



Fan Forum Agenda

5.30pm-7.30pm 2nd November 2023

Boardroom, Highbury House & Online via Teams

Members:

Club representatives

Khali Parsons – Fan Services Lead (Chair)

Mark Brindle – Supporter Liaison Officer

Amy Trynka – Ticketing & Venue Strategy Lead

Samir Singh – Community Inclusion Manager

Aaron Heskins – Disability Access Manager

Alistair Cripps – Senior Communications Manager

Supporter representatives

16-21 Rep	Liam Patel (LP)
ADSA	Anne Hyde (AH)
AISA	Richard Smith (RS)
AST	Akhil Vyas (AV)
Ethnic Minorities	Draco Wang (DW)
Gold	Darren Epstein (DE)
LGBT	Angus Moorat (AM)
Over 60's	Richard Stubbs (RS)
Red	Ben Buckstone (BB)
REDaction	Raymond Herlihy (RH)
Silver	Joshua Webley (JW)
Supporters Clubs Domestic	Dave Harrold (Arsenal Scotland) (DH)
Women	Linda Duffy (LD)

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. 'Retired' Fan Reps, and recruitment of new members
3. Ticketing Update (including Fan Rep Questions)
4. Samir Singh – Community Inclusion Manager (Presentation)
5. Premier League Fans Fund
6. EDI – Chinese Gooners and East Asian Supporters
7. Fan Rep Questions
8. AOB

Minutes

1) Welcome

- Khali Parsons (KP) introduced Amy Trynka (AT), Tom McCann (TM), Mark Brindle (MB), the Club's new Disability Access Manager Aaran Heskins (AH), Alistair Cripps, Senior Communications Manager (AC), and Samir Singh, Inclusion Manager, Arsenal Community (SS).
- The forum acknowledged the sad passing of Geoff Beddingfield and Steve Powell, founding members of ASA. KP and Richard Smith (RS) paid their tributes.

2) 'Retired' Fan Reps, and recruitment of new members

- Khali Parsons (KP) confirmed that three Fans Forum representatives reached the end of their tenure. Mark Brindle (MB) announced three vacancies to represent the following groups - Overseas Supporters, Family Enclosure and Club Level. MB asked the forum for their input on the election process, the group will reflect and decide upon the best way forward.

3) Ticketing Update

- Amy Trynka (AT) updated the forum on the new Cup Scheme. Comms to Gold Members to be sent in the next couple of weeks. New Cup Scheme gives ST holders the opportunity to be automatically charged for any future home Cup games, including UCL knock out and FA Cup fixtures. Guide on how to sign up to the Cup Scheme will be sent out in the email comms to Gold Members. Payment card registered will be automatically charged, Gold Members cannot opt into the Cup Scheme and then opt out at a later date. ST holders will also be given the opportunity to purchase their seat match-by-match in a priority window before tickets are balloted/go on sale to Members. TX and TT will be available to Gold Members and ST holders will be charged the ST price of their seat for each game, not the match-by-match member's price. Relevant for next season, Carabao Cup fixture are not included in the Cup Scheme. Club Level Members do not need to sign up, these matches will be automatically included in the cost of their ST. Supporters required to relocate for UEFA seat moves will not be eligible to sign up for the Cup Scheme but will be able to buy their either their own seat or will be offered another seat. Booking fees will not be charged.

- **Raymond Herlihy (RH)** asked if supporters required to relocate for UEFA seat moves have been made aware. AT confirmed that these supporters have been made aware. **Anne Hyde (AH)** asked if Disability Access ST holders will be able to enroll into the Cup Scheme. AT confirmed that DA ST Holders will be able to sign up for the Cup Scheme.
- **Richard Stubbs (RS)** questioned whether the cost of ST has increased given the introduction of the new Cup Scheme. AT confirmed there has been a base rise of 4% (Upper Tier) and 6% (Lower Tier) in the cost of STs which was communicated at the start of the season, but that the composition of a Gold ST has changed from 26 to 22 matches. AT confirmed that the categorisation of UCL fixtures differs to UEL fixtures which does impact the overall cost when moving from a UCL to a UEL season . AT clarified once again that ST Holders will pay the ST holder price of their seat for cup games, which is less than the usual match-by-match member's price.
- **Richard Smith (RS)** asked why supporters impacted by UEFA seat moves cannot enroll into the Cup Scheme. AT explained that the Cup Scheme can only be applied to a ST holder's usual seat and that for the knockout stage of the UCL, a supporter affected by UEFA seat moves would be unlikely to be sat in their usual seat. AT also pointed out that this gives supporters the choice and flexibility to decide whether they want to purchase the seat they are being moved to, rather than being automatically charged.
- AT confirmed that there are currently 1,119 Young Adult ST holders who receive a 25% discount on their ST along with 986 ST holders below the age of 19 who enjoy a 57%-66% discount depending on whether they are a Junior Gunner or Canon Member. ST holders aged 65 and over receive a 57% discount when sitting in the F/E. AT stated that in order to request a move to the F/E, seniors should notify the Club at the end of the season in May. Not currently planning to offer senior discount outside of the F/E. Belief is that the current policy has the biggest impact to supporters whilst being financially sustainable for the Club.
- AT confirmed that the Club continues to closely monitor the ballot data and assured the forum that the number of supporters that have entered every ballot and not been successful once this season is extremely low. The Club is reviewing policy regarding Silver Members to enter the Red ballot. 57% success rate in Family Enclosure ballot, Red and JG ballot is approx. 20%. AT confirmed that the Clock End will continued to be

