



## **Disabled Supporters Advisory Board Meeting minutes**

**Date:** Tuesday 31 July 2018

**Time:** 6.00pm – 7.30pm

**Location:** Stadium Store, London Stadium

### **Key personnel:**

- Tara Warren, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications, West Ham United
- Philippa Cartwright, Project and Stadium Director, West Ham United
- Julie Pidgeon, Disability Access Officer, West Ham United
- Jake Heath, Supporter Services Manager, West Ham United
- Sophie Lawson, Supporter Services Executive, West Ham United
- Eugene Otchere-Poku, Supporter Services Executive, West Ham United
- Megan Clarkson, Supporter Services Assistant, West Ham United
- Joanne Dexter, Disability Liaison Officer, West Ham United
- Austin Hughes, Community Manager, West Ham United Foundation
- Andy Sheldon, Dedicated Football Officer, Metropolitan Police
- PC Robert Glozier, Metropolitan Police
- Graham Harris, Deputy Safety Officer, LS185

### **DSAB Members present:**

- Trevor Bright (Co-founder of DSAB)
- Cathy Bayford (Co-founder of DSAB)
- Jeremy Gibson
- Steve Lowe
- Neal Crowley
- Helena Reynolds
- Gill Fowler
- Bradley Donovan
- David Griffith
- David Puckett
- Robbie Cahill

### **Apologies:**

- Ben Illingworth, Head of Matchday Operations, West Ham United
- Nicola Keye, Head of Ticketing, West Ham United
- Joe Lyons, CEO, West Ham United Foundation
- Tracey Higgins, DSAB Member
- Joe Seigel, DSAB Member
- Pauline Tanner, DSAB Member
- James Datson, matchday commentator for blind and partially-sighted supporters
- Richard Pullen

## **AGENDA**

1. Introduction
2. Evolving Supporter Consultation
3. Updates on actions
4. Disabled GO service
5. Looking to the 2018/19 season – questions from the group
6. A.O.B

### **1. Introduction**

Tara Warren (TW) opened the meeting by welcoming members back for the new season and thanking them for their attendance and continued support, before explaining the Club's decision to completely overhaul and restructure its approach to supporter consultation.

Going forward, all direct consultation will go only through the official supporter boards, to then be communicated to the wider fanbase only on our official channels. This is to ensure a clear and transparent format that all supporters have direct access to.

### **2. Evolving Supporter Consultation**

Jake Heath (JH) explained further the changes taking place, with the Club deciding at the end of the 2017/18 season that the time was right to review our approach to supporter consultation, creating a brand new constitution, including the way in which meetings are structured, a new and independent election process and how we consult with supporters to create the agenda and minutes of meetings.

The Club undertook significant research, consulting with members of the Supporter Advisory Board, which had been in place as a forum since 2011, along with external organisations such as Supporters Direct, the Football Supporters' Federation and the Premier League, in order to find best practice.

This feedback was presented at last month's SAB meeting and some of the key points to follow include:

- The new name of the overall supporter consultation forum will be the Official West Ham United Supporters Board.
- A new independent election process will be in place to confirm members, with qualifying criteria to ensure fair representation.
- The DSAB will continue to support in a specialist role, focusing on accessibility issues, with Cathy Bayford (CB) and Trevor Bright (TB) attending the WHUSB on its behalf.
- A new junior fan forum, the official West Ham United Junior Supporters Board will be launched in October to give young Hammers a voice, with two separate meetings for 11-15 year-olds and 16-20 year olds.
- A new fans' section on whufc.com, with content more readily available and digestible. The DSAB element on the site has already been restructured but the new section will allow supporters to easily access all information to come from the consultation forums.
- Supporters will be able to contact fan representatives directly via WHUFC.com, with public profiles featuring in standout places on Club channels.

- The new format to be the official and only conduit between the supporters and the Board, with the WHUSB sitting over the DSAB and Junior Forums. There will continue to be three DSAB meetings per season.

