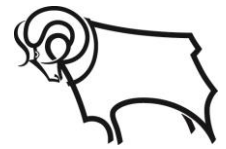


# **DERBY COUNTY SUPPORTERS' CHARTER GROUP MEETING: 20/03/24**

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## **Meeting Details:**

Wednesday 20th March 2024, 6:30pm start in the Boardroom at Pride Park Stadium

## **Attendees:**

Jim Coyle - Rams Trust

Gary Dempsey - Derby County Disabled Supporters' Club

Nick Webster

Andy Ellis – The Derby County Collection

Lynn Hemsworth - Derby County Supporters' Club

Mike Rothern - Black & White Together

Derby County Owner - David Clowes

Derby County Chief Executive Officer - Stephen Pearce

Derby County Chief Commercial Officer - Dave Biggar

Derby County Senior Communications Officer - Tom Loakes

Derby County Head of Marketing - Megan Patrick

Derby County Head of Ticketing - Tyrone Harta

Derby County Supporter Liaison Officer - Emma Drury

## **Apologies:**

Rams Active

Punjabi Rams

## **Pre-Meeting Discussion:**

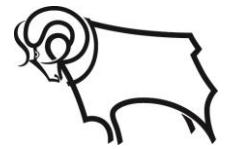
None

## **Agenda Topics:**

### **HERITAGE**

**Archie Goodall Grave:** This was raised at the last meeting about him being in an unmarked grave and the club were going to see what could be done with Wathall's. This would have been a great bit of publicity in recognising a great former player. This has been seen and picked up elsewhere now. Can we ensure that points are followed up in a reasonable amount of time?

**A:** The club was made aware of the crowdfunding campaign for Archie Goodall's unmarked grave earlier this year, which followed on from the last Supporters' Charter Group Meeting, and albeit conversations were subsequently had with the organisers, the club accepts that it needs to work within a shorter timeframe to possibly assist with such endeavours.



**Founder's Grave** - On a similar note, our founder's grave needs some attention. Mr Morley's grave has lost all the lettering and unless you know which it is or where it is, his memory and place in our history will be lost.

**A:** The club will engage with Andy Ellis, the Club Historian, with a view to taking action on this. A further update will be provided at the next Supporters' Charter Group Meeting.

**Player Unique Numbers** - England cricketers have long since had their 'number' on the caps and shirts and there has been a steady spread into football clubs. Some clubs have their player number on the match shirts. Stockport County produce framed certificates with a special seal for players and families of deceased players, West Bromwich Albion produce embroidered caps and Tottenham Hotspur, Ipswich Town and others are finalising their plans. Something we could/should be interested in, with sponsorship, for our 1,180 players?

**A:** The club will engage with Andy Ellis, the Club Historian, on this topic which might be best aligned with a potential Hall of Fame and rotating Memorabilia Display/Museum at Pride Park. An update will be provided at the next Supporters' Charter Group Meeting.

**Celebrating 50 Years Since 1974/75 Title Win** - Next year is the 50th anniversary of our second league title success. Could we wear the kit from that year? What other plans are in place to celebrate this occasion and how can we help with them? If there are events planned, can fans be engaged with for suggestions or possible ways to contribute prior to the events?

**A:** The club is very much aware of the 50-year anniversary of the 1974/75 First Division title win. At an appropriate time, the club will provide an update as to how it will, ideally in tandem with the players, staff and supporters of that era, commemorate the achievement.

### **SUPPORTER EXPERIENCE**

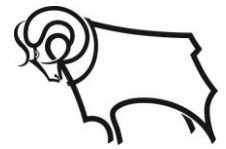
**Home Attendances** - Are the current numbers announced of actual people at the game or do they include Season Ticket Holders who aren't present?

**A:** Following the same approach as most sports, the announced attendance is based on tickets issued, including Season Ticket Holders and matchday hospitality members/guests, and **not** the turnstile count.

**Atmosphere** - Many supporters leave the ground early and watch the TVs in the concourses. Could these be turned off by at least the 90th minute with a plea from the club to stay in the ground and get behind the players? When we went to Barnsley, they made a great effort to improve the atmosphere, with their supporters encouraged to bring scarves, they gave flags to dozens of young supporters before kick-off and had seven huge flags in the opposite stand to the Derby fans. Are there any ideas about what we could do and what can we do to help?

