

Notts County FC SLO Meeting Minutes

Call to order

A meeting between Notts County's SLO team, supporter groups and independent supporters was held at Meadow Lane on Wednesday 31 January 2018.

Meeting facilitator

Notts County SLO Team: Sarah Gooding (SG), Rob Holland (RH) and Dougie Pullen (DP)

Attendees

Disabled Supporters' Association, LGBT Pies, Official Supporters' Association, Supporters' Club, Supporters' Trust, Pride of Nottingham, 4 x independent supporters, Steve LeMottee (guest).

Start: 6pm End: 10:30pm

Agenda Item 1 (presented by)

Heritage Project (Steve LeMottee – HP manager and Notts fan)

Steve was invited to attend in order to request help from the club and supporters with a heritage project he is managing.

Steve gave an overview of the project and how he came to be appointed as project manager. The project is run by FITC and is funded by a heritage grant, with the aim of looking at what FITC and the club could do to celebrate and protect its heritage.

The project launched in July 2017 and has three main 'strands' to investigate:

- Identify what items the club has
- Identify what memorabilia and items are out in the community and in the homes of supporters
- Suggest what FITC and the club could do to protect and share its heritage

Two groups are meeting regularly regarding the Heritage Project – a project steering group chaired by Anne Rippon (Simon Fotheringham represents the club), and a reference group comprising staff, fans and external non-football people with expertise in the area.

Steve will eventually produce a report which will be presented to FITC trustees and the board of the club.

Steve is looking to create dialogue with supporters re. hidden collections and items. He was keen to stress that the club isn't looking to take any items back – just to catalogue it and provide conservation advice to keep items in the best condition possible. He is also interested in finding out how fans would like to see heritage celebrated and suggested a public consultation at a future date.

Steve requested that information be passed to supporters via the Supporter Groups and attendees at the meeting. This will be shared via email by Sarah Gooding (SLO) once received.

- After discussion with supporters present which raised several ideas, Steve left the meeting. All following points were those raised by the supporter groups and independent supporters.

Agenda Item 2 (presented by)

Will there be an open day during the summer/close-season? (OSA & SC)

SG advised that the club are keen to host an open day this summer, but planning has not yet begun on this. There is currently no date scheduled in due to the schedules of any pitch works and players returning from summer holidays being changeable dependant on league positioning/play-offs, etc.

Ideas and suggestions discussed included the need for this event to happen on a Saturday or Sunday during school holidays, the inclusion of an open training session, player signings, kids' training sessions, shirt launch/unveiling, supporter group stalls, staff meet and greet, FITC involvement, not being too close to Community Day, not clashing with cricket/hockey fixtures or events in Nottingham, setting rooms for events to showcase facilities on offer and a meet the manager session.

Agenda Item 3 (presented by)

Query re new hospitality entrance on Meadow Lane and the effect it's having on the Derek Pavis Stand turnstile opposite (OSA)

SG explained that one block of turnstiles situated on the left-hand side of the main gates has been converted into a new hospitality entrance/ticket collection point, with four turnstiles thus removed. The conversion has been considered a success due to the following points:

- Hospitality guests previously entered via the Derek Pavis stand turnstiles, with the now-converted turnstile block unused due to lack of demand. Up to 500 hospitality guests per game now use the new hospitality entrance, thus relieving the pressure on the Derek Pavis stand turnstiles.
- The new entrance is also used as a ticketing collection point for hospitality guests and press, relieving pressure on the ticket office collection point.
- In accordance with the Green Guide, the removal of these four turnstiles still leave us with more than enough turnstiles for the ground capacity.
- All changes were approved and commended by the council and the Safety Advisory Group.

Agenda Item 4 (presented by)

Website links for supporter groups (OSA)

SG confirmed that the five recognised supporter groups (DSA, LGBT Pies, OSA, SC, ST) will be given a page on the website to provide the following:

- A brief overview of who they are
- An outline of what they do/their aims for the season
- Contact details

These pages will sit alongside an SLO page under the 'Fans' tab.

Confirmed that an email will be sent to each group with the details required and a deadline. *(NB: email sent to all groups on Friday 2 February. Deadline for information from supporter groups Friday 9 February. Deadline to set page live Monday 12 February).*

Agenda Item 5 (presented by)

Possibility of a coffee machine in concourses to ease queues at tea bars (OSA)

SG confirmed this had been passed to the commercial director and catering team to investigate with our current hot drinks supplier and the stadium facilities team. Locations of such machines would depend on water points etc. SG to update at next meeting.

