



## **Bath City FC Supporters Society**

### **2023 Interim General Meeting**

**7.00pm on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023  
at Twerton Park and via Zoom**

#### **Confirmed minutes**

**Present:** Pete McCormack (in the Chair) and approximately 25 members

**Apologies received from:** Jon Blain, Paul Brotherton, Oliver Holtaway & Jon Payne

#### **1. Supporters Society update**

PM welcomed everyone to the meeting. He particularly welcomed new members to the Society, 49 of whom had joined in the last week or so following a recruitment drive via the Club's social media messaging. He outlined that the Society holds 54% of the Club shares and elects six of the nine members of the Club Board and that he as Society Chair attends Club Board meetings.

The Society has contributed to the Club to the tune of £8,000 over the last year, has contributed £2,000 to the Club in return for promotional activities, has contributed £1,000 to the Alex Fletcher fund, contributed £900 towards the women's team and £800 for a volunteers celebration event. Al Lord, Treasurer, confirmed that the Society currently has a balance of approximately £10,000. Members subs and the 100 Club are key fundraisers for the Society and participation is encouraged.

Pete highlighted the succession planning strategy developed by the Society and being led by William Heath. This aims to encourage more people to join the Society and to stand for election to the Society Committee and the Club Board. Vacancies will arise in June this year and it's important to have a stream of new people taking part.

He stressed that big decisions will need to be made in the near future, particularly in relation to the redevelopment, the repayment of debt and how to improve performance on the pitch. Pete pointed out that we're all in this together and that working together will allow us to build on the good progress made since community ownership began.

In answer to a question, Pete confirmed that the succession planning strategy will be put on the Society website.

#### **2. Club Update including redevelopment and 3g pitch.**

Nick Blofeld agreed that progress has been made in recent years, particularly the big increase in match attendances and a higher profile of the Club within the city. He highlighted the importance of redevelopment and outlined recent events. There is now one developer, Rengen, currently working with the Club to devise a new and more modest scheme which would likely involve a refurbishment rather than replacement of the main stand. It would release hundreds of thousands of pounds (rather than millions) for the Club. This scheme is likely to involve the Club's land only, rather than the land owned by Greenacre. There would be income from renting out space (rather than from holding events) and it would not involve



student housing. Nick hoped that details will be available within six months and will be shared with Society members.

He went on to say that a 3g pitch was part of the original redevelopment plan but the proposal now is to install a 3g pitch ahead of the redevelopment and a planning application has recently been announced. The Club thinks that this would generate £140,000 per annum in terms of profit and loss, which would transform the Club. However the capital cost of the project has to be funded and a successful planning application would help attract potential funders. While it may be possible to install the pitch this summer it is more likely to be in 2024. He referred to the recent successful application for 3g in Larkhall and highlighted that the Club's main funders are supportive of the project. The Club needs to move from 'hand to mouth' to financial sustainability. In answer to questions Nick said that the project would cost approximately £700,000 and that the Club has an outline of where this money might come from. He added that the 3g pitch would need to be replaced every 5-10 years and (according to current rules) would be replaced with grass if the Club were to be promoted into the EFL. He was optimistic that the project can be achieved and that it is likely to be well used by the Bath City teams and also rented out to raise income. Jane Jones added that there is a shortage of 3g pitches in Bath. It would also reduce or eliminate the loss of matches to the weather. Nick also confirmed that there will be some pitch levelling for 3g although it doesn't need to be perfectly flat.

Nick thanked to all the volunteers who devote their time to help keep the Club going and called for more people to get involved. He finished by commenting on Alex Fletcher's remarkable recovery and that Alex had thanked everyone for their support.

There was a question about the Club's loss last year (approx £80k) and whether this is be repeated this year. NB reported that the Club is still loss-making although losses are expected to be lower this season. The cancellation of matches is a key factor and there was some discussion about the increase in the playing and management budget in recent years. Jane Jones added that there is a strategic issue about the type of football club we are and how we develop local players. The point was also made that as a community owned Club we have a responsibility to benefit the community through footballing activities.

