



Supporter Advisory Board meeting minutes

Date: Tuesday 24 January 2017

Time: 6.00pm – 8.00pm

Location: Press Conference Room, London Stadium

Key personnel:

- Karren Brady, Vice-Chairman West Ham United
- Tara Warren, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications, West Ham United
- Nicola Keye, Head of Ticketing, West Ham United
- Nick Kendall, Head of Concessions, West Ham United
- Peter Smith, Safety Officer, London Stadium 185

SAB Members:

- Trevor Bright (Betway Upper – nominated to represent wheelchair-using supporters)
- Lee Dobinson (Bobby Moore Upper)
- Adrian Bradshaw (Club London member)
- Brendan Burke (Betway Upper – nominated to represent Bondholders)
- Patricia Lamb (East Upper)
- Barbara Adams (East Lower – nominated to represent Bondholders)
- Sherrie Goldsmith (East Upper)
- Sebastian Pearse (Bobby Moore Lower)
- Cathy Bayford (Betway Lower – nominated to represent ambulant disabled supporters)
- Stacey Housego (East Lower)
- Paul Hobbs (Bobby Moore Upper)
- Chris Sheppard (1966 member)
- Lee Vehit (Bobby Moore Lower – expertise in Transport/stadium egress, member of WHU Deaf Supporters Group)
- Norman Collins (Supporters Clubs - UK and International)
- Kevin Radley (Club London member)
- Paul Christmas (Bobby Moore Lower - Chair of West Ham United Independent Supporters Association)
- Alastair Holmes (East Lower – Treasurer for Pride of Irons; LGBT Hammers)
- Doreen Hoadley (Hammers Supporters Club)
- Cecilia O'Herlihy (East Lower)
- Steve Applebee (Betway Upper - nominated to represent Bondholders)

Apologies:

- Steve Burton (Bobby Moore Lower)
- Sean Whetstone (West Stand Lower)
- Ken Hill (Betway Upper)

INTRODUCTION

Karren Brady (KB) began by welcoming the members to the meeting and thanking everybody for making the time and effort to attend.

KB explained that the new SAB format had incorporated those independently selected from the first Fan Feedback Forum that took place earlier in the season along with members that represent key sections of the fanbase.

KB then introduced her colleagues on the main panel – Tara Warren (TW), Nicola Keye (NK), Nick Kendall (NKen) and Peter Smith (PS) – and mentioned the presence of other Club representatives in the room, including members of the Media and Communications team, Ticket Office and Supporter Services, with Supporter Services Manager Jake Heath (JH) and Accessibility Liaison Officer Julie Pidgeon (JP) also on hand to answer any questions.

KB reiterated that the purpose of the meeting was to hold a very open, frank discussion about the issues supporters are most concerned with at present, for the Board to listen to those concerns and to decide if there is anything that can be implemented to improve any aspect of the Club.

TW added her thanks to everyone for attending and explained that the SAB will continue to evolve to ensure that every section of the Club's fanbase is represented, and that there are also plans to set up a Youth Advisory Board to ensure that our young supporters have their own dialogue with the Club. TW also added that the current SAB will convene again at the end of the season in late May. This date has since been confirmed as Wednesday 24th May at 6pm.

ACCESSIBILITY

The first issue discussed was accessibility for disabled supporters at London Stadium.

Cathy Bayford expressed her wish for an official Disabled Supporters Association to be formed, and raised a concern over the waiting time and faults with the lift that takes disabled supporters down to their exit in the Betway Stand.

KB reiterated the Club's commitment to doing everything they can to enhance the matchday experience for disabled supporters, she flagged that in response to the feedback from the last meeting the free shuttle bus service had increased its numbers from 7-12 and the Club had supplied radar keys for the toilets.

KB urged supporters to make direct contact with the Club and stressed how important it is to receive feedback directly about the issues that disabled supporters are facing in order for them to be resolved quickly and efficiently.

Regarding the lift, PS admitted there had been a struggle to get the elevator system working correctly consistently and that a fault had been identified, but that a solution was currently in place that he hopes will be workable for supporters.

KB requested that Julie Pidgeon (DLO) be stationed at the lift for the next home match against Manchester City on February 1 in order to manage any situations that arise and requested that PS have a lift engineer posted nearby to ensure that any technical or mechanical faults can be dealt with swiftly which PS agreed.

