



18/02/2019 – 5:30pm

Carling Lounge

SAFC: Charlie Methven **CM**, Louise Wanless **LW**, Chris Waters **CW**, Nichola Linsley **NL**, James Wallace **JW**

Groups: Branch Liaison Council, Disabled Branch, Red & White Army, Senior Supporters Association, Sunderland Supporters Liaison Group

Present: Jane Hughes **JH** (RAWA), Ian Crow **IC** (RAWA), Chris Blyth **CB** (RAWA), Martyn McFadden **MM** (RAWA), Malcolm Fail **MF** (BLC), Cath Reid **CR** (BLC), Jim Gilling **JG** (BLC), Clive Dent **CD** (BLC), Paul Andrew **PA** (SLG), Steve Dean **SD** (SLG), Kevin Charlton **KC** (SLG), Malcolm Bramley **MB** (Senior Supporters)

Apologies: Dave Rose **DR**, Andrew Hird

Minutes

1. Apologies and review of action points from previous meeting.

AP1 -LW will investigate including half time scores on the scoreboard

Completed. There was a positive response to this from the table

AP2 - CM is to work with FSF on a fans' choice agenda briefing memo with The FSF for presentation to the Board.

Work is still ongoing with the fans' choice project, DR to liaise with SAFC.

AP3 – DR to provide a paper on how other Clubs deal with fans arrested for pitch incursions

Work is still ongoing between FSF and the Club, DR to liaise with SAFC.

AP4 – Video. Produced for Roker End launch in December

Work has been completed.

2. Club Finance and Governance

- a. **Review of comments made by Stewart Donald on Roker Report podcast with regards re-mortgaging stadium to enable development;**



CM: clarified it would be a mortgage not remortgage, as there is currently no mortgage against the Stadium of Light. He continued that it was an £80 million asset that was not being used, but the security of stadium would not be at risk. The idea has not really gone anywhere but supporters will be kept up to date.

b. Plans for future income generation.

PA: asked if the financial plan for generating income was looking at month by month or year on year numbers

CM: said we inherited a cost base of £46 million with a projected £15 million income. This year, there will be a £10-15 million loss, with a projected £8 million loss year on year. He aims to reduce this to a £1-2 million reasonable annual loss. Due to the excellent work of Tony Davison, the Club now has an £18 million projected income this year. The Club administration are working hard across the community to bring non-football events to the stadium and working harder and smarter on commercial sales. The loss of commercial expertise, through redundancies, had a significant impact on the commercial side, it is all being built from ground zero. CW is working on building the fan base with his team alongside the digital team.

The Club administration is working with community partners, such as Durham FA, for a mutual benefit as well as looking to build national and international fan bases.

The hospitality business had fallen off in recent years. This is a huge source of revenue for the Club. Covers have increased by approximately 500 per match this season.

MB: pointed out that the air Show brings a million people to Sunderland, yet there is no significant SAFC presence at the event. It takes place in the 2 weeks before the season starts and can be an opportunity to promote the Club, sell merchandise, increase Branch & RAWA membership.

JG: agreed a presence at the Air Show would be a good idea.

A discussion took place on the pros and cons of a presence at the Durham Miners' Gala

SD: offered to look at possibility of a presence at Durham Miners' Gala

AP 2: Louise Wanless to put the Sunderland Air Show on her agenda for discussion with the Council.

3. Matchday Experience

a. Issues surrounding PA System (Roker End complaints);

CM: said biggest issue was when volume gets turned down. There is still work to be done on the mechanics but mostly it is a manual control. Some short-term patches have been made to the system. It is part of a rolling capex list. The previous regime was aware of ongoing issues that were developing over an 8-year period, but these were not addressed. CM & Stuart Donald are working steadily through the capex without affecting cash flow.

