

**Bristol City Supporters Trust Meeting**  
**Bar BS3**  
**Thursday June 5<sup>th</sup> 2008**

**Board Members Present:**

S. Rogers, M. Hendy, M.Day, J. Darch, M. Adams, N Tompkins. Names of other attendees not recorded.

**New Stadium Fans Consultation**

The meeting due to take place on this today was postponed due to bereavement in the Sexstone family. A new date has been set for 18 June to meet with the architect and the project manager. The full research report was delivered to the club on 19 May and was published to fans on 4 June. A vote of thanks was offered to all those involved in the process, particularly Jon and Nick T.

**Loyalty Scheme**

The Trust has been working closely with the club on a new membership/loyalty scheme, due to be launched next season. Stuart, Miles and Jon feel that it has progressed to a point where there are now some tangible benefits for fans and will reward loyalty for attendance home and away. This was not the case when first presented with a concept from the club. The scheme is subject to final approval by the club board and the Trust is going to seek representation at that meeting. The main point of contention could be over the cost. The Trust is keen on the model “more for less” by maximising the number of supporters becoming members for a fee around £10. The concern is that the fee could rise to, or above, £20.

**Board Elections**

This process is virtually complete. Andrew Marshfield was welcomed to the meeting as a new board member and will be formally recognised as a board member at the AGM.

**Membership and Financial Management**

In April the Trust meeting decided to amend the membership process and start a new “membership year” in September. Some reconciliation and database work will need to happen before then. The day to day finances are up to date, with Stuart taking on invoicing and payments temporarily whilst Kevin gets the financial accounts ready for audit. Only when the audit has taken place can the Trust hold its AGM. Although a long process, an end date is in sight for this work and the auditor will need to be contacted.

**Player of the Year Event**

A brief review of the event was conducted, with members of the Supporters Club committee thanking the Trust for their part in organising it. Overall it was considered

a good event, although not as relaxed as the previous year when players were able to mingle with fans more freely. This year had a more corporate feel to it and was not the ideal format for either the Supporters Club or Trust. That said, the event is expected to make a good profit when the final figures have been assessed, with a 25% share of profit to each supporter group as a pre-agreed revenue share

Miles masterminded the player of the year event and has also suggested another event for consideration by the club. Scott Murray and Louis Carey are well thought of and long-serving players. Both had a short break in service and therefore, do not qualify for a testimonial. Not that either player needs the financial benefit of a testimonial, more that the fans should be given the opportunity to thank the players for their efforts over the last 10-11 years.

The suggestion is an event called “Never Mind the Testimonials” from which all the proceeds would go to charity. The format would be two teams captained by each player and a well known comedian and celebrity on each team. Dinner could be served in the Premier Suites, with guests joining the main event to start around 8pm. A paper outlining the event has gone to Steve Lansdown and Colin Sexstone.

### **Wembley**

The Trust played an active part in the run up to the play-off final. The initial push was to try and persuade Ticketmaster to not sell on a limited block by block basis, but to give fans a choice over where they sit. It soon became apparent that the deal struck between the club and Ticketmaster would not allow this, and therefore any attempt to establish a singing section was flawed. The Trust subsequently set up a ticket swap facility on [www.otib.co.uk](http://www.otib.co.uk) to enable fans to move seats by prior agreement with others.

With all tickets selling out in 20 minutes when on general sale, many true and loyal fans missed out. When a second allocation of 2,000 tickets became available the Trust spent a lot of time on the Sunday on the phone with the club trying to convince them not to send these tickets to Ticketmaster, but to sell direct at Ashton Gate. Good sense prevailed and direct sales were commenced to priority groups, with many fans queuing overnight. The Trust feels that lessons need to be learned once again about managing ticket allocations for major games. It was brought to the attention of the meeting that the Ticketmaster process of selling block by block from the halfway line may contravene Trading Standards and that if enough supporters complained, they would be able to investigate.

### **Website Community**

There are now 5-6 websites that regularly post content about Bristol City other than the official club site. Stuart raised the question whether the Trust should stop doing match reports and previews and concentrate on fans representation issues, and thus not replicate the work of other fans sites. Previews work well because they concentrate on the opposition, whereas, match reports either have to be bland accounts of the game as per the official site, or come across as overtly critical of certain players. The view was to drop match reports and ask whether Gavin is able to continue with previews, perhaps rotating with other volunteers. There has been some

good collaboration between fans sites lately and many were happy to publish the stadium survey results.

