



## **Supporter Advisory Board meeting minutes**

**Date:** Wednesday 15 November 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, West Ham United
- Nicola Keye, Head of Ticketing, West Ham United
- Steve Gotkine, Operations Director, West Ham United
- Julie Pidgeon, Disability Access Officer, West Ham United
- Ben Illingworth, Head of Matchday Operations, West Ham United
- Graham Harris, Deputy Safety Officer, London Stadium 185
- Jake Heath, Supporter Services Manager, West Ham United
- PC Andy Sheldon, Metropolitan Police

### **SAB Members present:**

- Debbie Hoffman (Treasurer of the Hammers Supporters Club)
- David Baker (West Stand)
- Joshua Dodd (representing youth supporters)
- Sean Whetstone (Claret and Hugh)
- Bev Cornell (Claret & Blue Bubble social media platform)
- Aaron Watkins (Bobby Moore Stand)
- Steve Applebee (nominated to represent Bondholders)
- John Beavis (Chair of Bondholders committee)
- Don Adams (representing Over 65s supporters)
- Cecilia O’Herlihy (East Stand)
- Lee Vehit (Bobby Moore Lower – expertise in Transport/stadium egress, member of WHU Deaf Supporters Group)
- Cathy Bayford (Representing ambulant disabled supporters; co-founder of DSAB)
- Trevor Bright (Representing wheelchair-using supporters; co-founder of DSAB)
- Paul Christmas (Chair of West Ham United Independent Supporters Association)
- Colin James (1966 Club season ticket holder)
- Anthony Rosenthal (Representing away season ticket holders)
- Alastair Holmes (Representing Pride of Irons)

## **Apologies:**

- Jodie Crane (Representing women)
- Sunil Karir (representing families)
- Thomas Hickey (South Stand)
- Jose Sanchez (Club London Bars)
- Jon Gower (Club London Restaurants)

## **AGENDA**

1. Welcome all new SAB
2. The SAB and Club working together
3. Review of SAB 2016/17
4. You informed, we took action
5. The DSAB – Cathy Bayford and Trevor Bright
6. Where we are now
7. Continuing to champion supporter experience
8. Submitted agenda items

## **WELCOME ALL NEW SAB**

Karren Brady (KB) welcomed everyone to the meeting and emphasised that the SAB was a forum for frank and open discussion and an opportunity for a diverse group representing a cross section of the fanbase to put their views to the Board.

Tara Warren (TW) opened the meeting and thanked all new members for attending and explained the application and selection process in detail. This covered the fact that the club were keen to have as many people who represented large groups within the fanbase as well as a broad representation based on data of the supporter base. TW then asked all members to introduce themselves to the rest of the panel.

KB underlined her eagerness to also provide clarity on queries following the last SAB.

## **THE SAB AND CLUB WORKING TOGETHER**

TW talked about how the mission and structure of the SAB has changed every year based on what the current members want. The SAB's agenda is driven by the advisory Board members. The current mission statement is to develop and maintain a positive relationship between the supporter groups and the club to make sure that all supporters receive the best possible experience. TW also described how the SAB will meet a minimum three times a year but there will also be some sub groups to cover specific issues that the SAB can help with depending on their areas of expertise, such as the DSAB on accessibility issues and the group led by Lee Vehit (LV) addressing issues around transport.

## **Aims and Objectives**

- To provide the broadest representation possible of the West Ham United fanbase, (representing key groups where possible/ensure broad geo/demo representation)

- To create a constructive forum for supporters to discuss key matters of relevance to our fanbase with the West Ham United Board
- To continue a direct, open and two-way communication between the Club and supporters
- To allow the Club to provide clarity and context on any key decisions that are made
- To enable fans to play a key role in improving the supporter experience and shaping the future of West Ham United

### **Mission**

- Working together to develop and maintain a positive relationship and the best supporter experience for all West Ham United supporters

### **Structure**

- The SAB will meet a minimum of three occasions per season
- The SAB, and its processes, will be constantly reviewed to ensure the views of our fanbase are fairly and appropriately represented
- Members should bring forward core issues for the agenda that are specific to the group they represent, with a view to reaching a consensus for the year's agenda that the Club can focus on and invest in as necessary

### **REVIEW OF SAB 2016/17**

Discussion topics from 2016/17 included:

- *Move to London Stadium*
- *Stewarding*
- *Ticketing*
- *Retractable seating*
- *Accessibility*
- *Matchday experience*
- *Communications*
- *Catering*

TW commented on well-publicised teething issues around the stadium in the previous season but explained that many of these issues have been worked through in consultation with the SAB. The SAB, she explained, acted as the eyes and ears for the club, the club had listened to their feedback and then dealt with things as they came up successfully.