Agenda Item 6 (presented by)

Contacting SLOs on a matchday/visibility of SLOs (OSA & SC)

SLO team confirmed they are keen to introduce matchday SLOs in easily-visible clothing to help with queries and provide a go-to point for supporters with any concerns. SG to discuss viability with club HR due to rules around volunteers etc, and SLO team to look at recruiting matchday SLOs.

Agenda Item 7 (presented by)

Possibility of an away travel loyalty scheme (SC)

SC explained about a handful of supporters who struggled with ticketing for Lincoln despite attending nearly every away game, due to not being season ticket holders.

SG confirmed that season ticket holders will always remain the priority. However, Tim Bradd does review ticketing requests from individuals such as those described on a case-by-case basis and knows most of these supporters. Tim considers it to be a small number of supporters who this could potentially affect, so feels there is no need to introduce a formal policy at this stage. He will continue dealing with these supporters personally.

Agenda Item 8 (presented by)

Hand dryers being slow and inefficient (SC)

SC explained that some supporters asked about the possibility of hand dryers in toilets around the ground being repaired/replaced as they are currently slow and inefficient, causing lengthy queues.

SG confirmed that the facilities team have recently checked all the hand dryers and obtained a quote for new dryers. At present all hand dryers work, although some are less powerful than others. At the moment there are no plans to replace hand dryers (approx. £300 per unit) but the facilities team will continue to ensure they are checked before each home game and any which cease to work are replaced.

Agenda Item 9 (presented by)

Improvements to Kop (Independent supporters)

Several suggestions were raised regarding improving the matchday experience in the Kop, including the general decoration and cleanliness, shelter over tea bars, access for disabled supporters, cleaning graffiti and access to tea bars. It was also noted that a noticeable improvement in stewarding had been seen by fans who sit in the lower sections of the Kop.

SG advised that the club were open to suggestions re improvements and acknowledge that the concourse and tea bars in this area are in need of improvement. It was noted that the Commercial

Director, Amanda Fletcher, had discussed some of these points at the FA Cup fifth-round draw event and confirmed that the club are considering redecoration in the Kop concourse in a similar effort (but different style) to that made to the Family Stand last summer, as well as improving the network which supports tea bar tills to make service faster. SG suggested that it would be appropriate to consult fans on what they would like to see in the Kop ahead of any redecoration.

In reference to disabled access, SG advised that an access audit has now taken place which the club are currently awaiting the report for.

SG also confirmed that she would speak to the stadium facilities manager re removal of graffiti in the Kop and general cleanliness, and highlighted that a considerable number of supporters had been in touch in the build-up to the Crewe game re. bird faeces on seats in the Kop, which the facilities team were working hard to clean.

Agenda Item 10 (presented by)

Product range/service in club shop (Independent supporters)

Suggestions were made for things supporters would like to see in the shop, as well as services they would like to see offered, such as the ability to pre-pay for items which may be out-of-stock and get them delivered when they were back in stock.

SG suggested the possibility of creating a fans' collection, designed and selected by a panel of supporters and, after lengthy discussion, committed to taking this idea to the commercial director and club shop manager post-meeting. *(NB: SG has now discussed this with the individuals briefly and it is felt it would be a good idea. Follow up discussion to be had with Chairman.)*

Agenda Item 11 (presented by)

Away travel (Independent supporters)

Some of the points had been covered earlier in the meeting but a discussion was held re. clarity on the different buses available. It was raised that a significant percentage of supporters think official club travel is run by the OSA. OSA explained that this is not the case and that club travel is run by Tim Bradd/ticket office, although OSA members do receive a discount akin to that of season ticket holders.

SC clarified that the bus they run is separate to the club's travel, although they are working on a proposal for the club re combining the two. SG confirmed that this had been discussed but there were no further actions on this until the SC provided a travel proposal which provides an adequate structure for the club's supporters. There are no plans to change the structure of the official club travel at this time.

The independent supporters also made suggestions re. improving the advertising of the club's away travel on the website, including using images of the buses, which SG agreed to take back to Tim Bradd/media team.

Agenda Item 12 (presented by)

An update on supporter groups – who does what? (Independent supporters)

Each supporter group gave a brief presentation as to what they do which was considered helpful by the others in the room. It became clear that the main confusion was between the OSA and SC, and it was agreed that generally this confusion is shared by the wider fanbase and that once the website pages are in place it will be clearer for supporters to understand the differences in the groups and why there were five different groups.