**A:** We will monitor the situation relating to the TVs in the concourses to obtain a greater understanding before making any decision. On the second point, ahead of last weekend's fixture against Bolton Wanderers, some supporters had access to the stadium in advance of the turnstiles opening to prepare flags in the stands and took to social media to encourage fellow supporters to wear club colours. We try to take advantage of opportunities, where appropriate, to help enhance the matchday atmosphere and have assessed various options, although the fervour before, during and after Saturday's game was palpable with players and coaching staff exceptionally impressed with many commenting on it after the final whistle. We are also reviewing an online system whereby any supporter can conveniently submit their request for bringing a flag and/or banner into Pride Park, which might help further enhance the fan experience.

**East Stand** - Why are the blocks at the South End of the East Stand still not on sale on a match-by-match basis? This has severely affected the atmosphere and matchday experience for a number of Season Ticket Holders in this area as well as those who liked to sit in those blocks.



**A:** Unfortunately, we have encountered some situations where supporters have been persistently standing in EU-J and EL-I in the East Stand without regard for Season Ticket Holders sitting within those sections. We are being closely monitored by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority on this and, as it is not a permitted Safe Standing Area, there is a real risk that these sections could be closed if supporters do not conform to the ground regulations. Although seats in these sections were made available for the match against Bolton and will, subject to demand, be made available for any/all of the remaining home games this season, there will be a requirement for supporters to be considerate of their fellow supporters and aforementioned Sports Grounds Safety Authority scrutiny.

**DCFCMegastore Parking** - Are there any plans for the remaining of the disabled parking bays outside the DCFCMegastore? And, if so, when will this work be completed? The current bays are badly worn and hard to differentiate from the normal bays and are therefore regularly being abused (intentionally or otherwise) by non-disabled drivers attending either the DCFCMegastore or Greggs.

**A:** The club is committed to resolving this issue during the close season.

**Matchday Parking** - Can a list be obtained or published of games where disabled blue badge holders are to be prevented from parking on Derwent Parade between its junctions with the A6 and Royal Way?

**A:** We do not expect any issues for the rest of this season, although this is a Derby City Council decision as opposed to the club. If there are any changes, we will endeavour to communicate this directly to the supporters we believe will be impacted as soon as possible.

**Away Memberships For 2024/25 (particularly if in League One)** - What categories are proposed? We would imagine there are many more people in the 15+ category now. Is there any scope for 'Rams on Tour' or similar scheme for those that travel to all away games?

**A:** The Away Ticket Membership has worked well over the last two seasons. However, we will review the data and qualifying criteria ahead of the 2024/25 season to determine what we believe will be the most practical and equitable solution for everyone. However, the 'Rams on Tour' scheme has not operated for several years with currently no scope for this to be reinstated.

**Rams TV** - Will RamsTV subscribers be charged for friendlies again in pre-season? If so, what is the point of fans subscribing from May to July?

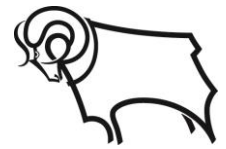
**A:** We have to charge for each individual fixture when streaming individual friendlies live, based on the pre-season friendly commercial agreement between the two clubs. Supporters do have the option to cancel, and reactivate, their monthly subscription at any time.

**Stewarding** - Are away fans at Pride Park Stadium subject to the same more intense checks than home fans that Derby fans experience at away grounds and how much contact does the club have with the police at away clubs? This may be something for all clubs in the EFL to discuss, but as away fans it often feels we are treated as guilty until proven innocent and in a way that would not be acceptable in any area of life in the UK. Recent heavy-handed policing at Bristol Rovers was a particular case in point.

**A:** We believe that everyone is treated fairly and correctly at Pride Park Stadium on a matchday. The volume of steward checks for away supporters is based on the advance police security risk report ahead of each fixture.

**Food & Drink** - How closely are away section food sales modelled at Pride Park and do clubs 'compare notes'? Almost without exception, food kiosks in Derby away ends are sold out of food well before the end of half-time. It seems fans miss out and clubs are missing out on revenue, that could be avoided with a little information sharing.

**A:** Where practical, we try to make club-specific offerings for away supporters. For example, for Saturday's game against Bolton Wanderers we sourced and sold pasties from Bolton-based Carrs pasties.



**Express Lanes** – Why do the express lanes move no quicker than other lanes in the bar queues?

**A:** We have staff members testing and monitoring how we can further improve service on matchdays but there have been some instances where supporters try to order food when they get to the Express Lane counter causing a frustrating backlog and invariably slowing the process.

