament in Switzerland.

This was the first time a dedicated Fan Forum has been held for a women's international tournament, and with more Fans' Embassies set to be active than ever before at a Women's Euro.

The event brought together Fans' Embassies, representatives from participating national associations, and host cities to make introductions,


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establish contacts, ask questions and share information about the upcoming tournament. It gave all parties the chance to better understand each other's roles and discuss how they'll work together to support fans on the ground.

FSE national teams fans and membership coordinator Jussi Hartikainen said: "It's been invaluable for Fans' Embassies to hear directly from and speak to those whose decisions will impact supporters. Establishing these connections now will play a key role in making the experience smoother for fans following their teams in Switzerland".

YOUNG SUPPORTERS

Throughout the season, we've continued work to engage with younger supporters and build relationships with the next generation of football fans, holding informal fan forums online to gauge the thoughts and ideas of younger fans that are involved at different levels of their supporter organisations.

These discussions enable supporters from across the pyramid to raise issues, talk about their own experiences, and focus on topics including: ticket pricing, how accessible supporter organisations are, how we can encourage activism, as well as representation and younger supporter involvement in Fan Advisory Boards (FABs).

In some instances, clubs have ensured that there is a seat for a younger supporter on their Fan Advisory Board (FAB) or Shadow Board; another positive step in ensuring they have the opportunity to be involved in the consultation and decision-making process.

The FSA also continues to work as part of the FSE-led Future of Football Project, aiming to increase the number of younger fans involved at football clubs or supporter organisations and specifically within democratic structures.

The FSA is one of seven partners involved in the project and has been working with supporters from SFSU (Sweden), Koordinationsstelle Fanprojekte (Germany), Norsk Supportersallianse (Norway) FASFE (Spain) and Sandlanders (Africa).

The FSA's National Working Group, made up of four younger fans that support clubs across the football pyramid, will attend the FSE's European Football Fans Congress 2025 in Malmo, Sweden, and will represent the FSA at Future of Football workshops across the weekend.

The sessions will focus on the impact that the project has had across the partner organisations and youth participation.

CASE STUDY - NEWCASTLE UNITED

In February, Newcastle United held a workshop for their younger fans, which allowed the club to gain further insights into the matchday experience for fans aged 25 and under.

The main talking points focused around matchday engagement and atmosphere, the growth of Newcastle United Women and attendances, as well as addressing challenges they faced. Feedback was collated by club officials, and was taken to the club's executive team as well as the FAB.

Sarah Medcalf, head of supporter services said: "We're proud to be the first Premier League club to establish a Young Person's Forum, and we're



excited to work with the FSA to ensure young fans have a voice in helping to shape the future."

Tom Symonds, young person representative on the FAB said: "The event was about giving young NUFC fans a voice, sharing our experiences, highlighting the challenges we face, and working together to push the club for real change to ensure young Newcastle fans have the chance to develop the best possible relationship with the football club. There's a lot of work to be done but this is a step in the right direction."

WOMEN'S VOICE IN THE MEN'S GAME



Women's Voice in the Men's Game is a new informal network at the FSA specifically relating to the experience of being a woman fan of men's football. Started by my colleague Nic Cave, I took over guiding this group in February 2025, hosting an afternoon conference on Zoom on Sunday 9th March for International Women's Day for our first event.

Attending men's football matches was my first interaction with the game and continues to be the primary way in which I experience football; I'm a season ticket holder at Coventry City. The first game I went to was in 1996, when I was 13.

I think there's been a lot of progress in the way women are accepted, seen and valued as fans of men's football since then, along with an improvement in facilities from clubs, specifically more toilets and free sanitary products. There are more women pundits, presenters and commentators in the men's game. But there is still work to be done. Recently, I had an experience on the train which runs from Coventry station to the stop by the CBS Arena where a large group of away fans started singing a very sexually degrading chant about a woman, whose name I didn't catch.

Prior to that it had been the usual derogatory chants about their rivals and celebrating their own club identity. It was loud and they were drunk but I'm not phased by this kind of behaviour, even being the only woman in the train carriage.

When the sexist chanting began something changed. I became acutely aware of being the only woman, and a bit disturbed by the seeming lack of connection to what they were singing from these men who were all sons, and many will be husbands, partners and fathers.

On this occasion, and due to the police presence on the train, I decided to ask the man sitting next to me if he thought it was necessary to sing such a song as a way of attacking a rival team. He looked surprised, wasn't aggressive at all and simply replied 'It's just funny, isn't it'.

It's this type of attitude we have to challenge, to try and help our male counterparts understand that for women these chants aren't 'just funny', they make us feel like we aren't welcome. While most will join in without even thinking about what they're singing, the connection between this kind of chanting and actual violence towards women and girls is one which cannot be ignored.

Hannah Kumari
Campaign manager (Fans for Diversity)

WHAT NEXT?

