



Structured Dialogue with BCAFC

Report of Trust meeting with BCAFC

In attendance from the Club were, Ryan Sparks (RS) – Club CEO
Representing the Trust was, Manny Dominguez (MD) – Chair

Apologies were given from Paula Watson (PW), Director of Operations, Justin Bret (JB) – Trust Vice Chair, and Matthew Pickles (MP) also from the Trust.

**Bantams Supporters Trust met with the Club on Monday 4th Aug.
Whilst we last met in March to be consulted on Season Tickets, The last Structured Dialogue meeting with a Trust agenda we had was on the 10th Feb 25, 6 months ago.**

This meeting was a much-needed catch up on developments particularly on Fan Engagement. So, without further ado lets dive into it.

Fans' surveys

We had previously asked about fans' surveys, in particularly on how supporters feel after the game and feeling valued. It was said that Club would follow up on this.

Season ticket sales breakdown

We had asked for a breakdown on sales figures of season tickets which have been published on the Club website, [here](#). The headline figure is that the Club have surpassed 16K in sales, 16,026 in fact ahead of the start of the season, which is very good. At a glance at the figures, they show healthy increases; 8,133 adults, 2,146 65+ senior citizens and 1,047 young people (17 -23) are all up. What is pleasing is the

amount of youngsters / children and families attending – it was certainly noticeable at the first game of the season against Wycombe. And 13,089 renewed from last season, which is almost all.

That said, it says that 7,192 took advantage of the Direct Debit scheme during the sale prices (Early Bird offer), an increase of 11% on last year, but it is not clear on what the total take up on the Early Bird offer was overall, that includes those that paid in the traditional way of paying all at once. Seeing it from another angle, how many of the 13k+ renewals from last season took advantage of the early bird offer?

In hindsight, it would've been better if we could see the figures compared with figures from last season based on percentages. Perhaps these can be available at the next meeting.

Also, and in addition, it would be good to see figures that show increases or decreases in numbers based on diversity with percentage comparisons from last year at a future meeting too.

Away matchday ticket sales and away capacity limitations

We noted that there will be a greater demand for way tickets this season. This was agreed but it was said that there will be many grounds that have significant increases in their away capacities compared with last season (in League Two).

It was asked about capacity reduction, with the prime example of Doncaster Rovers last season in mind, as there was a lot of disquiet about the fact that on previous occasions they had given much us a much bigger availability of tickets.

We had one unhappy member taking it upon himself to complain to City and the EFL about it. He referred to a regulation (35.7), which states that, "Each Club must make provision for at least 2,000 visiting supporters at every home match or such number as represents 10% of the Club's certified capacity, if less than 2,000"

It's clear that this rule is used especially in high-stakes matches to give unequal competitive parity to visiting teams. FSA advice was that the rule has been used in this way on many occasions although the host club can give any other reason to justify it, such as safety.

Any amendments to EFL regulations would need to be put forward by, and/or voted on by the League's member clubs themselves. Clubs are permitted to recommend a rule change at any time, and as such would ultimately be required to vote on any implementation. But it is unlikely any Club would do this.

RS's advice was that our member may have got a better response from the EFL if the tone of his letters would've been more diplomatic or been left to the club to discussions that already been ongoing.

On the plus side, the Club did it's best in inviting supporters to watch it on the big screen in the suites.

Ticket re-sales

It was picked up that the ticketing website has a section on re-sales, and it was said that this is something for the future as we are not yet selling out games. A lot of other Clubs further up the pyramid have this facility whereby tickets can be bought from supporters who are not able to go and then resold to fans that want to attend.

Supporter Liaison Officer(s) /Resources for Fan Engagement team

RS said that a new person will be starting from September as the club's full-time fan engagement lead, and that from there it is hoped that the Club can grow a volunteer staff team.

Improving our structured dialogue / Fan Engagement

MD raised the importance of the Fan Engagement Plan (FEP) and that there were some amendments to it from the Trust that were agreed at the previous meetings that were not yet on there. See [here](#). There was a concern from MD that area of fan engagement could be much better. RS reassured that he'd make sure he would look into it and ensure the amendments would be in place before we meet again and suggested that we propose all 4 dates for the year. It was down to the fact that the Club needed staff to cover this area but hopefully things will improve from September onwards.