The advertising agreement for [www.otib.co.uk](http://www.otib.co.uk) being struck with a prominent online broker has hit a contractual issue beyond our and their control, so this won't be happening. This puts us back into the position of not generally being able to cover costs on a monthly basis. The Supporters Club are willing to contribute and the Trust needs to provide a figure for them to agree upon. A competition to drive sales via the shopping forum is also being devised, with Play.com vouchers being the incentive.

A healthy debate ensued about whether gambling advertising would be acceptable. The result was that some sport related gambling like Paddy Power or Bet365 would be OK as this is no different to advertising seen on the official club site. The Trust feels that [www.otib.co.uk](http://www.otib.co.uk) needs to reflect the wider community and be responsible for content being viewed by younger fans. With that in mind, some consideration needs to be given to some avatars and signatures that are becoming more sexually graphic.

The Trust internet forum has become quiet due largely to the Trust having evolved so rapidly that events come and go too quickly to enable drawn out debate on the forum.. In essence, we're just getting on with things as they arise. Board members use the "board only" forum to pool ideas and discuss confidential matters, but the wider forum is not currently used. We decided to simply retain the board forum.. One suggestion was to create an "ask the Trust" forum on [www.otib.co.uk](http://www.otib.co.uk)

### **Work with other Supporter Groups**

The Supporters Club regularly attend Trust meetings and this has helped lead to a more collaborative approach on events like the Player of the Year. Both groups worked well together on the Nick Randall tribute. Nick T suggested the Supporters Club take more control over communications by running their own website to deflect some unwarranted criticism. An appeal to members for the necessary skills might be one approach to take. There is some uncertainty around the use of the DEH for next season, which is expected to be resolved shortly.

Forza East End is growing and Trust members will, and are, lending support where it is helpful. Whilst some have individual preferences about the use of certain match day atmosphere improving techniques like megaphones, the Trust is broadly supportive of the fans that are actively doing something to contribute to the Bristol City on and off field experience.

### **Wedlock's Pub**

The Trust will re-approach the owner of the Wedlock's pub and establish if he is ready to sell. Much will depend on what is developed on the current ground site and the worsening property market. The Trust knows of interest from several investors, however, can't move this forward without a commitment from the current owner. The Wedlock's would still be ideally located for the new stadium and could even form a base for supporters groups. The original vision still holds true for a communal daytime café, outward facing to the park and a night time multi functional pub/restaurant and match day venue.

## **Under 16 Travel**

A very low registration rate at the end of last season made this not a viable proposition. However, given that we are in the Championship again this season, we have some history to reflect upon. The club didn't want to give reciprocal tickets for fear that the away following would sell out each week and therefore become an opportunity cost. A bit of analysis into this will likely find that this is not the case and the club should be approached again about offering reciprocal tickets. This should breathe new life into the travel service.

## **Supporters Direct Development Day**

Supporters Direct are running a regional development day on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Bristol. This is an ideal opportunity to catch up and learn from other Trusts and focus on key issues like membership management, board responsibilities and best practice on a range of issues. A strong representation is expected to attend from our Trust, given that it is on home territory. Names to be given to Stuart for registration purposes.

## **AOB**

The annual newsletter is due to be produced, with a key target date of the open day on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2008. Having newsletters available for open day last year meant that 1,500 – 1,800 were distributed before the start of the season.

## **Actions**

- AP – Contact club about being represented at the loyalty scheme decision-making meeting - SR
- AP – Get financials finalised for audit and set up with auditor – SR
- AP – Start preparing for new membership renewal approach in September - MA
- AP – Follow up on proposal with SL and CS for “Never mind the Testimonials”
- AP – Draft copy for online shopping forum competition - MH
- AP – Investigate new online advertising options and contact Moderators about use of avatars and signatures - JD
- AP – Contact people doing match previews and reports and communicate decision - JD
- AP – Draft letter to Wedlocks owner - MA
- AP – Analyse home and away attendances for Under 16 Travel - MA
- AP – Draw up schedule and running order for newsletter - MH
- AP – Register for Supporters Direct Development Day - SR

## **Future meetings**

- Wednesday 2 July (Bar BS3)
- Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> August (Bar BS3)
- Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September (Bar BS3)