TW stated that it is important to build on the progress that has been made but in order that new members could get up to speed with what has taken place previously she suggested they read all the minutes of the previous year's meetings – all of which have been published on the website.

TW explained that Jake Heath was also available (JH) to meet with new members to answer any question regarding what has been discussed and has taken place before.

TW stated that the main agenda item last year was working together to make the stadium feel like home. KB added that the club have listened to the SAB views and summarised the actions that had

been implemented. KB confirmed that JH and his team have introduced 40 supporter liaison officers who have made a huge difference to the fan experience.

KB noted that the SAB had suggested that Boleyn Ground stewards return and as a result, the Club had sent messages out to them and had offered fully funded additional training (as the new qualification criteria had been found to be a barrier to some moving over) to all those that wanted to work at London Stadium. Boleyn Stewards that took the Club's offer have since been deployed into the key areas where it was identified they could have most impact. This has proved to be successful.

KB stated that Ben Illingworth (BI) attends all pre-game steward briefings and WHU make clear in that briefing just how important it is to be understanding of West Ham supporters and explained the many things West Ham staff do to ensure that matchday staff are educated about the club, its history and its supporters. Steward uniforms have been changed also to ensure they are more identifiable as West Ham United staff on a West Ham matchday .

KB touched upon the work that has been done to improve the atmosphere in the Stadium. KB explained that 8,000 fans were relocated over the summer in addition to the 600 that were moved during the season to allow likeminded fans to sit together.

KB explained that fans were unhappy that there were not the same vendors at LS as there were at Upton Park and so WHU had helped anyone set up that wanted to, including notable successes such as the Rib Man.

Before continuing with the agenda items, KB asked if anyone wished to raise any new concerns.

Sean Whetstone (SW) raised his concern that, following accusations of heavy-handedness from stewards dealing with trouble last season, things have gone too far the other way and become too soft an approach at times, with stewards reluctant to become involved in altercations between fans.

BI agrees that the previous season there were issues but now there has been a change in process where people are spoken to at half time. BI said this had proved to be more effective but made it clear that if someone is considered to be in danger WHU eject immediately.

BI explained that the Club invite people in during the week where there are issues to discuss what is acceptable and what is not and where the line is. BI guaranteed that in any situation in any block where there is a danger, someone will be moved.

SW raised concerns that fans are wearing non-West Ham kits. KB asked where has this been seen as the Club had heard fans saying this but had no reports of it being an issue. BI stated that he briefs stewards that non-West Ham shirts are not acceptable and confirmed the Club's policy that anyone found to be wearing other Clubs kits would be asked to leave.

JH added that, particularly in the winter months, it can be difficult to spot supporters wearing non-West Ham shirts as the majority are wearing coats and other layers.

SW also raised an issue around broken seats. KB asked Graham Harris (GH) to answer. GH explained that the Stadium have a very good CCTV system and can trace supporters through the turnstiles. Andy Sheldon (AS) said he works closely with JH's team and follows through with any complaints, tracing people with the CCTV footage. GH said examples of seats being broken are very rare.

Paul Christmas (PC) said that the feedback he has received suggests that the stewarding is better but asked about stewards removing adults entering the grounds on upgraded children's tickets.

Nicola Keye (NK) said that any upgrade is loaded to the card before a supporter enters through the turnstiles and that stewards are able to clearly see if an adult is entering on a child ticket that has not been upgraded.

BI stated that the traffic light ticket system turns yellow if it's a concession ticket and people are only asked to go and change their tickets at the ticket office. NK stated that almost every time this occurs it is due to the supporters not having paid for the upgrade and added there were only a handful of anomalies. BI said the stewards have a guide which details all the different codes. TW stated that this was raised last year by the SAB and that the measures are now in place as a result of that.

John Beavis (JB) complained about stewards around the perimeter of the pitch standing up five minutes before half-time and full-time, which is obscuring the view of fans in the first two rows. He stated he was informed this was a directive from LS185 but GH stated that this is not the case and promised he would look into it immediately.

The topic of the optimum location for supporters' flags was raised. KB raised issues around the presence and position of supporter flags. It was always understood that the area where flags were displayed initially may not always be available. SW suggested that the flags go on the scrim next to the digital screens. GH replied that LS185 has no objections to that. KB asked that the solution be in place from the next game.

