



**FSF NEWS: Manchester United in relegation battle as national football fans' organisation rates club charters [EMBARGOED 00.01, Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2011]**

Too many football clubs pay only "lip service" to customer service, according to a comprehensive review of Premier League and Championship club charters by the Football Supporters' Federation (FSF). It is 12 years since the government-appointed Football Task Force Report proposed that all clubs should adopt a customer charter.

The FSF, which represents more than 180,000 fans across England and Wales, looked at every club charter in the top two divisions. Every club charter was rated 0-5 across a range of categories encompassing accessibility, timeliness, quality, clarity of complaints procedure, appeals process, and contacts for the relevant league and Independent Football Ombudsman.

Tottenham Hotspur topped the Premier League's club charter table scoring an impressive 31 out of a possible 35 with North London rivals Arsenal taking second spot with 23. Birmingham City and Blackburn Rovers completed the top four as both scored a respectable 22.

Everton finished rock bottom of the Premier League when it came to club charters with the Toffees failing to pick up even a single point. The Toffees' club charter is seemingly non-existent as an internet search for "Everton" and "club charter" only returns links to Liverpool's website.

The table will also make unusual reading for Manchester United fans as the club finished third from bottom with eight points. Fellow on-field title contenders Manchester City (13) and Chelsea (12) also performed poorly leaving a table with many Premier League heavyweights struggling at the wrong end.

Searching for "Fulham" and "club charter" shows that the Cottagers' club charter is available – although it is hidden in the Visitors Guide section of their site. This could be misleading as club charters apply to both home and away fans.

In the Championship disappointing seasons for mid-table Derby County and Ipswich Town are at odds with their excellent position in the club charter table. The Tractor Boys scored an impressive 32 points out of a possible 35 while the Rams finished on 31. The remaining play-off places were taken by Norwich City (29), Leeds United (26), Millwall (26), and Preston North End (25).

Club charter relegation beckons for Leicester City and Sheffield United as both scored a miserably. The Foxes managed 11 points while the Blades fared even worse with zero points ensuring they finished bottom of the Championship's club charter table. Middlesbrough and Crystal Palace battled it out to avoid the final relegation position with 14 points each.

The FSF's research found that many club charters were out of date and so generic as

to be almost meaningless - some clubs do not even include the contact names of key club personnel on their website. This is despite excellent guidance being available from the Football League on how to best construct a club charter.

However, it isn't just football clubs who publish charters, so too do England's three main football authorities – the Football Association (FA), Football League, and Premier League. They were scored out of 25 across five categories and the Football League topped the table with 23 points. The FA managed to score 20 while the Premier League scored a fairly miserable five – their last fans' charter reports were dated 2004/05.

**Amanda Jacks, spokesperson for the FSF, said:**

"Any other industry which had customers as loyal as football fans would be counting its lucky stars and doing everything possible to keep them happy. Sadly many clubs just pay lip service to their supporters - a truth reflected in the attitude to charters. It's quite obvious many documents had little thought put into them and were given very low priority by clubs.

"Many fans face long waits before clubs reply to their emails or complaints, even when club websites promise swift turnaround times. It is very, very rare that a complaint we assist with has a swift and satisfactory response.

"Complaints procedures are often not comprehensive, references to the Independent Football Ombudsman almost non-existent, and far too many clubs adopt a default 'we're right, you're wrong' approach. One club even stated that they always back their stewards regardless! For many clubs sorry seems to be the hardest word."

**Derek Fraser, The Independent Football Ombudsman (IFO), said:**

"The IFO welcomes the FSF's survey into club charters. The Ombudsman places great reliance on the charters in evaluating whether clubs have met their stated obligations to supporters. The FSF has identified a number of shortcomings and improvements and the IFO supports the wish to make the charters an even more effective way of clarifying and enhancing the relationship between clubs and their supporters."

**- ENDS -**

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- See below for full table of results from the Premier League, Championship, and football authorities.
- Clubs were scored from 1-5 on the above criteria. 5 = excellent, 4 = very good, 3 = good, 2 = fair, 1 = poor, 0 = no charter on site.

<b>Premier League</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Quality of Charter</b>	<b>Complaints Procedure</b>	<b>League Details?</b>	<b>IFO Details</b>	<b>Bans Process</b>	<b>Total</b>
Tottenham Hotspur	5	5	5	5	5	5	1	31
Arsenal	3	1	3	5	5	5	1	23
Birmingham City	4	5	5	4	1	1	2	22
Blackburn Rovers	5	5	4	5	1	1	1	22
Sunderland	5	5	3	3	1	1	1	19
West Bromwich Albion	5	5	3	3	1	1	1	19
West Ham United	5	5	3	3	1	1	1	19
Liverpool	5	5	4	1	1	1	1	18
Wolves	5	1	3	3	4	1	1	18
Aston Villa	5	1	3	5	1	1	1	17
Wigan Athletic	3	5	3	3	1	1	1	17
Newcastle United	5	1	3	4	1	1	1	16
Blackpool	5	1	2	4	1	1	1	15

Manchester City	2	1	3	4	1	1	1	13
Stoke City	5	1	2	2	1	1	1	13
Chelsea	1	1	3	3	2	1	1	12
Fulham	1	1	3	4	1	1	1	12
Bolton Wanderers	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Manchester United	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	8
Everton	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0

<b>Championship</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Quality of Charter</b>	<b>Complaints Procedure</b>	<b>League Details?</b>	<b>IFO Details</b>	<b>Bans Process</b>	<b>Total</b>
Ipswich Town	3	5	4	5	5	5	5	32
Derby County	5	5	5	5	5	5	1	31
Norwich City	5	5	4	4	5	1	5	29
Leeds United	5	5	5	4	1	1	5	26
Millwall	5	5	4	5	5	1	1	26
Preston	5	5	3	5	5	1	1	25

North End								
Reading	5	5	3	5	4	1	1	24
Scunthorpe United	5	1	4	4	5	1	1	21
Cardiff City	5	5	3	3	1	1	1	19
Doncaster Rovers	5	4	3	3	1	1	1	18
Hull City	5	4	3	3	1	1	1	18
Barnsley	5	2	3	4	1	1	1	17
Burnley	5	1	2	1	1	1	5	16
Nottingham Forest	5	1	3	4	1	1	1	16
Portsmouth	5	1	4	3	1	1	1	16
QPR	5	1	4	3	1	1	1	16
Swansea City	5	1	4	3	1	1	1	16
Bristol City	5	1	4	2	1	1	1	15
Coventry City	5	1	3	3	1	1	1	15
Watford	5	1	3	3	1	1	1	15
Crystal Palace	5	1	2	3	1	1	1	14

Middlesbrough	5	1	2	3	1	1	1	14
Leicester City	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	11
Sheffield United	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	0

<b>Authorities</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Quality of Charter</b>	<b>Complaints Procedure</b>	<b>IFO Details</b>	<b>Total</b>
The Football League	4	5	4	5	5	23
The Football Association	1	5	5	4	5	20
The Premier League	1	1	1	2	0	5

- The FSF is the national supporters' organisation for all football fans from England and Wales comprising more than 180,000 individual fans and members of local supporters' organisations from every club in the professional structure and beyond. For more info [www.fsf.org.uk/about-the-fsf.php](http://www.fsf.org.uk/about-the-fsf.php)
- Fans can join the FSF free of charge and it only takes a few minutes, simply visit: [www.fsf.org.uk/join](http://www.fsf.org.uk/join)

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