



DISABLED SUPPORTERS ADVISORY BOARD

2017/18 Meeting 3, Tuesday 3 April 2018, London Stadium, 6pm-8pm

Key personnel

- Karren Brady, Vice-Chairman West Ham United
- Tara Warren, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications, West Ham United
- Julie Pidgeon, Disability Access Officer, West Ham United
- Jake Heath, Supporter Services Manager, West Ham United
- Nicola Keye, Head of Ticketing, West Ham United
- Joe Lyons, CEO, West Ham United Foundation
- James Datson, Matchday commentator for blind and partially-sighted supporters
- Andy Sheldon, WHU Dedicated Football Officer, Metropolitan Police
- Tracy Gunn, Faith and Communities Officer, Metropolitan Police

DSAB Attendees

- Cathy Bayford
- Trevor Bright
- Neal Crowley
- Gill Fowler
- David Puckett
- Helena Foreman
- Pauline Tanner
- Richard Pullen
- Bradley Donovan
- David Griffith

Apologies

- Ben Illingworth, Head of Matchday Operations, West Ham United
- Graham Harris, Deputy Safety Officer, London Stadium 185
- Jeremy Gibson, DSAB member
- Tracy Higgins, DSAB member
- Robbie Cahill, DSAB member
- Joe Seigel, DSAB member

Agenda

- Premier League Equality Standard update
- Updates on actions
- Questions submitted by DSAB members
- DSAB for the 2018/19 season
- Any Other Business

INTRODUCTION

Karren Brady (KB) began by welcoming members for coming and thanking everyone for attending. KB confirmed that the meeting had been called in response to Burnley match and issues arising affecting accessibility supporters. KB said a number of actions have been taken and were put in place at Southampton match.

PREMIER LEAGUE EQUALITY STANDARD UPDATE

KB revealed that West Ham United had successfully achieved the Premier League Equality Intermediate Standard and that Club representatives would be attending the Gold Standard briefing at the Premier League in April. KB said the key focus of the Equality group is to understand how it can work with and benefit the DSAB

Joe Lyons (JL) said that achieving Intermediate Standard represented a success after 12-18 months working towards it as a Club. JL said this achievement was all due to the Club's top-down approach and the Board embracing this process and giving it momentum. JL said the Club will be meeting a Premier League advisory team on 25 April, where the Club will find out more detail about what Gold Standard looks like, and that the depth of work the Club will do will come out of that meeting. JL said the Club wants to understand what achieving Intermediate and Gold Standard would mean to groups like the DSAB. JL said that, when the Club understands what new framework is, information will be sent to the DSAB with a view to finding out new ways in which the Club and DSAB will work. JL said three groups will be part of working towards Gold Standard – Strategic/External/Advisory groups. JL said the Club would welcome a DSAB member to sit on Advisory Group, who will examine the Club's 18-month Action Plan. Nicola Keye (NK) has already gone through the same process at another club (Aston Villa) and likened the process to being subject to an Ofsted report.

UPDATES ON ACTIONS

Additional audio headset collection points added – JH updates that additional audio headset collection points have been put in place at London Stadium.

Signage on segregation gates – JH updates that segregation gates now have signage up reminding fans why gates are in place and information of how accessibility supporters can access the Shuttle Bus and Car Park. Cathy Bayford (CB) asked for signs to be installed throughout stadium letting accessibility supporters know what will happen after the game as this information would be helpful.

Signage inside toilets – JH updates that new signage has been put up in Accessibility toilets asking fans to close the door behind them after use, to prevent misuse of toilets and ensure the safety and comfort of fans who require access to those facilities.

Accessibility pass/Westfield access trial – JH updates that Accessibility passes have been issued enabling accessibility fans to access Westfield through a gate near Jamie Oliver's Italian. Helena Foreman (HF) said she had no trouble accessing Westfield to get back to her car in P2 after the Southampton match, but that one issue arose getting through the barrier where fans were packed closely together 'like sardines'. JH said 24 fans have trialed the Accessibility passes at the last three home matches. DSAB members were shown images of the passes given to stewards, enabling them to immediately recognise them when accessibility supporters approached access points. Julie

Pidgeon (JP) said Accessibility passes could be used by carers accompanying accessibility supporters, but stressed that the scheme was currently being trialled. CB said half-and-half scarves are used by some clubs as an alternative to passes to enable stewards to identify Accessibility supporters. JH said the Accessibility Pass scheme has not yet been publicised, as the scheme is currently only a trial. JH said the scheme will be reviewed in a meeting with Westfield and it is hopeful that the trial will continue until the end of the season. JH said the indications are there that the scheme is going well.

Dedicated route for shuttle bus and car park users – JH said a dedicated route for Shuttle Bus and Car Park users is in place from the Segregation Gates down to Shuttle Bus and Car Park.