Jane Jones briefly reported on progress with the women's team, who are currently second in Division One of tier seven of the women's football pyramid. Plans for next season include the establishment of a women's reserve team and an under 18 girls' team. Bath College have seen an increasing interest in women's football and the establishment of a female academy programme is being looked at. Jane is also looking at sponsorship for future years.

### **3. Bath City Foundation Impact Report**

James Carlin, a long-standing Bath City supporter, has recently become Chief Executive of the Bath City Foundation and summarised its work. It works with 15 schools across BANES, has five coaches and worked with 2,300 people over the last year. Every week the Foundation runs 28 sessions including walking football, women's football and youth football sessions. It works with Bath Mind, Swallow (a disability charity) and does prevention work with young people. It is an inclusive charity working with different groups in the community.

One project is Reconnecting Twerton, which supports 20 people living on their own in Twerton and which has attracted £15k of funding from GWR to support weekly sessions and awaydays with other Clubs in the region. A dedicated women and girls' officer, Emily Stephens, worked with 769 people from primary and secondary schools across the area in the last year, including a summer tournament.



Other activities include Man versus Fat for people with a high BMI, a new partnership with Julian House, and work with the police crime prevention service. James thought that there was more scope for the Club management and players to get involved in work with schools, which would in turn benefit the Club.

Future plans include working with BANES public health team, working with Threeways School, improving the Foundation's health and wellbeing offer, and doing more with Bath College and the universities. James asked if anyone present works for a company, or runs a company, to consider sponsorship of the Foundation, and similarly if anyone does a fund-raising activity (eg the Bath Half) to consider raising the money for the Foundation. He also invited people to get involved in the activities themselves, eg walking football.

James finally reported that Helen Donovan has stepped down as Chair and the new Chair of the Foundation is Rob Mullen.

In answer to a question, James said that the priority schools are those in and around Twerton where the need is greatest, but football sessions are held with a wider range of schools. These can be very cost-effective for those schools as an alternative to private providers.

The impact report will be launched shortly and will be sent to Society members.

#### 4. **Motion 1.**

"The Society should ensure that, where possible, Bath City FC has no direct association with or contract with, any external gambling companies, other than lotteries, and does not promote gambling companies, other than lotteries, in any of the Club's official output". Proposed: Alan Finney, Seconded: Martin Powell.

Alan Finney introduced the three motions concerning gambling, highlighting that problem gambling blights many people's lives. He said that the motion is not against gambling per se, but is concerned with the way it is advertised as being a normal part of a day at the football. This doesn't help tackle problem gambling, and the association with football clubs and leagues makes it seem acceptable without caution. He highlighted that the motions don't include lotteries.

Alan noted that Bath City currently complies with motion 1 and said that if passed it would enable the Society to consolidate this approach for the future.

#### 5. **Motion 2.**

"The Society should ensure that, where possible, Bath City FC should oppose or vote against any direct association with or contract with, any external gambling companies, other than lotteries, at league level". Proposed: Alan Finney, Seconded: Martin Powell.

AF recognised that Bath City is just one club in the league and that NLS clubs have less voting power than National League Clubs, but nevertheless felt that the Club should use its vote when it has the opportunity.

Martin Powell added that live streaming of matches is being trialled in this league and that the issue of gambling advertising may arise in this context in future.



**6. Motion 3.**

"The Society should ensure that, where possible, Bath City FC should avoid the display of logos of any external gambling companies, other than lotteries, within any interviews officially posted on YouTube". Proposed: Alan Finney, Seconded: Martin Powell

AF noted that a background display used for Bath City YouTube interviews does have gambling company logos but that many other NLS and NLN Clubs doesn't use this background so it doesn't appear to be compulsory.