PS also added that, in the event of any problem with the main lift, a contingency lift is available to supporters. Although a more convoluted route, it will at least ensure that supporters are able to exit and get back to their vehicles.

Paul Christmas, co-chair of the newly-formed WHUISA, said that the feedback he had received from some of his members also featured issues over disabled access. KB urged WHUISA to pass on any issues that had been raised and point supporters directly to the Club via the supporter services address: supporterservices@westhamunited.co.uk that way any issues could be dealt with and resolved in real time.

KB again emphasised the need for supporters to contact the Club directly in order for their concerns to be dealt with as quickly as possible. KB also mentioned the fact that in Julie Pidgeon, the Club have a dedicated Accessibility Liaison Officer who is there to answer any queries. JP gave details of her direct email addresses and encouraged any supporters to contact her.

KB also confirmed that TW is in the process of creating of an accessibility advisory group and accessibility forum for supporters in the future which, along with the direct contact with JP, will ensure that the Club are able to implement bespoke solutions for each individual and react speedily to issues arising.

JP confirmed that the Club have purchased three additional wheelchairs for use in emergency or to assist supporters who have problems with their own wheelchairs or disability vehicles on matchdays.

LEGACY FOR SMALL BUSINESSES NEAR BOLEYN GROUND

Adrian Bradshaw raised a concern over the future of small businesses in the Upton Park area who have lost matchday custom following the move to Stratford, and enquired about the role the Club could play in helping them to tender for a new location near London Stadium or continue to trade viably at their current premises.

KB made the point, while having sympathy for those businesses, that wherever West Ham United is situated it is in fact supporting small businesses and was continuing to do so in the Stratford area - who for years may have been deprived of regular custom and will now benefit from being close to the new stadium

KB added that only one matchday trader from the Boleyn Ground area – The Rib Man – had made contact with the Club to enquire about the process of applying for a pitch at London Stadium, and that the Club had worked with the stadium's catering management company, Delaware North, to assist him and ensure he has the information he requires.

KB also added that, when the new residential complex is built on the Boleyn Ground site, there will be an uplift for businesses in the area, and reminded members that, three years ago, when the move to the new stadium was confirmed, the Club did write to all local businesses explaining the process and assuring them they had the opportunity to discuss their future plans with us.

TW added that the Club also insisted, as part of the contract with Gaillard Homes following the sale of the Boleyn Ground, that Gaillard had to consult with local businesses and support them in any way possible which was also being carried out.

TW also emphasised that the Club would put anyone who wanted to look into tendering at London Stadium in contact with Delaware North and provide any information we can.

Regarding the Champions Statue that sits on the junction of Green Street and Barking Road, KB confirmed that the plan is still to move it to London Stadium next season.

In relation to the future of the Hammers Supporters Club, who are searching for new premises near to London Stadium, the Supporters Club chairperson Doreen Hoadley admitted that the organisation had been suffering but that she has been in direct contact with TW in the hope of finding a solution.

TW confirmed that she had been working hard to get the process moving and had once again spoken to the Newham Council, who, working with the Club were willing to assist the Supporters Club in getting some options for the Supporters Club's to consider. TW assured DH that the Club are doing everything possible to help and that finding a solution is an important objective.

Paul Christmas then confirmed that he and the WHUISA were also seeking to assist the Supporters Club and had held some meetings about this specifically.

KB suggested it would not be productive use of time for both the Club and the WHUISA to be driving this agenda separately and asked PC whether it was something the WHUISA would prefer to take forward. DH confirmed that she was happy with the way things were progressing with the Club's support and PC agreed that DH and TW should continue their negotiations in the hope of finding a solution by the end of the season.

(A further meeting between WH, the HSC and LBN has since been confirmed for 8th February)

SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE

Brendan Burke raised a question over the free shuttle bus service provided by the Club on matchdays to ferry supporters with mobility needs between Stratford station and London Stadium, asking if it would be possible for the shuttle buses to pick up and drop off at Stratford International and Pudding Mill Lane additionally.

JP confirmed that the Club are currently in discussion about the possibility of adding a collection/pick-up point at Stratford International, but that it would not be possible at Pudding Mill Lane. JP added that an update will be made public as soon as available.

