

Fans Parliament November 1st, 2024

Attendees:

Directors:

Chairman Mehmet Dalman (**MD**),

CEO Ken Choo (**KC**)

Cardiff City staff.

Omer Riza - 1st team Interim Manager (**OR**).

Phil Jenkins - Financial Director (**PJ**).

Wayne Nash - Head of Operations (**WN**).

James Askey - Head of CRM (**JA**).

Amy James - Fan Experience Manager (**AJ**)

Gavin Chesterfield - Academy Manager (**GC**)

Lee Southernwood - Football Support Executive (**LS**)

Mona Sabbuba - Head of Ticketing (**MS**)

Huw Warren - Head of Commercial (**HW**)

Gavin Hawkey - Foundation Director (**GH**)

Will Hale - Head of Retail (**WH**)

Patrick DeBoy's - Head of Recruitment (**PD**)

Iain Derbyshire - Head of Women and Girls' football (**ID**)

Paul Corkrey - Supporters Liaison Officer (**PC**)

On Monday November 1st, 2024, the first ever fans parliament took place at the Cardiff City stadium.

The meeting was chaired by **WN**, who explained the rationale behind holding the Fans Parliament, which is part of the Cardiff City FC strategy and fan engagement plan to have meaningful, constructive engagement with its supporters. It offers an opportunity for Season Ticket Holders and Members to meet with and discuss important topics with the club Directors and head of departments, in an open and transparent manner with no restrictions on the agenda.

WN further explained that after discussions with the Fan Advisory board (FAB) about the new football regulator, and their objectives around club sustainability, systemic football pyramid and cultural heritage, it was agreed that Cardiff City football club want to be in a position to satisfy the regulator and have a strong fan engagement plan, that includes holding these open transparent Fan Parliament forums once a year.

One hundred randomly selected Season Ticket Holders and Members out of the few hundred that had expressed interest were invited to attend. On the night while only c40 Season Ticket Holders and Members attended, slightly less than we were hoping for, it still represented a broad and diverse section of the fan base. In addition, eight members of the FAB were also in attendance.

Unlike other fan meetings such as the FAB or SLO meetings, the Fans Parliament provides a voice to fans who do not usually get their voices heard. The fans were randomly selected from applicants on the Clubs Season Ticket and Members database

WN invited the club chairman Mehmet Dalman to open the meeting.

MD thanked everyone for their attendance and emphasized that all questions were welcome, nothing was off the table, and he was pleased to meet with the fans present and engage with the forum. He hoped that

the fact that the club had brought the entire club management team to this forum was testament that the club takes the Fans Parliament seriously. He felt it would be beneficial to both the fans and the club.

He explained that he has always welcomed meeting with the fans and has held many smaller meetings to keep the communication fluid over the last five years, he wants to listen and understand the views of the fans and see what can be done better.

WN then introduced the CEO Ken Choo.

KC Welcomed the opportunity to share with the fans knowledge of what goes on at the football club and he emphasised that there is such a lot of great work being done behind the scenes by the club staff and that was why all the heads of departments were present and each will have a few minutes to explain to the forum the work they and their staff do for the club.

He offered the forum the opportunity to ask any questions, not only to the directors but also to all the heads there, the engine room behind the club. Ken wants fans to understand that it is not just the top but the layers within the club that do such a great job and they will share with the forum things fans don't usually see or are probably not aware of but are vital in the running of the club.

Each head of department then did a short power point presentation about their departments roles in the club, this has never been done before at meetings and give a real insight to the work done within the club across the various departments .

Omer Riza, the interim Cardiff City first team manager was surprise attendee at the meeting and beforehand had interacted with all the fans introducing himself, it was a special treat for the fans present.

Following the presentations from the heads of department, Omer spoke to the forum and started by praising the presentations, he felt they were outstanding and showed how the club is so much bigger than just the football that the fans see out on the pitch and how important it is than an evening like this can not only bring everyone together but allow the fans to have a better understanding of what happens behind the scene and what goes into running a football club.

The floor was then opened to the supporters to ask questions and to get the evening started three questions were presented by the FAB

Question 1:

Why are the club using external advisors? What was the process here and why this instead of a Director of Football appointment, which in the long run is more beneficial to the club.

MD As was evidenced in the presentation by the Head of Recruitment ,the reason the club hasn't gone down this route is that we have developed our in-house database system to identify the positions and players we need to recruit to meet not only the immediate transfer window but the planning for future transfer windows . Patrick and his team work tirelessly on this with the Board such that we are in the best position to identify and hopefully recruit the right players not only in the UK but across Europe and the rest of the world.

Question 2:

Can the chairman outline the (non-playing) strategic plan and requisite objectives for the next year, three and five years?

MD Its more difficult to plan in the championship compared to the Premier league where you can almost guarantee the income coming into the club on a year-to-year basis, so you must run the business the best way you can, we spend enough money to make the club competitive. We have greatly reduced our annual

operational deficit in recent years through hard work and the plan is to continue on this road to make the club operationally self-sufficient. Despite the nonsense you often read on message boards it is important to know that this club is much sounder than most EFL clubs. The majority of the debt we carry is to our owner, Tan Sri Vincent Tan it's his money, his club, he carries the burden meaning we do not need to find or resort to third party, high interest loans which can carry interest rates between 15%-20% pa . Credit should be given where its due to the owner who takes no interest payments on the loans provided .The job of the board is to reduce that financial burden on the owner, but still provide finance for a competitive team. We are ambitious and want to be in the topflight, so our three-to-five-year plan is to be both a competitive team and a settled Premiership club.

