National League Structured Dialogue Meeting - 12th February 2026

Present - Phil Alexander and Michaela Garrard (National League), Darren Bernstein and Garreth Cummins (The FSA)

Fan Engagement and Independent Football Regulator (IFR)

Both parties gave updates on recent discussions and developments with regard to the IFR. The FSA's focus was on the steps that the NL had taken towards the Fan Engagement requirements under the new licensing regime, and what the current state of play was with its member clubs.

The FSA presented examples of our work with EFL clubs, the various routes that clubs have taken to comply with Fan Engagement requirements, and there was discussion on how the two organisations would be able to work together to ensure that NL clubs offered meaningful engagement with their supporters.

3UP campaign

It has been just over a year since the NL launched its 3UP campaign, which the FSA officially backed at its AGM last summer. The NL provided an update on recent events, including further meetings in Parliament, and the two organisations will continue to work together to amplify the message and lobby clubs ahead of the EFL clubs' meeting in March where the issue is on the agenda.

Club ownership

We discussed clubs where fans have voiced concerns over their ownership, such as Morecambe, where FSA affiliates the Shrimps Trust have been pressing for improved engagement and transparency from the club's new owners, and shared their experiences with the NL team to ensure the supporters' voice is being heard by the NL leadership team.

3pm Blackout

There was discussion of recent press reports indicating that the upcoming TV deal could include a 'threat' to the 3pm Blackout. The FSA reiterated its support of the policy, based on the protection of attendances throughout the pyramid; the National League indicated they would monitor developments and deal with any changes to the status quo as best they could, should the situation change in the next broadcast deal.

No fault stand-down policy

At the FSA AGM in July 2025 a motion was passed to support the campaign for a 'no fault stand down' policy for players and club staff accused of serious criminal offences, including but not limited to sexual violence. This means that clubs should have the ability to stand the individual down from playing or public facing duties without prejudice while investigations are ongoing.

The FSA asked the NL for their response on such a policy being adopted in their competition.

Any Other Business

The case involving Scunthorpe's '0-0 win' against Wealdstone was discussed, with the issue of a potential precedent being set for clubs to avoid defeats which could affect promotion/relegation, and the overall sporting integrity of the league. The NL informed us that they relied upon the flexibility to determine the results in cases where clubs failed to complete matches in line with the FA's standard rules, and that future cases would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.