

Chairs Report – RamsTrust AGM 2024

In my first Chair's report last year, I talked of a year of transition and change and that continues to be the theme for both Derby County and for RamsTrust.

Firstly, what a season we had on the pitch last year, securing promotion to the Championship, culminating in one of the most joyous days at Pride Park with our 2-0 win over Carlisle United on the last day of the season. I'm sure it's one of those days that Rams fans will remember for the rest of their lives. We have had a solid start to the Championship, hopefully we can build from that and stabilise in this league and continue to build and progress. Congratulations to Paul Warne and his team in leading us to a well-deserved promotion.

Off the field we have seen more continuity. Under David Clowes, we have an owner who offers stability and, although often being seen as a reluctant owner, it is clear that David understands the importance of Derby County to the city and the wider community of Derbyshire.

The purpose of RamsTrust is to strengthen the voice of fans in the decision-making process at Derby County, to be a voice for strong supporter representation and along with other members of the SCG (Supporters Charter Group) work with the club to ensure fans' opinions and views are heard.

I spoke last year about the progress made by the SCG on how we as a collective could envisage a Supporters' Board working at Derby County. Following consultation with the fan base, and with full support of the club, it was agreed that a Supporters' Board would progress at Derby County alongside the SCG.

It has understandably taken time and work to establish and agree the framework of how these two groups would operate together. We have worked very closely with the FSA (Football Supporters Association) to ensure that we have best practice – I would like to thank the FSA and Ashley Brown in particular for their support and advice on this.

The constitution of the Supporters' Board is critical – it was agreed that up to three places on the board would come from established Supporters' groups. Both RamsTrust and Punjabi Rams accepted places on the board. The remaining places were recruited independently. There was a high number of applicants for these places and a rigorous recruitment process was held. Following this process, four independent board members have now been appointed.

For RamsTrust, we discussed at length who we would nominate as our candidate and I am delighted to take on the role of the RamsTrust representative on the Supporters' Board. I will endeavour to ensure that the voice of RamsTrust members and the wider fanbase are represented.

It is still early days in the Supporters' Board journey – we have now met, initially informally and subsequently had a first meeting where we are working through how we will operate and communicate with the wider fan base. Please bear with us as we develop this but rest assured that we will proactively communicate as transparently and as quickly as possible.

Outside of the Supporters' Board, we continue to work hard on all things Derby County. We were delighted to ask our members to vote for our first Player of the Season Award – Curtis Nelson was the recipient and RamsTrust member Kevin Savage, along with RamsTrust photographer Jen Maskill, made the presentation on our behalf. We look forward to awarding a Player of the Season on an annual basis.

We have updated the RamsTrust website and modernised our logo. We have also started to issue more regular communications to our members, including interviews with former players who have shared their memories about their time with Derby. Massive thanks to Steve Kitson and Ollie Wright who have been integral on this. Under their guidance, we will continue the work to improve our communications with you, our members.

We have renewed Pride Park as an 'Asset of Community Value' (ACV) with Derby City Council and have applied to do the same thing with Moor Farm (under Erewash jurisdiction) which is due for renewal this month. Both of these have been applied for with the full support of the Club.

The new Board members who were elected last year have made a real difference to how we operate – Steve and Ollie on Comms and Tris Weavers as our new Treasurer. We look forward to welcoming our new elected members this year and would ask that if any members here would like to become more involved with the Trust, please do let us know. We are here to represent you and welcome ideas from everyone on how we can improve and do things differently.

On that note, I would like to close by thanking all of my fellow Board members for their incredible work this year. I would particularly like to thank Angie Kerry, who does such a huge amount of work as both Secretary and Membership Secretary – it is a massive task and her work is hugely appreciated. I would also like to thank Jim Coyle as Vice-Chair and Tris Weavers who has taken on the role of Treasurer this year. And finally, there are a number of board members who are standing down after many years of service. My thanks to Martin Rawson and Kevin Hepworth who have both played a key role during my time with the RamsTrust Board and in the years before.

Finally, it will not have gone unnoticed that after 22 years of service, Elaine Dean is also standing down from the RamsTrust Board. Elaine has worked tirelessly on behalf of RamsTrust for this incredible amount of time – she has been integral to the establishment of RamsTrust and I know that I speak on behalf of the whole Board in expressing our heartfelt thanks for her commitment.

Hilary Leam
Chair, RamsTrust
September 2024