balloted to Silver Members and there are no plans to change this. AT stated that the Club are working with ticketing partners to enable supporters to choose their price range when entering the ballot. Ticketing roadmap includes plans for an away Ticket Transfer facility and increased sanctions and checks at away matches, along with priority access to TX for members who have been unsuccessful in the ballot. AT stated there is currently no intention to share the number of members within each Away Credits bracket but this is being kept under review.

- **Richard Stubbs (RS)** questioned the rationale behind senior citizens needing to move to the Family Enclosure to receive a discount on their ST. AT stated that the Club has been clear on its strategy regarding senior discounts – we have a duty to be financially responsible. The extensive data the Club has analyzed does not suggest that offering a stadium-wide discount for seniors will significantly affect their ability to attend matches as much as a concession for younger supporters hence the Club's decision to introduce a Young Adult (25%) discount from the 22/23 season which was extended to U25s in 23/24.
- **Richard Stubbs (RS)** read out an email received from a longstanding supporter who is upset at being regularly unsuccessful in the ballot. AT stated that off the back of unprecedented demand for tickets last season, the Club feels that balloting is a far better system that does not require supporters to queue for tickets which was essentially a ballot based on the time a supporter entered the queue. AT noted that the Club understands supporters' frustrations, however, the data shows that only a small % of people who have entered every ballot have not been successful once so far this season. AT explained that the Club requires a full data set across the entirety of the season before a decision can be made on the approach with ballots moving forward.
- **Raymond Herlihy (RH)** questioned the % of supporters who have entered every ballot and been unsuccessful. AT stated that the Club are not in a position to share these numbers at the current time but notes the request for transparency.
- **Linda Duffy (LD)** raised the point that families have been broken up by having to move to the F/E to receive a discount on their ST. LD asked what the rationale is behind only offering a concession discount in certain areas of the stadium? AT acknowledged supporters' frustrations and committed to having discussions internally which will be brought to the forum at a later date.

- **Liam Patel (LP) acknowledged that whilst the majority of junior ST holders are situated in the F/E, what discount is available to juniors aged 16 and under outside of the F/E? AT clarified that currently there are no JG concessions available outside of the F/E to supporters aged 16 and under. The rationale behind this is that often parents/guardians will be paying for the ST for those aged 16 and under, whereas ST holders aged 17 – 24 are more financially responsible for themselves and therefore this is where the Club’s current policy has the most impact.**
- **Richard Stubbs (RS) noted his concern regarding the language used to refer to ‘older’ fans considering their loyalty. RS made the point that ‘older’ fans who have spent their hard-earned cash with Arsenal now have a sense that they are a ‘problem’ and that senior concessions must be limited. AT clarified that the Club in no way sees ‘older’ fans as a problem and greatly value their longstanding support of the Club across many generations. AT made the point that as custodians of the Club, we have a responsibility to make sure that we are driving revenue to ensure success on the pitch. The impact on revenue would be a seven-figure sum by offering stadium wide discounts for senior concessions citizens. AT also noted that the Club has invested in extensive research into the demographic of our ST holders and that the data suggests those aged U25 would benefit more from the financial support hence the clubs decision to introduce more generous concessions for Young Adults. The Club offers the option to supporters aged 65 and over to move to the F/E to receive a 57% discount. AT concluded by acknowledging that this is an emotive topic and we are not insensitive to that.**

Visit Rwanda

Richard Stubbs (RS) asked that given Rwanda’s Human Rights history, and their close involvement with the British Government’s hoped for migration policy - which to date has been considered illegal - why are The Arsenal continuing with them as sponsorship partners?