### 3. Updates on actions

JH began an update on the actions to come from the previous DSAB meeting in April. Of a total of 30 actions, 25 have been achieved or are progressing, with the remaining five still being explored:

- Production of a DSAB fan experience and awareness video. Members were shown a short test version of an informational video to give an idea of the planned content. TW then asked members for their co-operation and participation in filming content at the opening two home matches of the season, with those interested advised to speak to JH at the end of the meeting. David Griffith (DG) asked if audio commentary could be added to the video for visually-impaired supporters. A member of the WHU media team present revealed that plans were already in place for first-team players to be involved in voice-over parts for the video.
- An accessible toilet to be available in Car Park 1A at every match.
- Access to Turnstile A for supporters who wish to use lifts. The internal barrier placed within this area will be moving a few metres to the North to provide supporters in this area with access to more amenities and Lift 11.
- Attaching weights to large flags that might obscure views in wind. Weighted rope ties have been purchased and will be used to secure and larger flags to ensure that they do not move in heavy winds and obscure the views of fans in WAV bays.
- Adding signage to exit doors relating to gates outside of away end. Signage was in place for the last four matches of the 2017/18 season and will continue to be present for every match this season.
- New headset collection points and 10 additional devices available. Audio devices will be available to collect from any of the four Supporter Services information point on the Stadium Island.
- Creation of a website sub-group to improve accessibility on whufc.com. TW made the point of thanking David Griffith (DG) for his help and assistance in testing some of the new features and improvements being introduced.
- New signage to provide information on Shuttle Bus waiting times and road closures. Signage was in place outside of the Store Coffee Shop for the last four matches of 2017/18 and this will continue in 2018/19.
- New signage in place on the back of the seats in the Bobby Moore Lower for the last four matches of 2017/18 to advise that the seats are reserved for accessibility supporters. This will continue for the 2018/19 season.
- SLOs being positioned nearer to access lanes to assist with any queries. This has been factored into our strategy for every match next season.
- SLOs to also assist with keeping circulation areas clear close to WAV spaces.
- Disabled GO service is now live – additional access guides are available.
- More DSAB information leaflets to be distributed in key accessibility areas.
- Update on access route for accessibility supporters through Westfield Shopping Centre. This will continue next season via car park A due to building works near to the previous route via Jamie's Passage. Feedback will be collected after the first six games to ensure the new route

is working efficiently. TW added that the Club were writing to Westfield to point out how well received the previous access route had been.

- Letters being sent to all Accessibility Season Ticket holders to promote the DSAB and encourage interaction.
- Permits and Terms and Conditions to be sent out to Shuttle Bus users. Julie Pidgeon (JP) confirmed these would be sent out by the end of the current week.
- Shuttle Bus permits to continue to be checked by staff at every match next season.
- A review on the eligibility criteria for Accessibility membership. JP asked for feedback from DSAB members on the situation and stressed that West Ham United's main objective was to ensure that those supporters who are most in need and deserving of accessible tickets are prioritised. JP also confirmed that hearing-impaired and visually-impaired supporters, and those with learning difficulties would certainly be eligible for membership.
- A review on the introduction of an Accessibility Card. A communication plan was reviewed and it was decided that we needed to explore the potential uses for the card beyond quicker means of access to facilities and services.
- A review on the introduction of a Medication Card. The club decided to combine the Accessibility Card and its uses with a Medication Card as requested by the DSAB in the last meeting, as it was felt that issuing multiple cards for different reasons would cause confusion for supporters and stewards. The additional purpose of the Accessibility Card is to assist supporters who have restricted items such as syringes in gaining access through the search lanes quickly and efficiently. GH confirmed that stewards would be briefed clearly on the matter but urged members to ask for a supervisor if ever encountering any problems.
- Issues with large groups congregating outside toilets. Towards the end of last season stewards were actively requesting that supporters move on from standing outside of the accessible toilets. This will be factored into SLO briefings for every match next season so that the SLO team will also actively assist. It is also hoped that the DSAB Fan Experience and Awareness video should also help to alleviate these issues.
- Ensure seating can be placed up at platform 13 for Shuttle Bus users. The Shuttle Bus team were taking chairs up to Platform 13 last season and will continue to do so for every match for the 2018/19 season.
- Review of persistent standing behind Blocks 240 and 154. Stewards were actively requesting that supporters move on from these areas. Again, this will be factored into SLO briefings for every match next season so that the SLO team will also assist.
- Development of a Trip Advisor guide in conjunction with CB and TB. A template has been created but there are some moderation issues to be worked around.
- Development of an FAQ guide. A dedicated Accessibility FAQs section is now available on the West Ham Help service.

*Actions being explored:*

- Reviewing the feasibility of a Shuttle Bus stop adjacent to bridge 3. The current view is that this will slow down the service due to the time it takes supporters to board and alight the Shuttle Bus. We do not want to rush people who may require our support. Additionally, in the summer, Bridge 3 would in theory be a good location for an alternative Shuttle Bus Stop. In the winter, however, and in instances of poor weather, Bridge 3 has no shelter, no toilet facilities and nowhere to get refreshments.
- Stadium access via the nearest turnstile for Shuttle Bus and Car Park users. There are some potential segregation issues with this idea, but a suggested way forward is to offer ONE

alternative turnstile entrance. We will email all accessible supporters who use the Shuttle Bus or Car Park 1A and advise that they can contact us to request the use of one alternative turnstile to enter. For example, a supporter who currently enters via Turnstile H but is on Shuttle Bus so wants to go through E and F, can contact JP by phone or email.

