



Premier League Structured Dialogue – Summary Notes (London, 21st July 2016)

Agenda:

1. Expert Working Group
2. Away Ticket Prices
3. Kick-off times
4. Safe Standing
5. Independent Football Ombudsman
6. Living Wage
7. PL teams in EFL Trophy

Club-specific fan groups:

- AFC Bournemouth - Cherries Trust - Tony Maycock (TM)
- Arsenal - Arsenal Supporters Trust - Tim Payton (TP)
- Burnley - Clarets Trust - Peter Pike (PP)
- Chelsea - Chelsea Supporters Trust - Tim Rolls (TR)
- Crystal Palace - Crystal Palace Supporters Trust - Sue Maisey (SM)
- Everton - Everton Supporters Trust 1878 - Dave Kelly (DK)
- Hull City - Hull City Supporters Trust - Geoff Bielby (GB)
- Leicester City - Foxes Trust - Sarah Hubbard (SH)
- Liverpool - Spirit of Shankly Supporters Trust - Jay McKenna (JMc)
- Manchester City - Manchester City Supporters Club - Allan Galley (AG)
- Manchester UT - Manchester United Supporters Trust - Duncan Drasdo (DD)
- Middlesbrough - Fly me to the Moon Fanzine - Rob Nicholls (RN)
- Southampton - The Ugly Inside fanzine - Nick Illingworth (NI)
- Sunderland - A Love Supreme Fanzine - Martyn McFadden (MM)
- Stoke City - Stoke City Supporter Council - Julia Zuk (JZ)
- Swansea City - Swans Trust - David Little (DL)
- Tottenham - Tottenham Hotspur Supporters' Trust - Martin Cloake (MC)
- Watford - 1881 Movement - Matt Turner (MT)
- West Bromwich Albion - West Bromwich Albion Supporters Club - John Homer (JH)
- West Ham United - Mark Sandell (MS) – Various

From the Premier League:

- Richard Scudamore (RS)
- Bill Bush (BB) - Premier League
- Tommy Guthrie (TG) - Premier League
- Nick Noble (NN) - Premier League
- Rachel Solich (RSo) - Premier League
- Jamie Herbert (JH) - Premier League

From the FSF and SD:

- Anwar Uddin (AU) - FSF
- David Rose (DR) - FSF
- James Mathie (JM) - Supporters Direct

- Kevin Miles (KM) - FSF
- Michael Brunskill (MB) - FSF

1. Expert Work Group

The PL confirmed they're committed to meeting with PL supporter groups twice a year and to continue dialogue with FSF and SD between meetings.

The Premier League confirmed they will be recruiting a new head of customer services in the coming months and in the meantime queries will be handled by Tommy Guthrie and Rachael Solich. Bill Bush also confirmed he is available to assist fans when needed.

The PL will finalise review of current club practises in terms of dialogue with fans and shared with the fan groups. JMc made the point that such dialogue must be meaningful and suggested some clubs have forums that suit the club rather than the fans.

MC encouraged the PL to look at the EFL rules in relation to this. BB acknowledged that dialogue between clubs and fans should not be a "one-way" communication.

JH underlined the need for "meaningful communication" and not "box-ticking".

The PL committed to working with a smaller "working party" on Structured Dialogue with regards to clubs and their supporter organisations.

2. Away Ticket Prices

KM thanked RS and recognises his role in clubs going beyond what they said they would initially commit to. KM went on to say that supporters still have concerns; the aim of £30 cap is to maximise away attendance but there are worries there'll be pressure on away allocations i.e. reductions.

RS confirmed same allocations are in place. Only Spurs have exemption because of ground reconfiguration. Overall capacity going down 7% and away down 7.5% so even that is minor.

DD suggested there may be ad hoc examples of clubs breaking rules. Can RS offer reassurances home clubs not allowed to resell seats they refused to give to away clubs?

NI asks for clarification on sale/return of away tickets saying Southampton don't always take the full allocation. MM said the same applies to SAFC.

TG – the rule was changed to make clubs less risk averse. Tickets are sold sequentially now (i.e. by blocks although may not be adjacent for safety/configuration reasons). Once numbers are agreed 50%+ of the last section applied for must be bought to avoid costs to the visiting club.

KM asked if equivalent accommodation rule still in place? RS says that the equivalency rule no longer a requirement due to £30 cap but it has been agreed away fans have to be pitch side or "at blocks of seats which are nearest general admission to pitch". This is because MUFC have a disabled area pitch side so slight exemption needed there.

GB stated that no concessionary tickets announced at Hull is a "massive concern" for kids/OAPs.

KM also cited Palace v WBA. Kids were £16 last season, now £20. Adults have dropped £32 to £30. *[Note – since this meeting took place Palace have confirmed that the £20 price was an admin error and have reverted to £16 pricing for kids and refunded qualifying WBA fans.]*

RS confirmed there is no rule as to what specifies concession.

There was a consensus amongst the supporter groups that fans will continue to monitor and put pressure on clubs that they believe don't offer fair concessions.