Trevor Bright flagged his positive matchday experience when visiting Manchester United Away and TW said the Club would pick up with them re their offering as West Ham United are always striving for best practice and particularly in this area where the Club are proud to be among those leading the way.

Several members made reference to the benefit of the shuttle bus service and praised the help it had provided on matchdays.

TOILETS

SAB members raised concern over the fact that no gent's toilet facilities are available between Block 251 and 247 in the Betway Stand. A complaint was also made that male supporters have been seen using ladies toilets near exit H after matches.

PS agreed to look at the distribution of toilets in that area and identify what solutions might be available, with the option of turning a ladies toilet into a Gents one possibility. PS also suggested that a gent's toilet is available at block 252 if walking in the opposite direction from block 251.

PS also explained that the problem of ladies toilets being used by male supporters has been raised previously and that stewards have been deployed in those areas to monitor the situation. PS will continue to investigate and ensure that further stewards will be deployed to eradicate the problem if required.

TW emphasised the fact that there are many more toilets available at London Stadium than were at the Boleyn Ground, and suggested that the distribution of toilets may be information that can be added to the Matchday Guide on whufc.com

SECURITY

Stacey Housego raised a concern over the issue of individuals entering London stadium unchallenged when exit gates are opened during the second half of matches.

PS made it clear that a deployment plan was in place that involved stewards being posted on the exit gates and doing everything in their power to prevent supporters entering or re-entering the stadium. PS stated that this was something he is acutely aware of and is addressing.

PS added that the point in the match it is right to open the exit gates, very much depends on individual egress patterns and the status of the football match. PS confirmed this was at the top of his agenda.

BB explained that he had recently been prevented from walking around the concourse at podium level after a match in order to reach the Founder's Wall.

PS explained that stewards were instructed to direct supporters to the nearest exit for safety reasons, as people moving around the concourses after the match could cause cross-flow and lead to people tripping and sustaining injury.

KB suggested that JH meet the member at the next home match and escort him to the Founder's Wall. TW requested that to the best of their ability (i.e. noting that on some matches it may vary) LS185 provide a list of gate opening times and access routes that the Club can share with Supporters.

The discussion moved onto the fact that certain exit routes are blocked at full-time until visiting supporters are away from the stadium, PS confirmed that steward briefing packs contain instructions to re-open the routes no later than 30 minutes after the final whistle but confirmed also that it has not taken that long at any match so far, with the routes normally back open within 20-25 minutes at the latest.

KB stated that that is still a long time and asked for an update in terms of how we could look to reduce that time.

DISABLED ACCESS TO REFRESHMENTS

Trevor Bright added that he would be more than happy to wait inside the stadium after the match until those exit routes were re-opened if a kiosk selling refreshments was open nearby. NKen confirmed that eight kiosks around the stadium concourses are open after the match and that the kiosk at Block 203 would be the nearest available.

TB added that it was sometimes difficult to navigate a wheelchair through crowds on the concourse on the occasions when he was not accompanied by a carer. JP advised that her team of accessibility staff are on hand to offer any assistance they can and would be more than happy to help in the ordering of refreshments etc.

KB requested that JP write to all disabled supporters advising them of the assistance that is available on matchdays.

KB also spoke of her pride at how well accessibility supporters are treated at West Ham United, who match any other club when it comes to willingness and desire to assist.

KB also expressed her hope that, once a Wi-Fi network is available within London Stadium next season, the catering management company hope to launch an app that will allow supporters to pre-order food and drink before arriving at the stadium.

CONGESTION AT TURNSTILES

Paul Christmas raised concerns about congestion and large queues outside turnstiles just prior to kick-off, in particular around the East Stand entrance.

PS revealed he has already moved one of the catering vendors from the area in order to create extra space and is considering moving another. PS said the issue is something he is fully aware of but expressed satisfaction that stewards have been able to maintain a safe flow of supporters at the back of turnstile queues.

Paul Christmas suggested the club could be doing more to help reduce the queues and asked if an email could be sent to supporters reminding them to arrive for matches earlier and warning them that they risk missing kick-off if they don't arrive until 15 minutes before kick-off.