### **Enhancing fan experience**

TW revealed that the Club have introduced a dedicated Supporters Services twitter account. Steve Gotkine (SG) added that a new radio service for senior SLOs has been implemented. JH revealed that a new feedback system has been introduced to make contact with any issues and KB added that all issues flagged by the SAB are discussed at Board level and those that can be resolved swiftly are done so immediately and the Board also consider options also for those that require longer term solutions.

TW said there has been improved search process for women and children and Don Adams (DA) confirmed his view that the new bag search system has been a real improvement and is safer. BI said that 200 people per minute now go through the turnstiles.

PC said fans feedback regarding the bridges has been positive but some WHUISA members thought the security search could be better. PC asked what provisions are being made if lots of people are late to the game. GH explained that at the Tottenham game many supporters used

bridge five and there was one breach of the barrier, but everyone in every game has been in the stadium before kick-off. GH added that more search wands have been purchased and that the security checkpoints are monitored intently.

TW added that the Club goes to great lengths to advise supporters to use the other bridges around the stadium in order to avoid being caught up at the most widely-used bridge and advised supporters to listen to the announcements and advice as following it would get them in by the quickest and fastest route.

KB said that there have also been improvements in the following areas:

- The ratio between male and female toilets has been addressed
- Premium rate telephone number has now been removed
- Enhancing the Club Cash system
- Actively pursued transport issues with rail companies
- Introduced shelving on concourse (further shelving currently with building control)
- Worked together with Pride of Irons ahead the Brighton and Hove Albion match where the Club launched its Equality and Diversity Campaign.

SW said that there is still more shelving needed on concourses and SG confirmed the Club are awaiting approval from Building control. GH confirmed he would check on the status of that approval to implement ASAP.

KB went on to confirm that West Ham United are improving the way they communicate with supporters. Including:

- Promote and encourage early arrival on matchday
- Introduction of Matchday Guide
- Promote locations for late kiosks at weekend matches
- Promote prohibited items list on Matchday Guide
- Communicate information regarding access around the Stadium
- Supporter Charter 2017/18 available online
- Launch of Fan Feedback article
- Increased signage on matchdays

TW added that JH and his team are setting up a help centre and SAB members are encouraged to come along and test it before giving their feedback.

## **THE DSAB – CATHY BAYFORD AND TREVOR BRIGHT**

KB thanked both Cathy Bayford (CB) and Trevor Bright (TB) for what they do and invited them to talk about the work they do to help the club.

CB explained that the first DSAB was held last April and another in September and follows a similar process to SAB.

Key topics included:

- Shuttle bus to and from the station
- Segregation post matches
- Disabled parking improved
- Abuse of disabled toilets
- Lack of parking across stadium site

CB praised Julie Pidgeon's (JP) work and the Club for increasing buses to and from Westfield and Stratford International and JH for taking the walk to and from the station to see what the issues were for disabled supporters. Westfield are willing to trial a system of allowing disabled supporters through the centre on match days and this could start as early as Leicester game.

CB wants to see better monitoring of disabled toilets as some have been left in a unacceptable state on matchdays.

Trevor Bright (TB) welcomed new members to the SAB.

TB said that in the last 12 months there have been lots of improvements and the club have listened, but the club must be told by supporters if there are issues to resolve as they cannot act without direct information. TB reported that he wanted to go to the Ladies team at Rush Green and found some accessibility issues when he arrived so sent a letter to JP and JH highlighting the issues he faced and the response had been very positive. TB would like a page in the programme about the SAB and the DSAB in case fans do not feel as though they can contact the club. TW agreed that this is a good idea and wants to promote the DSAB as widely as possible

JP said that club immediately installed a temporary disabled toilet and made sure that the ground was even at Rush Green following TB's feedback. JP said if information comes in then the fixes can happen quickly. CB provided further information about some of the improvements that have been made for the benefit of supporters with accessibility needs:

- Enhanced the Accessible Shuttle Bus Service
  - Increased to total of 18 Accessible Shuttle Buses
  - Issued new shuttle permits to streamline process
  - Introduced ticketed queuing system for shuttle bus
  - Created new Shuttle Stop at Stratford International station
  - Staff trained in BSL and Disability Awareness
- Created bespoke map for accessible services and facilities
- Signage at Ticket Office for lowered counters
- Dedicated DSAs on each turnstile entrance
- 100% of toilets with RADAR lock system

KB mentioned that she is pushing really hard for Westfield to open up the barrier gates to allow disabled access to London Stadium and hopes to have an answer soon.