**Post-Match Offer** - Does the club's licence mean bars have to be closed a certain amount of time after the end of the game? Other sports and clubs leave some (not all) bars open after the game and encourage fans to spend their money in the ground rather than at a local pub. This also occurs in hospitality areas where often fans/sponsors are ushered out when still keen to spend more money.

**A:** We have tried this on many occasions for the concourse outlets but with very limited success, hence it's no longer offered. The hospitality bars invariably remain open for one hour after the final whistle unless there's another event using the lounge or suite afterwards, which requires set-up and crossover of staff.

**Betting Stands** – Where have they gone in the South Stand and other stands?

**A:** We currently do not have an in-stadium betting partner. We are reviewing options for next season, but more betting now takes place via apps on smartphones as opposed to betting booths. Consequently, for now, a number of booths have been turned into refreshment kiosks to help provide further options and quicker service to supporters.

**Signage To Pride Park Stadium** - Can the club try and ask the council to update the brown tourist signs to ensure any with iPro Stadium are changed back to Pride Park! (A6 from Belper at A38 roundabout still has iPro Stadium).

**A:** We will ask the question of Derby City Council.

## **PLAYING MATTERS**

**Ball Retrieval** - Can somebody please explain the role of the ball retrieval team? Sometimes they are inside and sometimes outside the advertising hoardings. Sometimes offer a ball, most times don't.

**A:** We acknowledge the supporters' observations on this matter, but it is a process determined by the individual match officials' requests/instructions on the day of the game.

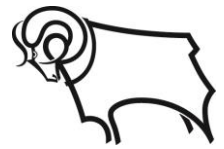
## **GOVERNANCE \***

*\* This will probably be the remit of the Supporters' Board in future, but until established, we continue to ask about these items at Supporters' Charter Group.*

**Finances** – It was recently announced that Derby County had a £10.6m operating loss last year. Can the club confirm whether this was due to outstanding debts or takeover costs, or whether this is a realistic expectation of ongoing annual losses of over £10m? If so, is this sustainable for the owner on a longer-term basis, or do costs need to be further reduced or is outside investment being sought?

**A:** This was discussed by Stephen Pearce at the Fans Forum last night. The operating loss did have some minor outstanding debts, but not major. Our Business Plan and budget is in place for the next five years, and we know what we have to operate within and are comfortable with that.

**Player Purchases** - Without going into specific numbers, can the 'loan pot' and 'permanent pot' situation that came to light around the signing of Corey Blackett-Taylor please be explained? Surely cash in or out is the same irrespective of whether it is a transfer fee or a loan fee, and the same for wages for a loanee against a permanent



signing? How were we then able to sign Dwight Gayle? Are these restrictions from the EFL or due to our own budgeting?

**A:** Stephen Pearce has discussed the majority of this topic in the local media recently, notably the money pots, and also at the Fans Forum. Paul Warne has also talked about these topics during and just after the transfer window.

**Board** – It is now 18 months since the Supporters' Charter Group were told a Chair would soon be announced. Are new board members actively being sought, to be Chair or otherwise? Is a Director of Football in the business strategy?

**A:** We appreciate the time it has taken on this, but we are committed to getting the right person and right fit for the role of Chair and any additional board members. A Director of Football is not in our thinking and thought process, but we are continuing to rebuild our football operation both at first team and Academy level.

**Club Strategy** – Without giving away anything commercially sensitive, could the club publicly state its aims and short, medium and long-term objectives, both on and off the pitch?

**A:** In short, there is a five-year business plan the club is working to. In terms of driving forwards, on and off the field, we will strive to generate additional revenue through various means to increase what we are able to additionally spend as a club. That could be through additional sponsorship, other revenue streams and potential player trading if this fits within our strategy.

**Supporters' Board** - What sort of response are we getting to the advert for independent directors so far in terms of interest and completed applications?

**A:** We have had a positive response so far and, at the time of writing, we have had 58 applications. The Football Supporters' Association is currently assisting the club in putting together a panel to go through the interview process. We hope to have the independent directors in place for the start of next season.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**

**1.** The club would like to remind supporters about Derby County Women facing Nottingham Forest Women at Pride Park Stadium on Sunday 31st March (2pm kick-off). Tickets are on sale on [dafc.co.uk](https://www.dafc.co.uk) and from the Ticket Office. The Women's side formally joined the club last summer and we would encourage supporters to show their backing to Sam Griffiths and her side.