CW: said he has received quotes on a replacement system which will be presented to the board in the summer

CB: asked if the outside speakers could be used to help promote the atmosphere in the ground

b. Allowing supporters choice – updates on smoking areas;

CM: said he was awaiting a report from DR on how it works in other clubs

c. Updates from Atmosphere sub group (Roker End Project);

CB: said the funding target almost reached and approximately 30 designs had been submitted for flags and the concourse area

CW: had discussed with a colleague the possibility of moving the Archibald Leitch Latticework, concluding there would be a lot of work to be done on it if it was to be moved

Wearside By Side



CB: suggested it could be recreated on the former Betdaq advertising spaces in the Roker End
CM & MM both commented that the current flags needed to be checked to see if they remained viable.
CW offered his time if the flags needed to be brought to the ground to be checked.
The SAFC administration offered the digital design team to help with creating flags.
CB: is trying to contact someone about creating a song sheet to revive some of the old songs.
CM: said there was no shame in being overt in trying to create an atmosphere and believes a dedicated group of supporters can begin to affect change.
MM: suggested creating a single theme for each game: bring your scarf, sing this song
MB: asked if the players create the atmosphere by their actions on the pitch or does the atmosphere inspire the players to perform. He also suggested that the build-up of the atmosphere should begin before the game starts.
PA: If it could be made easier to change your seat if you are moving into a singing area.
Group discussion followed about the pros and cons of the team running to the Roker end and use it as the home end.
CM: said the administration intends to put a 'Roker End' on the Roker end, but had no timescale yet.

d. Supporters adding to the matchday experience (branches bringing their own flags).

CR: has asked Branches who are willing to bring in their flags to home games as well as away ones.

4. Location of away supporters

- a. **Updates from SAFC as to when it may be possible to re-locate away supporters;**
- b. **Methods of engagement and consultation with supporters about potential re-location of away supporters;**

CM: said there will be no change for next year, but away fans will be moved in preparation for a return to the premier league. He recognised it will impact on season tickets holders and require structural change within the Stadium. A request has been made for a full financial implication of all options with a consultation process to begin in the summer, looking for an agreed solution by the beginning of the 2019-20 season.

5. • Stadium Identity

- a. **Artwork project updates;**

CB: said some design that had been submitted were unsuitable for flags but suitable for artwork. Paul Nelson is looking at art projects

- b. **Opportunities for additional stadium identity projects.**

A discussion took place on ideas that were coming in from the atmosphere group as well as groups present: having a Welcome to Sunderland sign (as in the Fulwell End), copies of Newspaper articles reflecting memorable games, an Old turnstile from Roker park moving to a more accessible area.

6. • Sub groups

- a. **Update on existing sub-groups;**

CW: said the Marketing sub-group would be having another meeting within the next two weeks. NL would be contacting all U.K. Branches looking to support existing branches and create new ones. He acknowledged Cath Reid had been a great help.



CR: said the Norfolk Branch has over 100 members already after setting up a week ago. Lancaster has been in touch about travelling, as they have enough to hire a bus. Leicester have been in touch about forming a new branch. Further details will be given at the forthcoming BLC meeting.

JG: was supportive of the branch visits by CM and / or Stuart Donald arranged over the next few months.

b. Potential for ticketing sub-group to be established.

PA: said we are all after consultation and outcomes from sub-group work and asked if a meeting with the ticket office would be useful to give and receive valuable feedback.

CR: said problems with tickets were greatly reduced and the ticket office should be congratulated on their efforts, suggesting a one-off meeting would be an answer

JG: said, generally, the BLC are happy with ticketing whilst still having some minor issues, for example problems relating to the timescales of ticket sales

LW: explained that the ticket office would not put tickets on sale until in physical possession of them, which sometimes leads to incredibly quick announcement and on sale schedule.

7. A.O.B

JG: asked if the feedback about the Netflix documentary had been positive, as recent reports had suggested players were unhappy about it.

LW: said it had been well received but that some players were happier to be in front of the camera than others. All had been asked about, and agreed to, the level of their involvement.

LW shared details of an email received from an Argentinian football fan who had very much enjoyed watching 'Sunderland until Death'!!

Next meeting: April 2019.