Distribution of DSAB leaflet – JH said the DSAB information leaflet had been distributed on Shuttle Buses at the Burnley and Southampton matches and will continue to be distributed at the four remaining home games this season.

‘Trip-Advisor’ guide for away days – JH said that Megan Clarkson from the supporter services team is creating ‘Trip Advisor’ style guide for away days to provide detailed information for accessibility supporters attending away matches.

Accessibility FAQ page on website – JH updated that an Accessibility FAQ page has been created on whufc.com. JH said the Club would continue to develop this page with feedback received through the DSAB email address.

Accessibility/DSAB site menu improved – JH updated that the Accessibility/DSAB site menu had been improved to make it easier for users to navigate the official website.

Record of DSAB successes – JH said a record of [DSAB successes](#) has been published and will continue to be updated on the official website.

Soccer Sight audio headsets – David Griffith (DG) led a discussion on Soccer Sight audio headsets and suggested fans are given their own set to take home and bring to each match they attend. It was alternatively suggested that fans could use their own headphones and smartphones to access the live Soccer Sight commentary. Matchday commentator James Datson (JD) said the potential issue was that Apps providing audio commentary via smartphones are normally delayed, whereas commentary needs to be live as supporters are inside the stadium and watching the match. JD added that the current standard of Wi-fi inside London Stadium means using Apps/smartphones would also be unreliable and may lead to delays in supporters listening to commentary. JD also made the point that supporters maintaining their own headsets may face maintenance and/or battery charging issues. JD says fans would ideally have their own headsets, as it removes anxiety that no sets may be available on arrival at London Stadium, but that they must be maintained properly. With growing numbers of users, JD says the headset issue is one which needs to be looked into. JP says the Club currently has 50 headset users at every match, that West Ham United are one of the leading Premier League clubs in this area and the number is only likely to continue growing to nearer 100 headsets being in use at every home match next season.

UPDATES ON PROGRESS OF ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

Update on Picture Route service – JH will meet with a company next Wednesday 11 April to explore their Picture Route service (for supporters with a range of disabilities) and will feedback to DSAB at a future meeting.

Access to nearest turnstile – JH said access to the nearest turnstile for supporters using the Shuttle Bus and Car Park 1A will be in place for the next home game against Stoke City.

Additional Shuttle Bus drop-off locations at stadium – JH said the Club are exploring the possibility of accessibility supporters being able to use the Bridge 3 outside the Club London entrance next season. JH said the Club will continue looking into this situation as part of the close-season review of the logistics of dropping off at multiple locations.

Update on website sub group – JH said the DSAB website sub group will meet on 26 May. DG, CB and Trevor Bright (TB) will attend the meeting, where Digital and Commercial Director Karim Virani (KV) will take members through work being done on new website.

Issue with large groups congregating outside toilet – JH said he and Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs) will look at this issue following more feedback over specific areas at Stoke match.

Sensory Room – JP was pleased to announce that the Club is getting closer to opening a Sensory Room at London Stadium. JP said the Premier League has confirmed that it will authorise their part of funding by end of April. JP said the Club was now looking at equipment and getting quotes for the items needed. JP said the Club was absolutely delighted about this development, that the Club has wanted a Sensory Room from day one and has now got there.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY DSAB MEMBERS

Shuttle Bus service – JP answered a question about queues for the Shuttle Bus service. JP was told arguments have started when people try to queue and ignore the numbered ticketing system in place. JP explained that surrounding roads are closed after the game and first Shuttle Buses cannot leave immediately after final whistle. Supporters using the Shuttle Bus service are welcome to wait inside the Coffee Shop, but some prefer to queue outside. JP says it is well-documented that the gates outside the stadium cannot be opened until permission from Safety Officer is granted. This is due to thousands of supporters leaving the stadium on foot using the surrounding roads to get to transport hubs. Once roads are clear the car parks are opened and road closures are lifted. TB says it does not matter how many times you inform bus users that they cannot leave immediately, as at virtually every game there are complaints about the Shuttle Buses not leaving the stadium quickly enough. PT suggests posting a sign in the car park explaining that the Shuttle Buses cannot leave until permission is granted by the safety officer. KB suggests drivers let fans know on their way to the stadium and again when they get onto the bus after the game. DG says fans with issues queuing would appreciate communication over how the situation can be resolved.

Richard Pullen (RP) commented that when he arrives at Platform 10 at Stratford and shows his bus ticket, other people come along with bus passes, rather than accessibility Passes and gate-crash the Shuttle Bus service. Other people use Oyster Cards and cut in and the queue gets longer, which does not help. KB says JP will monitor the situation at the Stoke City match.