Alistair Cripps (AC) updated the forum on the Club’s partnership with Visit Rwanda:

- **All our potential partners are subject to extensive analysis and research with external consultants before we conclude the deal. This is to ensure they meet the highest standards of governance and are the right fit for our club, our values, and our objectives.**

- **The goal of our partnership with Visit Rwanda is to support the country's drive to develop their economy, and in particular the tourism industry. Since our partnership began in 2018, we have worked together to tell the story of Rwanda's culture and history, as well as raising awareness of the country as a luxury holiday destination.**
- **Our partnership is making a difference. The partnership has contributed to an increase in tourism revenues in Rwanda, with \$455M recorded in 2022 compared to US\$164M in 2021, representing a 177% increase. Research also tells us that prior to the partnership, 3 in 4 Arsenal supporters were unaware Rwanda was a tourism destination. Now, more than half of our supporters consider the partnership to have increased their likelihood to holiday to Rwanda.**
- **Richard Stubbs (RS) responded by saying he believed this to be a corporate response from the Club, a classic case of sportswashing. RS feels the relationship with Visit Rwanda does not representative the values of Arsenal. AC clarified that the Club has no affiliation to government policy.**
- **Carl Fearn (CF) felt it was important to note that the Visit Rwanda agreement was in place prior to the British's Government's policy announcement. Should be clearer on messaging around tourism as opposed to other policies of Rwanda. AC agreed that the focus of the Visit Rwanda policy is on growing the tourism industry in Rwanda.**

4) Samir Singh – Community Inclusion Manager (Presentation)

- **Samir Singh (SS) presented to the forum on Arsenal in the Community and the Fans Fund.**
- **Mission Aims – Create a sense of belonging and help communities and individuals Thrive. Operate in three London boroughs (mostly Islington).**
- **33 full time staff (including teachers, health workers, employment officers and youth workers), 60 casual (many graduated as participants)**
- **Themes of work - Education & Employment, Social Inclusion, Sport Health & Wellbeing, The Arsenal Hub**
- **Currently working on 30+ projects, examples include Arsenal Primary Stars, Arsenal Double Club, Arsenal Kicks, Arsenal Positive Futures, Adult Walking Football (Male & Female) and Amputee Football**
- **Community partners include Islington Council, Hackney Council, Camden Council, Kick It Out and Show Racism The Red Card amongst others.**

- 14,000 unique attendees (2022), 4,000 participants engaged weekly (2022), 1,000 plus participants per week Arsenal Hub, 7,000 sessions delivered per year.
- Akhil Vyas (AY) praised the Community team on their initiatives and projects, making reference to the recognition they have received in the national media.
- Carl Fearn (CF) questioned that before lockdown, Islington foodbank used to arrange collections in conjunction with the Club, when will the next one be? Mark Brindle (MB) confirmed that in conjunction with the Community fund, the foodbank will be relaunched from Dec 2 against Wolves on podium level, a permanent place to bring food. This will take effect for every weekend match and potentially weekday matches in the future. List of items required will be sent to Fans Forum reps.
- Darren Epstein (DE) asked whether there will there be an Arsenal Foundation ball scheduled for this season? Samir Singh (SS) confirmed this is something the Club are looking into as we want to make this a regular fixture again. Watch this space.
- Darren Epstein (DE) asked whether the Club will look to arrange a player's reunion to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the 1994 European Cup Winner's Cup win in Copenhagen anniversary? Samir Singh (SS) acknowledged this would tie in nicely with arranging a Foundation ball.
- Richard Stubbs (RS) asked if the Club could better publicise these events, such as foodbank collections? Khali Parsons (KP) made clear that the Club wants to ensure it can cope with the expected volumes of donations and will continue gauge how this develops after the first couple of collections. The Club is looking carefully at comms plans, including the list of items that are needed. MB to update on this in the coming weeks.

5) Premier League Fans Fund

- Khali Parsons (KP) updated the forum on the Premier League Fans Fund. She shared details of the intuitive, themes, and opportunities, and invited members of the forum to feedback with ideas.

6) EDI – Chinese Gooners and East Asian Supporters

Khali Parsons announced to the forum that Draco Wang (Ethnic Minorities supporter representative) was unable to join the meeting at short notice.

