

Report of the PTFC Trust meeting, 1pm on Saturday 18 February 2017

One fan said before the start “we need a bigger boat” and he was right as the third meeting of the PTFC Trust kicked off full to capacity to discuss all things Thistle.

It was informative, relaxed in tone yet serious in content and an excellent start in the Trust’s role to engage with supporters. At the outset, Chairman Foster Evans reminded fans that the Trust, the largest shareholder in Thistle, was set up as part of the process of the Club becoming debt-free.

The meeting started with a comprehensive presentation on the Club’s current position as Trustee and Jags MD Ian Maxwell outlined the current structure of the Club and highlighted the current challenges as well as opportunities facing it.

After sharing attendance figures, Ian agreed to look in to the trends in attendances in other clubs in the Premiership and the potential for more Friday night games with nearby clubs. There was also a discussion around ticket pricing, especially of season tickets and whether there was a need to raise the price as it was felt that Thistle prices were cheaper than other clubs. Ian was challenged on why the Club didn’t charge the same concession prices for visiting young fans as Thistle fans are charged when visiting their grounds. He will look in to this.

Ian went on to outline the Club’s plan to appoint a Community Engagement Officer to build and develop our relationships with fans, schools, community groups, colleges, etc. to increase the Jags profile and, as importantly, match day attendance. This was welcomed by fans.

Despite the Club giving fans the chance to pick next season’s strip, there was some negative feedback around why only a choice of two strips and a question around why can’t Thistle let fans submit designs for the strip as other clubs have. Ian explained the limitations and nature of the Club’s contract with Total Teamware Scotland Ltd and Joma. Whilst it does restrict Thistle’s ability to design a strip as choices are made from templates, it was financially advantageous to do things this way, not least because it takes away the risk to the Club in terms of not selling stock, over supply etc which all falls to TTSL.

The Jagzone, which was introduced as part of the new website last August, was praised. The user numbers are encouraging but still need to be better.

Ian then went on give an update on developments in the stadium. In March 2017, a platform lift is being installed in the foyer of the Jackie Husband Stand. Not only will that help fans but it will also help with hospitality as it now gives full access to the Alan Rough Lounge. Ian also revealed that the Club has started investigations in to the possibility of building a raised viewing platform in the JHS to give wheelchair fans a better view of games.

While there are no current live plans for the gap site on the south side of the ground, there is planning permission for a stand if a developer can be found. But, in the current economic climate, that seems unlikely any time soon.

At the end of Ian’s presentation, Foster Evans encouraged fans to put forward any ideas they had to increase match day attendance or any other pressing issues by sending an email to ptfctrust@ptfc.co.uk

It was confirmed that there would be an informal "Meet the Board" night later on in the season to give fans a chance to meet and chat to Board members.

The meeting ended with a healthy debate on the current consultation, set up by James Dornan MSP, to introduce "Strict Liability" to Scottish football should the SFA/SPFL not put forward suitable proposals to tackle offensive behaviour at games.

For clarity, Strict Liability is currently the UEFA standard for tackling offensive behaviour at a football match. 18 sanctions for clubs are detailed, including warnings, fines, annulment of the result of a match, ordering that a match be replayed, the closure of sections of grounds, playing matches behind closed doors and the docking of points. Mr Dornan's proposal is that this system of sanctions could be applied to Scottish clubs in response to the bad behaviour of their fans, without having to establish any connection between the club's behaviour and that of the fans – even in a case where the club had taken steps to prevent or discourage that behaviour.

Strong opinions were held on each side and Chairman Foster Evans summed up by saying there was no clear consensus from the meeting either way. Ian Maxwell suggested that a short survey go up on the Club website to gather fan views before the Board make a decision on their position. A brief summary of SL follows.

Foster also encouraged fans and supporters clubs to respond the consultation by 17 March 2017 and the consultation document and the questionnaire are here:

http://www.parliament.scot/S5MembersBills/Final_Consultation_Document_pdf.pdf

Finally, Trustee Pauline Graham reported back on attending the Board meeting in January with Foster Evans, which had been open and friendly. The Board had made it clear that fans views matter to the Club and they were looked forward to hearing more by ways of ideas and suggestions on how to progress the Club.

The next PTFC Trust meeting will be in May, also on a match day at 1.00 pm, and it will be publicised as soon as the post split games have been announced.