The OSA explained that they fundraise extensively for the benefit of the academy. The SC explained that they have only recently been welcomed back into the club, and that they were currently working on identifying an area of the club to fundraise for.

Agenda Item 13 (presented by)

Attracting new supporters – what are the club doing? (Independent supporters)

SG discussed the following areas which the club currently deliver:

- Generation 8 scheme (visiting schools throughout Nottingham, working with 7-8-year-olds and providing free shirts and tickets)
- Improved family offering and facilities
- Marketing via paid methods (not just club website and social media pages), as well as directly to families etc
- Advertising on the city trams and in publications such as Leftlion and free papers delivered to NG postcodes
- Equality and ethnic diversity survey – concluded on 31 January. Results will now be analysed and used to help the club reach new supporters, working with equality and diversity lead, Elaine Bond.
- Working with two universities at present on marketing projects for their students, including engaging more of the student community

The group then discussed what else could be done and made the following suggestions which SG agreed to take back to the relevant staff:

- Follow up to Generation 8 – what happens after the first visit? How do we attract them back? Supporters suggested reduced ticket pricing for family groups.
- Engaging with lapsed fans
- Attracting existing fans who maybe can't afford to attend – linking up with local businesses and large employers to offer reduced rate tickets for a handful of games throughout the season. Maybe a 'business of the week' similar to 'school of the week'.
- A presence at city centre/localised events such as riverside festival, Christmas markets, the Nottingham beach.
- Introduction of a student ticketing structure
- Clear policy on ST transfers

Agenda Item 14 (presented by)

Safe standing (Independent supporters)

This point had also been raised at the FA Cup fifth-round draw event, and the Chairman had stated he was open to it. One supporter advised that he was working with SG re the viability of safe-standing and was attending an upcoming parliamentary event re. this topic. It was agreed that they would continue to feed back into the club via SG.

Agenda Item 15 (presented by)

Matchday catering including vegan/vegetarian options (Independent supporters)

Acknowledged difficulties with tea bars around the ground with growing crowds – also raised at FA Cup fifth-round draw event on Monday prior to this meeting, where commercial director, Amanda Fletcher, had discussed the improvements being made to the network supporting the tills, making them faster and more reliable.

SG agreed to take the following suggestions back to the commercial director and catering team:

- Short term: more tills, faster staff, positive reward for staff to encourage faster service
- Long term: introduction of a fanzone open to all supporters pre-match, comprising a variety of catering facilities, retail unit and ticketing unit. Suggested site: behind Kop Stand. This could then be used by supporters from the Kop at half-time.

Re. the selection of items on offer, SG advised that the club really like to know what supporters want to be able to buy (unfortunately chips are not possible in the tea bars). Initial suggestions included soup, which SG advised the catering team are currently looking at, as well as the option of a chilli box. SG will discuss with the commercial director/catering team re. a fans' consultation on items for tea bars.

The above also applies to vegan and vegetarian options. At present the tea bars sell cheese and onion pies and a vegan burger (with floured bap rather than brioche bun for vegans).

Agenda Item 16 (presented by)

Disabled access/facilities (Independent supporters)

SG confirmed that the club have recently commissioned an access audit which took place in November, and the report is due any time now. Once this is received the club will liaise with the DSA via its DLO and SLO and review the suggestions made to improve the access to Meadow Lane.

AOB

SLO team informed the attendees that Dougie Pullen will be stepping down at the end of the current season, as the two-year term set out when the SLO team was formed will be at an end. (Based on a two-year term, the attendees were also informed that Rob Holland's term will come to an end in November 2018).

The SLO team presented re. replacing the 'club-elected fan' with a second 'fan-elected fan' and asked for feedback as to how the group thought this would be perceived. Some supporters suggested the possibility of the role not being replaced and just having one fan-elected fan working alongside SG.

The SLO team advised that if they were to advertise for another fan-elected fan it may be worth also advertising the role of matchday SLOs to be introduced in the summer ready for the 2018-19 season (TBC) as well as to advertise for a replacement for Rob in preparation for November.

Date of next meeting

TBC. SLO team suggested Wednesday 25 April.

Follow-up actions

- 1) SG to obtain digital copy of Heritage Project information sheet from Steve LeMottee and circulate to attendees
- 2) SG to request details for website page via email
- 3) SLO team to send survey link to confirm acceptance of next meeting date