## **WHERE WE ARE NOW**

KB ran through some of the updates across the club, including the improvement in the quality of stewarding and the Club's commitment to improving matchday engagement with the 20,000 families attending matches. In this respect there have been many new initiatives introduced:

- Direct email to fans coming to their first match
- Post-match surveys and matchday guide direct email
- Launch of the Hammers Collectables player card range
- Collectables evolving into Legends range
- Exploring Happy Hammer meal deals for kids
- Junior All Access - starting from WBA 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan
- Family Fun Day

TW revealed that the introduction of the Hammers Collectables card range had been well received by our young supporters, with the addition of new Legends cards helping to educate them on the club's rich history.

KB then introduced the 'We are West Ham United' diversity video that has been created this season and emphasised West Ham United's dedication to diversity and inclusion, as evidenced by our commitment to the Accessible Stadia Guide and Premier League Equality Standard.

KB also discussed the Chadwell Heath training ground that is now the dedicated home of the Youth Academy and revealed that the Club will next year be spending £3million on upgrading and extending the facilities and making sure that the Academy remains the heart of the football club. KB also provided an update on the work taking place to revolutionise our Ladies football team:

- Significant investment from across the Club
- Tier 1 application for Super League status
- Home games played at the Rush Green training ground
- Family Fun Day held on 29<sup>th</sup> October v QPR which was a big success.

## **CONTINUING TO CHAMPION SUPPORTER EXPERIENCE**

KB says that the Visit Football audit this season was a big success and led to a mark of 'good to excellent'. Key contributors to that success include:

- Significant investment in improving supporters' matchday experience
- New searching process
- Proactive, approachable and knowledgeable SLOs
- High speed transactions using e-ticketing
- High level of service on telephones
- Efficiency in email response
- Good level of signage

NK said that everyone at the club is absolutely committed to making improvements at the club on the back of the Visit Football audits. TW added that it is a credit to the club that they have gone from good to excellent after just one year in our new stadium.

JH revealed that there were four Supporter Services marquees for the benefit of fans at the last home match, and that feedback had been excellent. Other updates included:

- Launch of WHU online Supporter Help Centre with extensive glossary and the ability for supporters to find the information they are looking for within just a couple of clicks rather than trawling through an FAQ section.
- New and innovative ways to contact the Club – within the Help Centre, a direct button via Twitter or email to contact the club.
- Supporters Services twitter account – West Ham United only 1 of 5 only PL clubs to have a dedicated Supporter Services twitter account.
- SLOs and stewards working well together – sharing briefing guides and familiarising themselves with concourse presence and assistance.

## **SUBMITTED AGENDA ITEMS**

- **Concourse design and activity**

CB asked what could be done about the TV's before matches as there isn't anything to look at. GH says that one issue is that if the match is on TVs after kick-off, people would rush out to the seating areas but added that LS185 do have the ability to show things before the match if the fans want it.

David Baker (DB) said that we shouldn't be showing our own game but if there is a game beforehand then that could be showed. TW said that she is happy to action WHU content on the screens if SAB desire it.

DB asked if Sky Sports News could be shown so fans could check the scores in other games. PC asked if it is possible to show academy or ladies matches. GH said it is possible from the control room to send content onto digital displays and confirmed that showing Sky Sports is possible. KB added that it has all been paid for by the Club and cost £150,000 a year. KB clarified with SAB that they want Sky Sports News shown in general admission areas pre-match.

Aaron Watkins (AW) asked if it could be possible for more Bobby Moore imagery and tributes to be added to areas within the Bobby Moore Stand. Also asked if there could be a separate queue for soft drinks only at concourse bars? TW confirmed that both requests will be looked at, and suggested that a sub group may be formed to discuss further improvements to concourse areas.

PC asked if there was any possibility of additional toilets being installed outside the stadium bowl on the podium level, as they were for the summer concerts. GH confirmed that toilets are situated across the park in various areas, and that temporary toilet facilities were only added for the concerts due to the capacity increase.

- **Stewarding/Searching process**

Bev Cornell (BC) expressed concern that children's bags are not being searched. GH said a 100% bag search is mandatory and asked that any such issues are reported, and added that high definition cameras can see what is going on at the security checkpoints.

JB asked if a list can be re-published on items that can and cannot be brought into the stadium. TW confirmed that the list is always displayed in the matchday guide.