Supporters Board

As part of Fan Engagement MD raised the fact that the based on the FSA's preferred model, Supporters Boards should represent the widest number of supporter to be fully representable and that Supporters Trust's should be key to that, however the SB [constitution / Terms of Reference](#) had changed some years ago whereby it has its own identity and that the chair of the SB and ST can meet outside its framework. RS's advice was to talk to the SB Chair, Tony Bates (TB).

Other meetings the Trust would like to attend as part of a consultation process

All these areas were are covered under the Director of Operations, Paula Watson (PW).

As environmentally sustainable football was one of those areas, RS reported that the Club had recently won silver in the EFL Green Club Scheme.

Since this meeting, the Trust have successfully been able to schedule meeting with PW and others on poor fan behaviour / restorative Justice.

Football Governance Bill

The Bill finally became law on the 21st of July. The Bill's legislation will be overseen by an independent Regulatory body, Chaired by David Kogan (OBE), who has had a

45-year career in media and sports, has extensive experience in negotiating TV rights deals for major football bodies like the Premier League and EFL.

The FSA had lobbied for this type of governance reform for many, many years. In 2021 it sat on the Fan-led Review of Football Governance and submitted 300+ pages of evidence and ensured 130+ of its' member-organisations were involved too.

There is a [short version](#) of what it covers and a [longer one](#) from the FSA.

RS felt it was yet to be fully clear what power/s the bill realistically has around the finances of the game and wealth distribution would be centered around bridging the gap between the Championship and the Premier League. He is hoping to meet David Kogan at some point within the next 6 months and was very impressed with his initial introduction at a recent EFL meeting in London.

EFL Sky Deal

Asked how much the Club will benefit from now being in League One this season, it was said to be over, an additional £400,000.

In May 2023 the 72 Clubs in the EFL agreed to a 5-year deal worth £935m that began last season. Both League One and Two Clubs have a minimum of 248 televised matches per season. See more detail [here](#).

We discussed the timetable of the schedule of the notice: Initially notice is given as soon as the fixtures come out until the 10th January 2026, and then notice is given from the beginning of the year with notice more televised matches increasing as we move towards the end of the season. RS believes they are much better than in previous TV deals. They are the games' biggest sponsor, he said.

[The FSA's recommendation for giving notice for rescheduling is 12 weeks, and Sky's is a minimum of 4 weeks.](#) In some instances, Sky is breaking their own commitment of notice. The reason the FSA's recommendation is a much longer period is to take into consideration travel and hotel bookings when fans plan for away trips.

Maintenance Costs

The Club said that maintenance costs are an on-going challenge. Although the stadium is modern, it is still over 20 years old, in its newest areas, and as a result needs on-going maintenance to the building.

Ownership

The Club said that the rental cost is more than £500K, though there is sponsorship income from Flamingo Land. We discussed a hypothetical idea of fans raising part of the funds needed for the Club to own the stadium outright. It was thought not to be viable.

Finances

The biggest cost incurred is repairs and maintenance costs of the ground. Close to £200,000 has been spent on reseating the Kop over the summer. It will be the Midland Road next year, if financially possible. Those seats are in a better condition as they are shielded from the sunlight, which is why they are last to do. Also work on upgrading the McCall and Hendrie suites is also planned.

The ground rental, still of approx. £500,000 is less impactful the higher up the league divisions we go, as it doesn't increase against divisional status.

Ownership

MD asked, since Stefan Rupp attended the recent fans forum in June, would he be able to attend the occasional Trust or Supporters Board meeting. It was said that he comes mainly for the weekend to attend the match and then flies back home but will ask when he's here next.

Stadium

Trust colleagues MD and MP attended a meeting with Naz Shah to discuss whether the local authority had a covenant on the stadium – an agreement within property deeds – in this case the stadium that dictate permitted uses and restrictions – to ensure its use is solely for football / watching sport. It was explained that we had discussed with Andy Walsh (AW), a full-time officer working on a temporary basis for the FSA at the time, specialising in stadiums being an asset of Community value and fan ownership, and advised us to investigate this route for the purpose of further protection of the land in addition to the ACV, and with the aim of receiving support. AW also sits on the board of AFC Wimbledon Supporters Trust. The experience we had with the local authority was like getting blood out of a stone but Naz Shah had responded very positively. MD said that we wanted to hang fire with publishing our story until we spoke to the Club about it.

RS said the Trust may do as it sees fit, but the club will not directly engage.