- **Khali Parsons (KP) - Draco has been in touch to highlight the perception amongst some in the fanbase that east Asian supporters are not genuine fans or are 'tourists' due to their heritage. KP emphasised the need for a wider conversation about ways in which we can promote our fan groups who are passionate, long-standing supporters. Discussion to be had regarding east Asian fans and their experience at home and away games and how we can address this, alongside the Club's EDI manager.**
- **Darren Epstein (DE) made the point that those that have an extensive online presence should call out this behaviour on social media. In no way is this behaviour towards ethnic minority fans acceptable.**
- **Samir Singh (SS) – Premier League Fans Fund has been introduced to showcase our fan groups and this may be a good use of our resources.**

7) Fan Rep Questions

Liam Patel – 16-21 Year Old Rep

- Q) LP – Will the club consider removing the 10% student discount exemption on new kits, seeing as the 10% discount for members is applied to new kits bought through the Club?**
- A) KP – We have turned on the student discount for Adidas products and will review accordingly.**
- Q) LP – Can the club clarify why they not stock the Kids 15-16 size kit, however, it is available to purchase through Adidas?**
- A) KP – We are ranging size 15-16 moving forward and it will be available from 24/25 season onward.**

Richard Stubbs – Over 60's

- Q) RS - The Advisory Board - what is their mandate? How different is it to The Fans Forum? Why does that group demand non-disclosure agreements with its members?**

A) KP – The mandate is set out in the Terms of Reference, and the Advisory Board was created to engage and consult on key strategic issues, whereas the Fan Forum focuses on operational. As such the NDAs are in place to ensure confidentiality and allow for the Club to be able to speak freely on matters that they would otherwise be unable to do so. The Fan Engagement Standard specifically states that:

‘Confidentiality - The proceedings of the FAB and information it is privy to are to be subject to an NDA/confidentiality agreement within the FAB Term of Reference or in a separate agreement’

Q) RS – Whats the difference between strategic and operational?

A) KP to send terms of reference to Fans Forum reps.

Q) RS - Given Societal changes (pension changes etc), should not the Fans Forum rep be at least 66+, rather than 60+ ?

A) KP – This is a matter for the Fans Forum reps to decide. Vote taken on whether the fans rep should change to 65 plus – even split, no real preference. KP to pick up with Fans Forum at next meeting.

Anne Hyde – ADSA

Q) Can you add that supporters are finding that they cannot get through or they get cut off when phoning. What can be done to improve the phone system?

Several disabled supporters have complained that they have been hanging on for up to 1 hour.

A) KP - Graph shared of call volumes over the last 6 months to demonstrate the peaks in incoming contact, and the current wait times which have settled to a reasonable and manageable level, impacted by having less sales. KP acknowledged that we do have huge spikes but levels are becoming more manageable, testament to our Fan Services team. KP reassured the Fans Forum that we have new tech coming that will enable fans to get an answer to their queries much quicker.

Q) AH – Why would supporters be cut off?

KP – If the call queue is full, the caller hears a message advising as such before th call is cut off.

Raymond Herlihy – RedAction

Q) RH – Junior Gunners events at the stadium or other locations were very popular with this group of members - These stopped during COVID, but have not restarted since : Are there any plans to restart these?

A) KP - The team run monthly campaigns and competitions for our JGs. These are open to all our junior supporters whether they live in London, elsewhere in the UK or overseas. Over the past couple of seasons, we have increased the prizes on offer and opened up participation to a wider geographic reach through newsletters and by using video technology. This means in addition to the small number of high impact events we arrange that touch a few hundred members; we have increased our digital engagement to reach thousands.

Since Covid we have run the following events, some several times:

- **Halloween Trail**
- **Play on Pitch**
- **Ball Squad Trials**
- **WTOW stadium play day**
- **World Cup screening and party**
- **Skills School with Kim Little (live streaming)**
- **Competitions offering Juniors the opportunity to meet players**

It's worth noting that the single video Skills School session had more juniors watching it live than the number of juniors attending all last season's events combined.

We welcome the feedback from the forum and will ensure we run further events this season and continue to offer value for the £15-£20 membership fee through our monthly engagement programme.

Q) RH - Further discussions on service levels at the bars at half time - any improvement plans pending (pre pouring etc)?

A) Tom McCann (TM) - Project underway on beer supply, part of a broader plan to improve our overall catering offering.

Akhil Vyas – AST

Q) AV – Update on safe standing?

A) KP – We are working through the analysis of viable options and this will go to AAB for discussion in due course.

Richard Smith – AISA

Q) RS – Update on connectivity/Wi-Fi improvements in the stadium?

A) Tom McCann (TM) – Focus is on improving 4G/5G Wi-Fi connectivity which should be in place at the start of next season. Updates to DAS (distributed antenna system) should address this.

Q) RS – Update on panels around the stadium?

A) KP - We are moving forward with the replacement of these. KP will update at next meeting. Tom McCann (TM) – Currently sat with marketing and brand team.

8) AOB

- **KP signed off to thank everyone for their time and committed to follow up with any information promised. The Club will catch up with Fans Forum reps separately ahead of the next forum.**