We have decided to make a short 'talking heads' style film which will explain how sexist chanting makes us feel. We thought it was a good way to launch this new network.

Going forward we will connect different women's supporters groups up and down the country through regular online meetings, in-person meet ups and further projects and events.

Want to find out more?
Email:
hannah.kumari@thefsa.org.uk



CLIMATE CRISIS

Green Football returned bigger than ever before in 2025, with their 'Great Save' campaign running for three weeks in the spring.

An annual event which aims to highlight issues around climate and sustainability within football, this year the focus of the campaign was to encourage clubs and supporters to save kits from landfill by donating, selling or reusing playing and training gear, rather than throwing it away.

The campaign says around 100,000 tonnes of sportswear ends up in UK landfills every year, and reducing that figure can only be a good thing.

Clubs across the country were involved with donation points, and the campaign featured widely on Sky Sports, TNT, the BBC as well as across the print and online media, gaining more interactions from clubs, fans and fan groups than ever before.

Broadcasters even got in on the act themselves, with Sky setting up donation points on their campus for staff to recycle their old sporting gear, in a partnership with the Salvation Army.

Plenty of players and ex-pros also got into the spirit by donating worn training kit, boots, gloves and shirts for an eBay charity auction to support the Green Football campaign, while also extending the life of their clothing.

Famous faces decluttering their wardrobes and donating their own gear included Rio Ferdinand, Gary Neville, Roy Keane, Mary Earps, Peter Crouch, Demi Stokes (pictured) and Mark Schwarzer among others.

Wycombe Wanderers, former home of the FSA's Climate Action Award winner David Wheeler, were one of the many clubs to set up matchday collections and encourage their fanbase to get involved.

Green Football said: "Football fans estimate their kit collections are worth an average of £300. If you've got unused kit like replica team shirts, training wear, football boots, or goalkeeper gloves why not sell them? You'll be helping the environment and earning money at the same time."

HOW CAN SUPPORTERS GET INVOLVED?

During Green Football's campaign many clubs teamed up with their own supporters' groups on local initiatives such as hosting repair/sewing workshops or even offering discounts on new kits for fans who traded in used ones (with the old kit upcycled or passed on). Why not see if this is something they'd like to continue throughout the year?

We've also seen clubs such as Bristol City women's team offering half price coach travel for away matches, while Wolves launched the One Pack, One Planet project committing the club towards achieving net zero by 2040 with many real world policies implemented to start this process. Engaging with your club on such initiatives can be a start.



INTERNATIONAL

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Across the last three decades, our Fans' Embassy services have been indispensable and the 2024-25 season has been no different: another successful year helping fans of our international teams overseas.

EURO 2024: HARD WORK PAYS OFF

The Euro 2024 Fans' Embassy was one of the biggest ever as our team of FSA staff and volunteers covered more than 5,000 miles via road and rail, distributed tens of thousands of our Free Lions matchday editions and sent out 20,000 copies of our 164-page guide to Germany ahead of the tournament.

As in previous tournaments the FSA, working with the England Supporters Travel Club, produced a guide to the host nation as well as individual editions of the Free Lions fanzine – both digital and in print – which served as match-specific guides.

Free Lions' Thomas Concannon estimates the embassy distributed around 70,000 copies of the individual editions.

"The embassy locations are our bread and butter," Thomas said. "But there's more to it than just handing out fanzines.

"Those help points are an opportunity for us to interact with supporters,



talk through any issues and build connections – it's extremely valuable. "That on the ground experience means we are a credible voice for supporters."

Euro 2024 was yet another overseas tournament where England fans enhanced their reputation, as the old tropes around English fans' hooliganism continue to be consigned to the history books.

"It was a positive tournament that was relatively hassle-free," says Free Lions' Ashley Brown. "England travelled in huge numbers, and there were a lot of younger fans attending their first tournament.

"There was a good atmosphere wherever England fans congregated, lots of colours and flags, mixing well with supporters from other nations." The work of Fans' Embassies, along with our European colleagues such as Football Supporters Europe and other key stakeholders, has been a vital part of that story.

SUPPORTER CONCERNS: WORLD CUP 2030 & 2034

Work on our embassy service for the next major men's tournament – the 2026 World Cup to be held in the USA, Canada and Mexico – is already underway.

It promises to be a huge challenge for our Fans' Embassy, as the scale of the competition steps up: taking place across three countries with 48 teams in 16 different host cities.

It's not the upcoming World Cup where most concerns lie, however, after FIFA announced that the 2030 World Cup would be held across three continents (South America, Europe and North Africa) while the 2034 tournament was controversially awarded to Saudi Arabia.

Supporters have very serious misgivings about how these World Cups were awarded and questions around the supporter experience, particularly in Saudi Arabia who were the sole bidders for 2034.

Echoes of Qatar 2022 are undeniable – an opaque awards process alongside the ludicrous pretence that 2034 will be a summer tournament. On top of that human rights criticisms are brushed aside and concerns from LGBT+ supporters completely ignored.

