



**Bath City FC Supporters Society  
Twerton Park Pitch - Open Discussion Meeting  
7.30pm on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018  
Twerton Park**

**Minutes**

**Committee Members Present:** Michael Clayton, Cheryl Bradley, Shane Morgan (also a Director), Jon Bickley (also a Director), Steve Skinner, Ken Loach, Paul Brotherton

**Directors:** Nick Blofeld, Martin Powell, Paul Williams, Andrew Pierce, Sally Harris

Meeting led by Michael Clayton and Nick Blofeld. Phil Tanner also assisted in answering questions.

*\*NB. References to "3G" are shorthand for a "FIFA Quality Pro International standard pitch" for the purposes of this summary document.*

**Introduction by Michael and Nick**

The meeting is an opportunity to air views and ask questions in order for members to make an informed decision regarding the pitch when voting at a forthcoming EGM. The Feasibility Study, an FAQ document and a Supporters' document have been made available to all members, and other related documents are available to view in the Club Office. An indication as to whether a 3G pitch will be installed is needed at the pre-planning stage of the redevelopment – mid/late April 2018.

The recent fan survey, which received >500 responses, indicated that the members' top priority is to make the Club financially sustainable, we are currently running at an approximate loss of £90k each year. At present there are no other suggestions to significantly increase income. The League has changed the rules on new Director's loans. These now must be as share capital or gifts. Therefore, the model that has been used historically to fund the club is no longer an option.

The commercial impact of installing a 3G pitch is c£600k, this would be a FIFA Quality Pro International standard pitch. The Feasibility Study assumes an annual profit contribution of £65k, based on 35 hours per week usage (this could go up to 50 hours). The Feasibility Study based this on a calculation of the latent demand in B&NES for 3G pitches.

Current Football League regulations are for a grass pitch, but the EFL will vote again in June on the use of 3G. Therefore, this may not be an issue by the time City are in a position to be promoted. There is an option to take up the artificial pitch, if necessary. In addition, 3G would need replacing after 5-7 years depending on usage but the cost of this is baked into the business case.

As part of the redevelopment the pitch will be levelled using spoil from the building work, whether the grass pitch is retained, or we opt for 3G. This will also make a saving in not having to transport the waste, and cause less traffic disruption locally.

**Questions, Discussion Points and Views of Attendees**

***£60k per year profit to break-even would take 10 years.***

There are grants and donations that can be applied for, also there is a charitable trust in Bath that has already offered a £100k grant. The £65k profit is net of capital.

The Board have recommended 3G subject to supporter/community endorsement, the Football League position and funding strategy. More detailed analysis is needed on demand and operating costs. If 3G is included in the redevelopment it is more likely that the Council will approve planning for the overall redevelopment as we will be doing something for the community.

***What impact would 3G have on the redevelopment?***

The pitch will be levelled anyway, and we will be doing something for the community.

***Would more changing rooms be needed?***

Not necessarily, many players come ready changed, but we would look into this further.

***Is £600k dependent on the redevelopment?***

No, we could split 3G and the redevelopment apart. We would like to be able to say at the pre-planning meeting that we intend installing 3G, the final decision is needed later in the programme. We don't know where the £600k is coming from yet, but grants/donations are available, plus money from the redevelopment could be freed-up.

***The revenue forecast does not include for a full-time member of staff, someone will have to administer the usage up to 12 hours per day, 7 days each week.***

***1 full-time member of staff 9am -7pm, 7 days per week?***

We already have a full-time member of staff, the role could be changed. Also there could be part-time staff and volunteers. This is the model that Sutton use.

Lots of details still to be worked out when we know the design of the building and the facilities.

***How much is the cost of laying a grass pitch?***

We haven't looked into that. A construction company are looking at covering a 3G pitch with a natural top at another club, the estimated cost is £350k-£400k. The cost of re-laying a grass pitch has not been included, but spoil from the redevelopment will be used to level the pitch, either grass or 3G.

***If the pitch is levelled, what about the terracing?***

There are knock-on costs and implications, especially the Bath end, details will follow on this during the redevelopment.

***Will the spoil raise the level of the Bath end?***

This will likely also go onto the terracing, but this detail needs to be worked up.

***Would the people who live behind the Bath end object?***

We haven't asked them yet! There's no point asking them until we know what we're doing. There are a lot of elements that still need to be tied down.

***The redevelopment isn't definite yet, if it doesn't go ahead is 3G more important, would this put the Club even more in debt?***

If the redevelopment doesn't go ahead it makes 3G even more important.

***With rental of 35 hrs per week maximum, the Club having 7 hours leaving 28 hours for Bath City Youth, BWB and Larkhall covering the evening periods, what usage is envisaged between 9 am and 5 pm?***

Corporate use, and schools are crying out for 3G, and through the Foundation there are indications that schools would use it. Odd Down is currently fully booked-up during the day. There is also walking football and the Academy. 35 hours is an average.

***Was Lewes FC intentionally not spoken to? They have said their 3G made less money than expected.***

Sally Harris and Oliver Holtaway did visit Lewes on other issues, but 3G was not specifically discussed. They will now be contacted. Oliver advised (over the internet) that this is a training pitch rented from a school.

***Weekday slots are earmarked for schools, but should we be charging £70 per hour?***

There will be cheaper slots and sliding scales of prices. These will all need to be determined. The business case in the Feasibility Study is conservative and illustrative.

***There are 3 pitches that might be worth looking at - Keynsham, Dartford practice pitch (and WSM building a training pitch).***

***90% of Football League players don't want 3G. Is it fair on players if they don't want to play on 3G? There are more injuries and longer recovery, therefore could cost more with a larger playing squad or more loanees. Would it put players off joining us?***

This should be left to the manager. Eastbourne did have issues with some older players but this was resolved. Some injuries would be the same on grass.