3. KO Times

TR stated that there were a number of occasions it wasn't adhered to and this causes severe disruption for supporters; It's time off work, travel expenses. Four out of five evening games currently are scheduled when it isn't possible to make it back on public transport. Out of 30 games end of last season (Feb/March/Apr/May) only at four could away fans get public transport back.

RS expressed disappointment that the perception is the PL don't think fans are taken into account. 64 of 194 pages of the TV contract is about match selection. (Agreed to circulate the wording). Aug/Sep games must be announced by 6 July then Oct/Nov is 28 July. The real complication is the second half of the season with FA Cup & Europa League. Hardly any way around that uncertainty. Other issue is that the PL do not have 38 weekends.

TR asked if the PL can you compel clubs to do more subsidised travel? RS says get into your clubs and tell them. TR asks about a rule change. RS says no and from where to where for subsidised travel? E.g. what works for London club doesn't work for Stoke or Sunderland.

JZ expressed that it can be very expensive for midweek away games, particularly from fans of northern clubs on lesser incomes.

JMc Suggested that fans need to meet with the broadcasters. The problem is beyond the actual costs as it's also the impact of time off work and use of annual leave.

RS confirmed that Friday televised games is a bit of a trade-off against Mondays.

JMc commented that it could be worse but that isn't a reason not to try and make things better.

MM asked why no Easter focus? (e.g. games on Good Friday and Bank Holiday Monday)

RS said this was because of broadcast issues – they can't broadcast two rounds of games over that period. Also, UEFA normally take those slots three of every four years. The PL try and keep contract the same for three-year period to match that.

4. Safe Standing

DD brought up Celtic and their new rail seating. DCMS are vague on whether rail seats comply with all-seater regs and clubs are therefore scared to trial as SGSA/DCMS say it doesn't comply. Can the PL on behalf of its members approach DCMS as to whether rail seats can comply with current regs? Not talking about imposition on clubs but to give them the choice.

RS will consider this.

TP said DCMS say that football authorities haven't asked. RS replied that clubs have never asked them to.

MT stated that clubs already allow fans to stand in seated areas. PP – Some fans have ceased going to away games because everyone stands. DD explained that's why Safe Standing areas are important – it provides choice.

There were many points made about the various merits of safe standing from many of the supporters in the room, including those that wish to sit down at games. This included the example of brilliant atmospheres in the Bundesliga and there was discussion around the sales of away tickets to better accommodate standing and sitting in away ends. There was some agreement that the latter was tricky as there cannot be an official acknowledgment of standing although it was encouraging that some clubs are attempting to resolve the issue.

- Note at this point conversation moved back to away tickets/subsidies following lunch. RS had now left the meeting, BB and others continued to represent the Premier League.

MT asked if there would be any further reductions on away tickets. Newcastle, Everton, WBA and Stoke did reciprocal deals last year.

TG said that Watford were thinking about it for the game at Burnley.

BB said that discussions with train companies are “improving”. Ticket discounts came in behind ticket price intervention as not everyone uses trains. MM said that 40% of SAFC fans going to Swansea last season lived within the M25 so ticket prices are the most effective as they wouldn’t benefit from club travel.

TG agreed that not all fans viewed chartered trains as most effective means of travel. Preferences vary from club-to-club and SLOs need to talk to their fans about what works.

5. Independent Football Ombudsman (IFO)

KM expressed concerns that the same IFO has been in post 14 years. Time for a review? His advisory panel isn’t diverse we’d like that reviewed and seek PL support for that.

BB acknowledged these as valid points and will consider a review of the terms of reference and will discuss this with the FA and EFL.

TG confirmed there has been a Terms of Reference and process change recently (leagues cut out of complaint process so it now goes directly to IFO from clubs). This was to get Alternative Resolution Dispute (ADR) status. PL had to step back as conflict of interest. He is now the body for complaint. If mediation required IFO can refer to the PL/EFL.

6. Living Wage

DK asked if the PL would commit to Living Wage campaign?

BB says they will support any club who wants to do it but not direct them. BB then highlights other campaigns that PL see as more PL club-specific such as modern slavery. There are examples in NW Africa of people traders trying to use club names to facilitate slavery.

DK asks about “ethical trading initiatives” and BB says PL do act like that, it’s the way they behave, but it isn’t written down as a statement or policy doc. DK says most big companies have them. BB says PL only has 120 employees and is a competition organiser. Contracts for PL workers are high end (technicians in fibre optics etc.) and they aren’t in a space with low paid workers (e.g. caterers). So they don’t campaign on Living Wage as it would be misleading.

7. PL teams in EFL Trophy

KM expressed concern that this is a step to undermine the pyramid and insert B Teams into the league system?

BB said there are absolutely no plans, intentions, desire, or will for this to be about anything other than the trophy. It's about providing competition to fill the youth gap. UEFA had blocked wider PL competition on the continent of teams in that age range and it's not even clear if PL clubs will take part in the EFL Trophy.

JM asked who is driving the idea?

BB confirmed that Greg Dyke was committed to idea and the big champions of the EFL Trophy idea are FA and academy heads and tentatively by some in EFL.

Meeting closes