TW confirmed that a match preview is already sent out by email and published on whufc.com the day before a game, encouraging supporters to arrive early at the stadium, but agreed to ensure that this was prioritised in this email focusing on the fact (as was PC's suggestion) that supporters risk missing kick-off if arriving for the match not earlier than 15 minutes before the game.

SECURITY SEARCHES

PC asked for clarification over the policy for searching supporters on their entry into London Stadium, particularly children and whether it was necessary for under 16s to be searched.

PS emphasised that searching at turnstiles is quite an emotive issue, especially when it comes to young children. However, if there is reasonable need, the child's parent or guardian will be asked for permission, and a search wand will be used to carry out the search. If needed, the parent and child can be escorted to a more private area, and the search managed by a supervisor.

PS added that age was not a factor considered if security staff believe that it is appropriate to carry out a search on an individual. The key priority is to maintain a safe environment, and staff would only search children under 14 in exceptional circumstances. PS assured members that any search carried out is always proportionate to the potential threat and safety was always the primary concern.

PS confirmed that 50 more search wands have been purchased in order to speed up the search process for women and children, and PS expects successful results from that action.

ROUTE TO AND FROM STADIUM

Issues regarding changing the routes that supporters are made to require to walk when travelling to and from Stratford station at matches were raised.

KB confirmed that the permanent route between Stratford station has not yet been finally agreed, and is still changing every week and expressed her empathy with supporters' frustrations and stated that she was working hard with SAG to find a permanent route.

PS also provided an update on the closure of a bridge close to the stadium because of a gas leak in December, with projected completion expected before February 1. PS added that, in his experience, these issues tend to either get resolved very quickly or drag on for some time, and that the process can be a frustrating one.

PS also reminded supporters to bear in mind that the entire area surrounding London Stadium remains one of construction, development and change, and that the situation will improve naturally in time.

In response to a question on whether it was possible to hold visiting supporters in the stadium until home supporters have vacated, KB confirmed that it is a nationwide directive that supporters are not held back after matches.

PS added that police are only able to hold supporters inside a stadium if there is a genuine and exceptional risk of crime and disorder.

TRANSPORT LINKS

In response to concerns raised about the barriers and diversions used, particularly at nearby underground stations, KB emphasised her belief that Transport For London are doing their very best to assist supporters and keep them safe at the same time, and that processes are similar at the stations that serve the likes of Arsenal and Chelsea, who have been established at their stadiums for far longer than West Ham.

PS confirmed that he meets regularly with rail companies and offered to discuss any issues raised on behalf of members. PS also added that Transport For London are very responsive to direct feedback and will always investigate any complaints or concerns raised so encouraged supporters to flag their concerns also directly with TFL.

Another member raised a concern that the South Eastern rail company, who carry a large number of West Ham United supporters on matchdays, are running only six coaches on some of their trains, which isn't sufficient to cope with the number of passengers.

TW confirmed that the Vice Chairman had written to a number of companies servicing the routes out to Essex and this had resulted in success in that more coaches were added at peak times.

TW confirmed that the Club would do the same as a result of this feedback and would request an increase in services on a matchday on behalf of supporters.

WESTFIELD SHOPPING CENTRE

On the issue of supporters being denied access routes to the stadium via the Westfield Shopping Centre, PS confirmed that the situation is a decision entirely for Westfield, based on their business.

KB confirmed that the Club are working tirelessly to continue dialogue with Westfield in the hope of finding a solution, and admitted that the two parties have to find a way of working together and co-habiting positively given that fact that they are both here for the next 98 and a half years at least.

WEST HAM UNITED 'LOOK AND FEEL'

Several points were raised about the 'look and feel' of the area surrounding the stadium, the signage on the route to the stadium and the removal of West Ham United branding when the stadium is being used for other events.

KB confirmed that the grey areas in the stadium belong to the Stadium landlords E20 and will eventually be branded when a naming rights agreement is in place. AB asked whether West Ham could veto a Naming Rights deal.

KB confirmed that West Ham United have a contractual right to approve any naming rights deal.

KB also reminded supporters that, in the interim, the Club have offered to assist supporters in hanging large flags and banners in and around the stadium as a short-term solution. KB advised that the Clubs supporter services team will store any flags above the 2m x 2m permitted size and put them out and take them in on matchdays.