11 of the 15 stadiums due to host games at the 2034 World Cup have yet to be built and one of the host cities, the NEOM mega-project, doesn't even exist. According to a report published by ITV last year, thousands of workers have already died due to the poor conditions on construction sites at NEOM.

Ghost stadiums and abandoned infrastructure will no doubt haunt claims of sustainability and legacy in the same way they have done for 2022.

All of these criticisms are shared by fans across the continent and have been communicated to UEFA by Football Supporters Europe, to whom we affiliate.

We have shared these concerns with the FA and ask that they work with fans to try and create a transparent bidding process which legally binds host nations to comprehensive human rights standards and pre-tournament commitments.



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GETTING READY FOR SWITZERLAND

Just like in previous women's tournaments in France and Australia, we've produced another comprehensive guide for those supporters following the Lionesses through Switzerland for this summer's European Championship.

FREE LIONESSES

The Free Lions' sister Fans' Embassy team, the Free Lionesses, celebrated their fifth birthday last year as they continue to develop support around the England national team.

Of course they've continued to produce guides for Lionesses away trips, but they have also been instrumental in improving the matchgoing experience for supporters across several areas such as ticketing, travel and logistics.

Fan reps from the Women's Game Network along with the head of the Free Lionesses, Deborah Dilworth, continue to bring the supporter perspective to regular meetings with senior FA executives.

Deborah said: "It has been amazing to watch the Free Lionesses community grow over the last five years and we are really excited to see how things develop in the next five years.

"We hope to continue to help grow away attendances at Lionesses fixtures and ensure supporter experiences are the best they can be, while collaborating with supporters across international women's football."

FSA CYMRU

Our FSA Cymru team have continued to produce match guides for supporters who follow Wales away - since September, FSA Cymru have produced away fans' guides to North Macedonia, Turkey, Iceland and Montenegro.

FSA Cymru have also been representing supporters in their regular meetings with the Welsh FA (FAW), police and transport authorities to ensure Wales fans' concerns are heard. Minutes from those meetings are available on our site: **bit.ly/fsa-cymru**



ICYMI

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There are inevitably news stories that don't fit neatly into some of our sections, but which nonetheless are worth recapping, just In Case You Missed It...

FULHAM LILLIES

FSA associate members Fulham Lillies launched a new report which looks at the barriers facing new parents who want to take babies and infants to football. Titled "You're not welcome anymore" it explores how and why clubs can make stadiums safe for young children to attend with their parents.

Fulham Lillies have spoken to parents who have been unable to return to football



© Alamy

since the arrival of their children. Many say they no longer feel welcome at their "spiritual home" highlighting the need for clubs to "recognise the challenges of post-baby life and support new parents".

Hayley Davinson, Fulham Lillies co-founder and board member of the Fulham Supporters' Trust, said: "We believe a positive parent-child experience can be nurtured from an early age, creating strong bonds for families to support their team together. Our report advocates for family inclusion and celebrates football's positive impact on parent-child relationships. It's about making football truly accessible for all."

CHECK THE COPYRIGHT

This season has seen a number of supporters groups contacted by agencies looking to enforce copyright claims from photo agencies, and the bill for falling foul of the rules on this can run into the hundreds of pounds per image which voluntary groups can ill-afford.

We've produced guidance for supporters groups, with some do's and don'ts alongside some examples of common misconceptions around copyright, and it's not an issue you can afford to just bury your head in the sand around. If you want to find out more, email info@thefsa.org.uk

RECORD BREAKERS

Congratulations to community-owned Bury FC, who smashed the Step 5 non-league attendance record with a whopping crowd of 8,719 who attended their final home game of the season at Gigg Lane, to see them clinch the North West Counties Premier Division title. The previous NWCFL record was held by fellow community-owned club FC United, who still retain the Step 6 record with their crowd of 6,023 against Great Harwood Town back in 2006.

In other crowd news, Scunthorpe United broke the Step 2 record this season as the 8,274 fans who watched their top of the table clash with (yet again community-owned) Chester was a National League North record crowd.

OXFORD SUPPORTERS BACK STADIUM MOVE

Oxford United's Kasaam Stadium has long been one of the most recognisable in the EFL thanks to its missing fourth stand – and the club's time there could be coming to an end with plans for a move to the north of the city.

A planning meeting on Thursday 5th June (which takes place after we have gone to print) will consider the club's new stadium plans which have the full backing of the FSA-affiliated supporters' trust OxVox. The FSA and visiting supporters wish them well.

IF YOU SEE IT
OR HEAR IT,
REPORT IT

'It' is discrimination, in all its forms.
Racism. Homophobia, Misogyny. Disablism.
If you have seen it or heard it, follow
the QR code to report it to Kick It Out.
Together, we can put an end to it.

KICK IT OUT

Take action today at kickitout.org

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