- Ticket Exchange facility for car park users. This would be difficult to implement as, generally, when a supporter is unable to attend a match or use their car park pass, it is often for reasons of emergency at short notice. Greater notice would obviously be required for an exchange facility that enabled users to allocate their pass to a fellow supporter. There is also a lack of incentive when exchanging a car park pass that is free of charge. JP added the point that staff have to be strict when dealing with no-shows from car park pass holders – if a supporter doesn't attend and fails to let staff know in advance on more than one occasion, their car park pass will be cancelled.
- Election of DSAB to the Equality Advisory Group. WHU Foundation CEO Joe Lyons will be meeting the Premier League on the 20 September and after that we will be recruiting a member of the DSAB to join the Equality Advisory Group. Further update to follow.
- Increasing number of accessibility parking spaces. The Club increased the number of spaces from 49 to 60 last season and there will be a small number of additional car park spaces available for accessible supporters for 2018/19. We are currently assessing the formation and layout of the car park in comparison to vehicle/access requirements before we can confirm how many extra spaces will be available.

#### **4. Disabled GO Service**

JH gave a brief presentation on the Disabled GO service, who are partnered with the Premier League to provide information for disabled supporters attending matches at stadiums around the country. The Disabled Go service covers routes to the stadium, transport destinations, concourse facilities and amenities, the Ticket Office, accessibility services and facilities offered by the Club and ways in which fans can contact us.

Their website provides technical specifications, including heights of lowered counters, distances from drop-off points to turnstiles and amenities available in accessible toilets. The link is now available on West Ham Help and within our Access Statement.

The Club's Access Statement will still be available under the guidance of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, as the EHRC commented that the alternative format we provide would also be popular with supporters.

#### **5. Looking to the 2018/19 season**

JH handed over to CB, who informed members that the DSAB has been invited to be involved in the Premier League Disability Advisory Group, whose representative has described West Ham United's DSAB as 'already established in making a successful and meaningful difference on behalf of the Club's disabled supporters'. Some of the initiatives and ideas they are looking to introduce are already in place at West Ham, and CB and TB will be attending their next meeting in October.

The Disability Advisory Group was formed to bring together representatives of Premier League Disability Supporters Associations to create a consultative forum focusing on the experience of being a disabled fan of a Premier League club. Its general purpose is to offer practical common-sense guidance, suggestions and opinion on a variety of relevant topics to the Premier League. They are an

independent group who advise on issues relating to access and inclusion for disabled fans and identifying best practice with regard to implementation of the requirements of the Accessible Stadia Guidelines.

Some of the initial action points from their first meeting include improving the process of obtaining away match tickets and developing standard records of facilities at all grounds. CB added that it seems the WHU DSAB are already one step ahead in many areas, and more feedback will be provided after the next DAG meeting in October.

TB then spoke about the idea of a Trip Advisor-style guide for disabled supporters to review their experiences of away grounds. Given that different people have different opinions and experiences, it would be helpful to have access to a resource that displays those opinions and allows the individual to make their own judgement or be aware of certain issues, which could be more useful than information the clubs themselves offer. TB suggested distributing a questionnaire to as many fans as possible – both disabled and non-disabled – containing a number of questions to obtain feedback on a visit to an away ground.

JH made the point that any platform on official club channels would need a certain amount of moderation to ensure that other clubs weren't unfairly criticised or accused of poor standards on a public forum without the right of reply. TW added that it could be a case of asking the Premier League to grade on certain factors, in the way they do with most other operational areas of the club.

Jeremy Gibson (JG) raised the point that, with live television schedules leading to more varied kick-off times for matches, the journey to and from stadiums is as much of an issue as the grounds themselves for disabled supporters, particularly in relation to railway companies and their services, with severe congestion an ongoing problem, and stations not being adequately-staffed or well-lit at night. Steve Lowe (SL) added that congestion coming to and from Stratford station via Westfield is particularly dangerous for disabled fans – and has been since he was a Gamesmaker at the London 2012 Olympics six years ago.

TW emphasised the point that Karren has written to railway companies on numerous occasions to request that they do more to assist supporters, by providing extra services. TW added that this is exactly the kind of issue that the Premier League could be taking up with the new Premier League Disabled Advisory Group in order to create actions and solutions that provide a tangible difference for fans.