TW added that the Club are working hard along with the London Stadium Partners to create more West Ham United signage in the surrounding areas and the walk to the stadium. The issue of Clean Stadium for other events was raised and TW confirmed that the only event for which that West Ham United are required to deliver an entirely clean stadium for is the 2017 IAAF World Championships this summer.

STEWARDING

The issue of stewarding generated much discussion and opinion among members, with many expressing that they had seen a great improvement in this area of late. Members commented that the stewards in their area of the ground were helpful, friendly and efficient but some concerns with the attitude and demeanour of stewards remains.

The hard ticket checks which are in place when supporters are heading to their seats was raised.

KB explained that hard ticket checks are required as so many supporters had complained of finding someone else sitting in their seat. KB acknowledged the frustration that causes and the impact it can have on a supporter's experience, and that hard ticket checks are the only solution.

KB spoke in detail about the positive steps that have been taken to address the early issues surrounding stewarding, including former Boleyn Ground stewards being deployed in areas where empathy with supporters is key, the introduction of West Ham United directly employed SLOs to provide support and assistance, and the fact that the Club are writing to all former Boleyn Ground stewards inviting them to take up a role at London Stadium. KB also confirmed that the Club were now part of the matchday briefing that takes place with stewards at her instruction and were to insert information about the Club and how West Ham United expected matchday stewards to interact with supporters ahead of the Manchester City game on 1st February.

PS assured all members that he considers it a personal project to deliver West Ham United supporters with a secure venue, supervised by efficient and polite stewards, to ensure that the matchday experience is enjoyable for everyone.

PS also stressed the need for supporters to provide feedback and report any behaviour that is considered to be inappropriate by stewards directly to the Club via the supporter services address. He confirmed that the Club diligently shared all of the information received with LS185 and together has on many occasions reviewed evidence and as a result had ensured that stewards not deemed to be acting in line with the Clubs and London Stadium's policy had not returned to London Stadium as a result. Only if reported directly to the Club could these matters be addressed.

PS confirmed that all reports of this nature will be investigated fully and that LS185 take any accusations very seriously. PS added that a confidential text message service is already in place at the stadium and also advised supporters that complaints can be made on the day in person to senior stewards.

PS went on to confirm that all London Stadium stewards have conflict management and resolution skills built into their NVQ in spectator safety qualification.

PC stated that he held a dossier of complaints which had been passed onto him in his role as Chair of the WHUISA.

KB and PS asked him to pass over the information explaining that all examples would be thoroughly investigated. KB stressed that without sight of the issues/knowing about them it was very difficult for the club to do anything about them.

PC explained that the information had been passed on in confidence and contained names of individual members that he didn't wish to share. KB stated that she understood but requested that PC do pass this over without names but details of blocks/locations in order that the Club could investigate.

TW and PS expressed concern that issues were mounting when they could be resolved more quickly if the Club were aware of the issues.

PS reminded members that all steward jackets are numbered and again urged any supporter with a complaint to report it, either on the day to a senior steward, or retrospectively via the Club, who take all complaints very seriously and would pass on for PS to investigate fully.

BLOCK 114

Members flagged the situation regarding supporters who were moved from Block 114 to Block 127 earlier in the season.

KB confirmed that this had taken place following the Chelsea match in order to widen the segregation line between home and away supporters.

KB emphasised that there was no suggestion that the supporters who had been moved were guilty of any offences and stated her belief that the recent banning orders seemed to have been effective in eradicating any anti-social behaviour as had the new segregation line.

KB said it was still her aspiration that those moved to Block 127 could eventually be moved back to Block 114 although she was aware many had confirmed this was no longer their preference.

KB confirmed that this decision can only be made in conjunction with the Safety Advisory Group, who have the authority to increase the stadium capacity to 60,000.

PERSISTENT STANDING

KB pointed out that around 450 supporters had so far been able to relocate to other areas of the stadium to group together like-minded supporters.

KB also emphasised the fact that all football clubs are governed by the Stadium Licensing authorities, whose remit is to ensure supporters sit down at football matches.

KB made clear that the focus of the Club and the SAG was in relation to areas that are dangerous. For example, it is dangerous for supporters to persistently stand in the upper tier at London Stadium, and the Club and Stadium Operators have worked very hard to eradicate that issue and has now done so.