Major incidents/Emergency planning – RP said that when he leaves the stadium, he is looking forward to getting home but he has to wait for the car park to open before the Shuttle Bus can leave. RP asked what would happen in the light of a serious incident like a terrorist attack, as accessibility supporters should have priority to get out and clear the area. KB explained that the safest place to be in the event of such an event would be inside the stadium, subject to circumstances. KB said every single group of staff has a plan and JP's team know what that plan is for accessibility supporters. RP asked what would happen in the case of fire and how accessibility supporters would be safely evacuated. KB explained that a proper evacuation plan is in place and every member of staff knows what to do in any given situation.

CB asked if JP's team are now trained to care for vulnerable fans in the event of another 'Burnley-style' incident. NK says all areas were risk assessed and those populated by vulnerable supporters were prioritised. Andy Sheldon (AS) says the size of the area in and around London Stadium makes it more difficult to police [than the Boleyn Ground], but that officers were in place inside the Southampton game and will be in place for the remaining four home matches. The number of police at each match will be assessed for each. A number of members said they felt more comfortable with police officers in position.

Concourse areas/Access and amenities – DG got feedback from a supporter assisting their father to matches. The supporter explained that, when he got to the concourse, he would have to leave his father in his seat in the stand, which was quite cold, while he went to buy refreshments, as no seating was available on the concourse. DG asked if more concourse seating be installed under cover, where it is warmer, especially for evening matches. DG said this seating could be prioritised for people who require it. JH said there is a small number of Wheelchair User assistance seats in the North Stand by the scoreboard, but these are not in the concourse itself. KB suggests a Tube-style sign be installed by the seats asking fans to give them up for 'someone who needs it more than you'.

TB asked about the segregation gate in the North West corner and whether it will be remaining in place permanently. KB said it will likely remain in place. TB asked if accessibility supporters could use a different entrance from Entrance A (Club London) to access their seats and was told the segregation gate means they will need to use Entrance A. KB said some accessibility supporters preferred Entrance because it reduced distances from the lift to their seats inside the stadium. KB said a 'Four-stand' situation has essentially been put in place as part of the new safety and security measures. KB admitted it is a shame this is the case as many supporters are starting to get in routines, but the segregation gates have meant some of these are now not possible. KB said gates help people get to their allocated seat and sit in it. KB said segregation gates have helped management of the stadium.

Car parking facts and figures – KB said the number of Accessibility car parking spaces has increased from 49 to 60 this season. JP explained that there are a total of 70 Accessibility spaces in the car park, but only 60 can be used at the moment, taking into account the sizes of vehicles used. Philippa Cartwright (PC) said the Club would be looking into the possibility of increasing the number of spaces made available to Accessibility supporters. KB says 106 Accessibility supporters are on a waiting list, in addition to 60 current users.

JP said accessibility supporters are asked to inform the Club when they are not using their allocated space, but often circumstances mean it is too late to make supporters on the waiting list aware and enable them to use vacant spaces. KB suggests a system like Ticket Exchange should be put in place.

KB says a large proportion of car parking is allocated to Accessibility supporters. Only 229 spaces are available in total. KB suggests accessibility supporters could 'buddy-up' and contact one another to share vehicles or pass on use of spaces to fellow supporters. KB says there is no desire for Accessibility spaces to be left unused. KB explained that matches being broadcast live on television and the associated vehicles required further reduces the number of available spaces. JH says there are 229 spaces and 26.4% are allocated to Accessibility supporters.

CB asked for a toilet to be installed in the Accessibility car park. PC says a toilet is available in the Community Track on the ground floor. CB says this is still a distance from the Accessibility car park. KB says the Club will look into the issue.

Ticketing and membership eligibility – CB updated on the documentation required to secure Accessibility tickets at London Stadium. It was queried why West Ham United required proof to enable supporters to get discounted rate. It was asked why West Ham United are only club which requires enhanced Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which is the highest of two levels. CB has gone to every Club's website and says West Ham United are not the only club which requires enhanced PIP. Some do, while others require Blue Badge only. JP confirms the criteria for Accessibility ticket criteria is on the agenda for close-season review.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Anti-social actions from non-disabled supporters affecting accessibility supporters – HF brought up the issue of non-Disabled supporters standing up behind Block 154, where accessibility supporters are sitting, near the end of each half. HF said the situation improved at the Southampton match, but SLOs still had to ask them to move out of the way. HF said accessibility supporters are also missing the start of the second half as they cannot get to kiosks first at half-time. HF suggested accessibility supporters could have their own concessionary kiosk. KB says many of the issues faced by accessibility supporters are caused by non-Disabled supporters, with most of them being inadvertent acts lacking common sense or courtesy. KB suggested making an informative video (using the players) showing these issues to educate supporters of the issues they may be causing, for example leaving toilets in dirty conditions.

Disability Hate Crime – Andy Sheldon introduced colleague Tracy Gunn, Faith and Communities Officer in Newham, who has brought leaflets regarding the issue of disability hate crime to the meeting for members to take home and read.

In closing, KB thanked DSAB members for attending and wished them a happy Easter.