LV asked if, following a recent breach of security at London Stadium that saw trespassers gain access to the roof, supporters could be reassured that the stadium is not vulnerable from a counter-terrorism perspective?

GH confirmed that LS185 have a dedicated Counter Terrorism Security Advisor who reports into Whitehall. The stadium is searched 48 hours before a game, search dogs are then brought in, they start on lower ground and work up. GH says the dogs are also here on event days.

Regarding the trespassers who got onto roof, one individual was to blame for that. GH agreed it was embarrassing and insisted that the incident has been taken very seriously. BI added that following that incident, KB had immediately spoken to the LS185 chief executive, who commissioned a report, and Dave Sadler, LS185's Head of Security, is just finishing that report and it will be handed over imminently.

BI added that changes put in place since that incident led to another attempted trespasser being prevented from gaining access a few days later.

AS added that the difficulty around the issue for the police is that, unless anything is damaged, the offence is simply 'civil trespassing', which is a private matter for stadium security. KB agreed that the obligation lies with LS185's security measures to ensure the issue does not re-occur, but emphasised her belief that LS185 are taking the situation extremely seriously.

- **Ticketing pricing and allocations**

PC asked about ticket allocations for away fans and why WHU are taking lower allocations to away matches, specifically at Everton and Manchester City. NK confirmed that the decision on size of allocation is taken six to eight weeks before a fixture and there are lots of factors that are taken into consideration when deciding on what allocation to take.

The decision can be affected by kick-off time, distance to travel, public transport issues, television coverage and the run of fixtures. The priority points system is there to allocate tickets as fairly as possible. If the club get that judgement wrong and don't sell out, then we are liable to pay for any unsold tickets or risk them going on general sale. General sale could mean that home fans end up in the away end. NK notes that this has happened at Manchester United this year and Liverpool last season.

TW added that WHU try to take the full allocation whenever possible. DA said he and his daughter could not get tickets for the Watford match. DA added that if you can't buy the tickets you can't get the points and then if you're not getting points, you can't get tickets.

SW says that supporters with a high number of priority points are playing the system by buying the tickets to gain more points but not attending the matches.

NK added that one possible option was to make a small percentage of the allocation available on a ballot basis to all supporters – this would then enable supporters with low priority points the opportunity to purchase tickets and begin to increase their points.

TW confirmed the Club would look into Away Ticket allocation based on the feedback.

- **Wi-fi at London Stadium**

KB confirmed that West Ham United have been promised that Wi-fi will be installed at London Stadium but it hasn't happened, and asked GH for an update. GH said that lots of work has been done and a cost proposal has gone to E20 but it is sitting at their level currently.

SW said he knows one of the companies who have tendered for the contract but they are yet to hear anything. KB said that it is the goal but it is not looking like it will happen soon. It was supposed to be linked to naming rights but E20 are in charge of that and that hasn't materialised.

DB asked if there was any way mobile networks could assist. GH said additional structure by EE has been put in but says it is hard to communicate with staff on the floor with current signal and it's been a priority for quite some time now.

- **Champions Place stones / Champions statue**

KB confirmed that phase two of the Champions Place stones installation has been completed. PC said he has been contacted some supporters have had issues with stones that haven't been installed. TW encouraged PC to advise fans to speak directly to club. JH said that an email went out on September 29 to tell people if they were in Phase two or Phase three and that everyone should have had that email.

JH added that, as an ex-gratia gesture of goodwill, a discount voucher for use in the West Ham United store was given to supporters whose stones are due to be installed in phase three early next year. TW said the delays should have been better communicated by the third party company responsible for installing the stones initially and that the club had now taken over those communications with supporters.

PC said people have complained about the quality of the stones. TW confirmed they are cleaned regularly but are obviously subject to natural wear and tear. DH asked about supporters who had commemorative bricks at the Boleyn Ground and TW confirmed that all messages on those bricks had been transferred to stones at Champions Place in phase one last year. SW asked if the contractor has been replaced. TW confirmed the contractor is the same but operating under different terms.

KB confirmed that, subject to ratification from Newham Council, it was her belief that the Champions Statue will be at London Stadium by the start of next season.

- **Journey to 66,000 at London Stadium**

KB said that the journey to 66,000 is a long way off but the 60,000 capacity of London Stadium she hoped would be more imminent. KB added that she was told that the licence to apply for 60,000 was not put in because of safety issues that have now been overcome, and that it has to be put in by LS185 as the licence holder. SW asked GH if LS185 had put the application in. GH confirmed it was part of an ongoing discussion with the Club.

END