KB said it was clear to see that progress that has been made and that a balance had been reached that proved things are moving in the right direction.

In response to further concerns raised by a member that persistent standing was still an issue in her area, KB once again emphasised the need for supporters to provide detailed feedback and report any concerns or incidents direct to the Club. KB confirmed that she hoped the renewal process

which she confirmed would commence earlier this year as a result would resolve the few remaining issues organically.

SEAT RELOCATION

This led to questions regarding the opportunities should a Season Ticket Holder wish to relocate to a different area of the stadium when renewing in the close season.

KB confirmed that the first factor to consider is that every single Season Ticket Holder has a right to renew their ticket. Only after the deadline has passed for that renewal can the Club begin to consider requests for relocation.

KB added however that those who wish to migrate to another area of the stadium and who make it known to then Club (if they haven't already) will be able to join a waiting list and will be prioritised during the renewal period when a seat becomes available in their desired location.

KB also responded to concerns about Season Ticket Holders regularly not attending home matches and leaving their seats empty. KB pointed out that the percentage of Season Ticket Holders not turning up at matches this season is the same as it was at the Boleyn Ground, and also reminded members that many of the empty seats fall within the 3,000 existing seats that are dispersed around in blocks around the stadium, which the Club will gain when capacity is increased to 60k.

FANS IN OTHER CLUB COLOURS

In response to concerns that spectators had been seen wearing other club colours while sitting among West Ham supporters at London Stadium, NK confirmed that any such issues would be investigated on an individual basis and that bans would be issued to those found to be wearing other club colours among home fans.

Members at the meeting confirmed that they had not actually had witnessed anyone wearing another teams colours but that it was rumoured to be the case. NK reiterated the need to encourage any supporters who do actually see anything of this nature to report it immediately to the Club.

CONCLUSION

KB concluded the meeting at 8pm by thanking all members for their attendance and feedback, describing it as extremely valuable in helping the Board to shape and improve the future of the Club.

In closing TW ran through the list of key issues discussed and actions for the Club that she had noted during the course of the meeting, and expressed her hope that progress had been made.

TW then summarised this list of actions and asked members to verify that these reflected the key matters that the Supporter Advisory Board wished for the Board to focus on over the come weeks.

This included:

- DLO JP sending a letter to Accessibility Supporters to advise them of the services available to them on a matchday from the personal assistants in her team
- JH ensuring that BB and other Founders can view the Founders Wall post-match going forward
- PS/JP monitoring the disabled lift at Man City fixture
- Communicating information to supporters regarding access around the Stadium on a matchday
- Contacting TFL to discuss feedback from SAB members around the current barrier system

- Club pulling together information for Green Street traders looking to locate to London Stadium
- 50 further wands to be purchased to aid the speed and efficiency of the necessary searches upon entry to the Stadium on a matchday particularly in respect of women and children
- Ensuring arrival by 14.45 is flagged and has primacy in pre-match email stressing supporters risk missing KO if they don't
- Continuing to work to enhance the rapport between matchday stewards and supporters by:
 - Including a section from the Club in the matchday briefing
 - Briefing stewards directly and ensuring through every channel possible the understand the significance and importance of being part of the West Ham family
 - Continuing the expansion of the matchday SLO initiative to support them
- Looking into improving egress and experience by keeping bars and kiosks open post-match and communicating it
- PS providing a list that the Club could pass on to supporters via the matchday guide that confirms what can and cannot be brought into the Stadium on a matchday

As above in addition to this many individual issues were raised and the Club agreed to look into each of them and once again re-iterated the need to pass on that issues can and will be resolved if they are reported directly to supporter services.

SH said there had been a delay at the start of the season JH acknowledged this but said since his arrival and the recruitment of his new team this was now in hand and issues were being responded to in a timely fashion with visible and fast results. A number of supporters confirmed this to be the case in their experience of late.

TW ended by assuring all members once again that the Club are always on hand to listen to their concerns and issues, and that the quickest and most efficient way to raise those concerns is to contact the Club directly via the many channels available.

TW thanked everyone for giving up their time and bringing so much constructive feedback on behalf of their fellow supporters and to help to continue to drive their Club forward.

TW closed by confirming that the next SAB meeting would take place on Wednesday 24th May at 6pm and that everyone present would be invited to attend.