***If we intend to borrow to finance 3G, would Twerton Park be used as collateral?***

We are looking for sources of capital and grants.

***The Club Credo used 'authentic and progressive Club' does this not include the pitch?***

It's part of the package. Twerton Park has authenticity.

***Jerry Gill said 3G would improve the passing game, why are we basing on a manager who might not be here in a couple of years?***

We will recruit future manager/s on our philosophy of attractive football and the Club Credo. The reason we asked Jerry is that he is our current manager.

***Will the pitch be rented out in the summer?***

It is more likely to be used in school holiday with holiday clubs and other activities.

***Earlier injuries on 3G were bad.***

Research has been done on this, and it isn't causing significant issues, but further research we will reviewed.

***Jerry previously said he doesn't like 3G and football should be played on grass.***

Now that he has seen a variety of pitches (and quality), and he understands the finances of the club, he is less concerned and more supportive.

***Can we ask Jerry to ask connections he has with League clubs if they would have a problem in sending***

*us players?*

***Injuries and quality of football.***

Reports say there is no difference in injuries or the bounce of the ball. This was included in the feasibility study and supporting documents. These are available to view at the Club - contact Carole Banwell.

***If the project is a huge success and we gain 2 promotions into the Football League, if we have to dig up the 3G what would be the effect on the community?***

Sutton are looking for somewhere else they could have a 3G pitch for community use. They are also looking at putting a grass pitch on top of their 3G so that they can take it off again. The life span of a 3G pitch is approximately 5 years so if it is a disaster, or by the time we get promoted into the League, this shouldn't be a problem.

***Could laying down a 3G on a well-drained pitch have flooding implications?***

Very unlikely, £60k of the cost will be for drainage. Rubber crumb and toxins were looked into in the feasibility study, more investigation will be done.

***If we are levelling the pitch and installing 3G, what about the floodlighting – the current lights are not up to this type of usage.***

This is a concern and the floodlighting will be looked into. Pylons will still be needed for matches, but less intrusive lighting along the new stand roof could work for rental purposes.

***Will there be any problems with neighbours if lights are used 5-6 nights per week?***

This is a sensitive area that needs agreeing as part of planning.

***The Club losing £90k per annum can't continue. 1000BC have worked hard to keep people coming back, but as owners of the Club we have to take responsibility. So if people vote against 3G they need to come up with an alternative plan to make the Club sustainable. (Steve Skinner)***

***Has feedback been done amongst supporters as some might not watch the Club on 3G?***

This is the start of the process. The primary issue is how 3G is maintained, if it is looked after it is close to grass. The proposal is that we ask the members to vote 'in principal' in April.

***You say that costs/finance will be looked at in the future if the vote says yes.***

A lot of work has been done already and we don't want to waste time looking for funding unless there is a desire to progress.

***Another option to raise money could be to rent out the current grass pitch on a Sunday or when there is a gap between games. ~~between games.~~***

This would not make anything like £60k per year and would also damage the pitch. The Youth team and Bath & District

Cup games are already played here. The pitch could be used more but this would not bring in as much income.

***Could a 5-a-side pitch on the side of the pitch be included in the redevelopment?***

This is worth looking into.

***94% of League players are against 3G pitches.***

***The current playing squad matter, have they been canvassed?***

No, not yet, but Jerry will talk to them if we decide to progress.

***What impact will there be on local residents with extra noise and lighting?***

Part of the planning process, and we would have to cover this.

***If playing budget is cut by £90k what level would we play at? And what is the Board's opinion on cutting the playing budget.***

Southern League but at what level?! Crowds would go down and there would be a vicious downward spiral.

***This has been a good exercise and a lot of work has gone into it. It is important to listen to the points made. It is our Club and we have to make a decision that will sustain us. If finances work, and we see the Club being used and full of people that would be a brilliant result. There have been good questions asked but we don't know all the answers. We need to know what would happen with promotions. We need commitment from the Board that we would go back to whatever type of pitch would give us promotion. A big thank you for doing all the work, and please do more before we have to make a decision. (Ken Loach)***

***Pleased to see consideration has been made to usage and management of a 3G (Oxford City over-use?).***

***Do we have any information from Oxford on hours of usage of their pitch?***

We will ask them. It might have been a bad day when we played there.

***Re maintenance, the report says costs of £10k per annum. Is this negated by current grass maintenance?***

Some years we do spend this much, but some we don't. It depends on what end-of-season maintenance is needed, ie top-dressing, re-seeding. We probably should be doing more, but we just do the minimum.

***This has been a good meeting, but we do still have a grass pitch and need volunteers! (Andrew Pierce)***

***If we do get 3G and with the redevelopment, it will bring in more income. Is that the correct?***

That is the plan, but until we know what we will get from the redevelopment we can't work up a new business plan

***Has the Club looked at incorporating flats into the new grandstand?***

No, but this is unlikely to work, we have no money and the developer is paying for the grandstand, therefore we would need to pay for the flats. We need cash to pay off our debts, the developers won't do both. There are also health and safety and operational implications, we looked at doing this at Epsom Downs Racecourse but did not pursue it (Nick). fwp are looking into all revenue generating ideas from commercial use of the new grandstand/site.

**Close of Meeting by Nick**

If anyone has any ideas please contact the team, and also we are still looking for more volunteers to help, so if you can contribute, please contact the Working Group leaders or the Supporters' Society, or

go along to meetings and be part of it.

This has been a really good session. Thank you all for coming or listening on the radio. This is only the start of the process.