Philippa Cartwright (PC) added that transport for supporters is clearly becoming a strategic problem and therefore needs to be formally escalated to the authorities and various stakeholders. Information needs to be collected from supporters and a written representation then put forward. Stratford station is a particular concern and there is a Transport Safety Group linked to the stadium who should be informed of these experiences.

SL mentioned that the set-up appears to be different for other events at the stadium, such as athletics and concerts. GH confirmed that is the case, given that those events take place exclusively in the summer months, but that it is necessary to trial a different approach for football, given the problems that are being reported. GH added that he is due to be meeting the Stratford station manager, Gary Ashe, and TW requested that he be invited to the next DSAB meeting. CB added that she would send an email round to members to collect their thoughts and opinions on the transport issue to pass on to PC.

## 6. Any other business

JG mentioned that, at the home fixture against Liverpool in November last year, he was unable to find a steward or senior member of staff who held a RADAR key for the accessible toilets. Graham Harris (GH) advised that, since that time, all supervisors and senior members of security staff had been issued with RADAR keys, of which around 500 were purchased. TW emphasised the point that, should such a situation occur again, supporters are encouraged to contact Supporter Services immediately to report the matter. JH confirmed that the Club would conduct an audit of RADAR keys held across the SLO and DSA team and issue any additional keys accordingly.

Helena Reynolds (HR) asked if there was any update on the introduction of fast-track lanes for disabled supporters at the stadium catering kiosks. JH confirmed that we were hoping to trial an alternative delivery-to-seat service next season, enabling accessibility supporters to place catering orders in advance of matches. JH will update the DSAB as soon as any further progress is made.

Neal Crowley (NC) asked about the location of ambulances on a matchday at London Stadium and their proximity for disabled supporters who may require them at short notice. JP confirmed that a lot of work had taken place this year to relocate a number of disabled Season Ticket holders into more accessible areas. JH added that this was dealt with on very much an individual basis to ensure that the particular needs and requirements of an accessibility supporter are always met where possible.

A number of members raised the issue of Shuttle Bus users insisting on taking friends and family members on the buses with them to avoid being separated. Austin Hughes (AH) admitted it was a difficult issue to police, and tried as much as possible to ensure fans were using their permits in line with the one supporter/one personal assistant policy, but that the club would continue to communicate the need for all users to show respect and ensure only those who need the Shuttle Bus service actually use it, while also looking into the possibility of arranging a meeting point for those who are separated on their journey.

AH made a point, as a relatively new member of staff attending DSAB meetings, of praising the work of the group so far, alongside the accessibility staff, and the genuine difference it has made.

TW rounded off the meeting by requesting the agreement of members to adjusting the name of the disabled supporters' forum to bring it in line with the umbrella approach of the new consultation format. The DSAB will from now on be the official West Ham United Disabled Supporters' Board. A new information leaflet will be created to reflect the change.

### Actions to be carried forward

Actions	Assigned to
Conduct an audit of RADAR keys across SLO and DSA staff	JH/JP
Create schedule for filming on matchday for DSB fan experience and awareness video	JH
Further explore delivery to seat service	JH
Arrange second website accessibility meeting	JH
Email all Season Ticket Holders who enter via Turnstile A to provide update on access to lifts	JH

Circulate membership criteria to DSB for feedback	<b>JP</b>
Circulate Disabled GO and West Ham Help Centre links to DSB	<b>JH</b>
Feedback to DSB and Club on PLDAG meeting in October 2018	<b>CB</b>
Arrange meeting with DSB to progress Trip Advisory style webpage	<b>JH</b>
Arrange meeting with TfL to raise DSB feedback on access at Stratford Station	<b>JH</b>
Raise issues with rail companies in respect of the accessibility experience at Stratford Station and continue to work with DSB on the matter	<b>BI</b>
Further explore potential for Shuttle Bus Stop at Bridge 3	<b>BI</b>
Shuttle Bus permits and letter covering Terms and Conditions to be sent in advance of first match	<b>JP</b>
Further review Club policy on non-use of accessibility parking spaces on matchday	<b>JP</b>
Introduce new DSB leaflet with update content and information for all accessibility supporters	<b>JH</b>
Check in and further brief all Access Lane stewards at search points on matchday	<b>JH</b>
Email all Shuttle Bus and Car Park 1A users to offer one additional turnstile as a means of access (closest to Shuttle Bus Stop and Car Park 1A)	<b>JP</b>
Send email to DSB members to collect their thoughts and experiences on transport	<b>CB</b>
Invite relevant external stakeholders to next DSB meeting	<b>JH</b>
Create and send out fan experience survey to all Season Ticket Holders and Claret members	<b>JH</b>