PM then opened up debate on all three of the above motions. Points made by those attending were that:

- Banning advertising would potentially deprive the Club of very valuable income.
- The motions referred to Bath City as a Football Club but we need to recognise the limits of the Society as majority shareholder in directing Club decisions. For example it might mean the Society then putting forward a motion to the Club AGM.
- Motion 1 refers to direct association with gambling companies, which is broader than just contracting with those companies.
- The Advertising Standards Authority is putting measures in place to tighten up the environment about gambling and football.
- Another option is to make decisions on a case-by-case basis rather than having a firm policy that might lock the Club to a position.
- Ethical tests for advertising are complex and difficult and its hard to draw the line as to what is and isn't acceptable.
- Dulwich Hamlet covers up gambling logos and gets less money from the National League as a result.
- As signed up members of the League the Club has to adhere to League policies and requirements otherwise the Club could be fined or ultimately removed from the League.
- The motions might mean that the Club could miss out on some of the income resulting from a good FA Cup run, should that happen.
- It is important to have a Club that has values and sources of funding that we can support.
- Many other Clubs have no backgrounds in YouTube backgrounds.
- If gambling is a problem sponsor, then what about alcohol companies/pubs?

PM invited those present to vote on the motions and said that if they were agreed at the meeting they would then go to the full membership for a vote.

Voting results at the IGM:

Motion 1: In favour 7, against 8.

Motion 2: In favour 18, against 1.

Motion 3: In favour 8, against 9.

PM said that Motion 2 would go to the membership for a vote. AF thanked all those who took part in the discussion and noted that there was some opposition to association with gambling companies in the Society.



**7. Motion 4.**

"The Society should, by the date of the next Society Interim General Meeting, aim to publish a high level/basic, long term local talent player development strategy/roadmap through cooperation between Bath City FC, Bath City Youth FC, Bath City Academy and Bath City Foundation". Proposed: Robin Thomas, Seconded: James Carlin.

Robin Thomas highlighted that Bath City is a massive asset to the city and has substantial resources and skills through the Club, Bath City Youth, the Foundation and the Academy. He feels that in the long term there's potential to achieve multiple objectives by working together and making things happen. He highlighted the plans of the Women's team to establish a reserve team and women's academy team creating a better pathway. He pointed to progress been made by other some other clubs and that academy pathways are well established in many Clubs across Europe. He noted that Bath City Youth is in the process of applying to be a Sports Club with a form of charitable status which would allow access to more sources of funding and is expecting to take over Lansdown South Playing Fields.

In discussion the following points were made:

- As a community benefit society the Society has a key role in supporting local people but there is also a good business case for developing good pathways for local players (eg through future transfer monies).
- The motion would need to be backed up with specific actions, eg getting more people on board to lead the process, have conversations with key people and develop specific plans.
- Many conversations that would support such a strategy are already taking place.
- There needs to be a group of people to get together and turn a strategy into a plan.
- There is a key link here with the 3g pitch project led by Peter Headington.
- There is currently a gap for an under 23s/reserve team with no obvious league for it to play in.

PM asked for a vote on this motion and it was carried without a count being made. He said that it will now be put to the membership.

**NOTE:** *In the subsequent members' vote the results were:*

*"The Society should ensure that, where possible, Bath City FC should oppose or vote against any direct association with or contract with, any external gambling companies, other than lotteries, at league level".*

*For: 132 votes*

*Against: 28 votes*

*"The Society should, by the date of the next Society Interim General Meeting, aim to publish a high level/basic, long term local talent player development strategy/roadmap through cooperation between Bath City FC, Bath City Youth FC, Bath City Academy and Bath City Foundation".*

*For: 151 votes*

*Against: 8 votes.*

*Both motions were therefore carried.*



#### **8. Any other business.**

Steve Skinner asked PM whether the views of the Society are sufficiently taken on board by the Club. PM replied that he attends every Club Board meeting, and talks to NB regularly, and feels that yes, they are. Christopher Flanagan added that the Society appoints six of the nine Club Board members and although it can't specifically tell them what to do it does have sufficient influence. SS was concerned that the number of people actively running things in the Society has diminished. PM mentioned that Society Committee vacancies will arise in June and invited fresh people and ideas to come in.

CF congratulated all involved in the successful establishment of the women's team, which is a great achievement for the Club.

#### **9. Close**

PM thanked everyone for attending and contributing and then closed the meeting.