Question 3:

In relation to the new Vale training site, has any construction work started? We have been told late 2025 for estimated completion, is this still the target.

PJ We are currently carrying out preparatory work on the new training site and completing the design with a view of going out to tender in late 2024 or early in 2025 with construction commencing in summer 2025 and completion in Autumn 2026.

The fans were then free to ask any questions and the first season ticket holder started by saying how great it was to hear about all the stuff that goes on in the background and how this sort of forum was much needed and welcome.

Question 4:

It is disappointing how poorly occupied the family stand is with lots of empty seats, what is the clubs view about improving attendance in this area of the stadium, such as tickets for local schools and children for example.

JA explained that the club has an extensive marketing policy targeting new audiences including children and families, one of the challenges we face are the early kick offs and evening games but there is a plan in place and this is regularly discussed especially plans around schools. The Club is aware of the issue and it is very much on our agenda to improve attendances not only in that section but throughout the stadium. We have an external partner who we work with on advertising and the next phase is to target our family audiences.

KC Also confirmed that this is discussed at board level and the kick off times are detrimental, but we are working on various plans. It is not all negative the new Sky deal has delivered enhanced TV revenues, but we are still working hard on improving attendances.

AJ also confirmed that the early kick offs have also made it difficult to get mascots and flag bearers with many children playing football in the mornings. More school visits are planned and its very much part of the club strategy to engage with young fans, they are the future lifeblood of the club.

KC and JA said that the data analysis built up around new members shows there is an increase in younger fans communicating and connecting with the club day to day, whether it is through their cell phones or watching matches via our streaming services etc. This a terrific opportunity to engage with these new fans.

WN said the club was aware of the significant "no show rate" in the family stand but we are looking to engage and get them interested at an early age because once it is in their blood then they are normally fans for life.

Another fan suggested more school visits and more presence from Cardiff City at football tournaments and events involving children to get the children wanting to be a Cardiff fan at an early age.

WN said a lot of work and events like this happen behind the scenes but it is often seen as the best kept secret and we need to look at how we make such things more visible.

AJ added that we are also looking to engage with grass roots football events that take place in the evenings, it is all part of the strategy to send players out to engage with these children.

Question 5:

Next question from the fans was about the reaction to the news that Cardiff City and Swansea City had started approaching the EFL about the possibility of the 4 Welsh clubs competing in a Welsh cup that would give them access to a route into European football through the Welsh system whilst still being in the EFL. The fear was that if we did go down this route it could jeopardise our Football league status and that is a huge concern of many of the Cardiff fans.

PJ Confirmed that discussions were currently taking place with the FAW, EFL and the four league clubs, the current thinking is that should the decision be made to go down this road then the 4 Welsh league clubs would probably have to give up their right to reach Europe through the English structure (via the FA Cup, League Cup, Premier league position).

There is certainly a concern from other EFL clubs that the 4 Welsh clubs could significantly gain financially from this with access to a new revenue stream so funding we currently receive from the EFL may need to be looked at carefully. The FAW favour the move as a successful run in a Europe competition is seen as being more likely with one of the 4 league clubs which would then improve the co-efficient rankings that decide how many places Welsh clubs get in UEFA competitions.

KC said there were many hurdles still to overcome and it is still early days in the discussions. All four clubs say that if it benefits Wales then it is a good thing and worth investigating, it will need the green light from a number of the football bodies and association's though for it to happen.

FAB asked that the club could reassure fans that the club would not take any risk that would lose us money or status in the EFL, never mind doing this for the benefit of Wales.

KC reiterated that this was still early days and loads of conversations were and would continue to take place, but the answer is No we will not take any such risks over the status or funding of the Club.

Question 6:

The next question related to the welfare of young players who do not make it to becoming a footballer what care is given to them on their release from the club?

GC stated that this was a great question and reassured the forum that each Category 2 academy has to employ a full-time player care officer, this role deals specifically with transitions, and we currently have 172 players in the academy ranging from under 9's when they first register with us all the way up to under 21.

The transition work that goes on includes school liaison, educational support, career planning and as an academy we are responsible for every player who gets released in the scholarship age groups for three years after their release. We take this responsibility very seriously and continue to support some players now who may have fallen on challenging times. We also have a full-time dedicated safeguarding officer at the academy who also assists with the transition process of the young players.

We are also proud to say we have a very caring coaching team who know all about the players, their welfare their families etc and we do all we can to help the young players, no club can be perfect, but we are trying to be.

Question 7:

With Omar Riza (interim manager) in the room the next question concerned his future at the club, the fan relayed the general feeling from the fan base that Omar had been doing a remarkable job turning the club around and wanted to know if the club had decided about him getting the manager's job full time.

MD simply answered No.

Question 8:

The next question related to the atmosphere inside Cardiff City stadium and the fact our fans are so far away from the away fans, Ninian Park used to a hostile stadium where clubs feared to come but now it's the exact opposite and clubs seem to enjoy coming here due to the poor atmosphere at most games. Surely it would help the players if the atmosphere was more intimidating?

WN Some fans still crave for the old days at Ninian Park but we have to move forward many of the former years prior to coming to the new stadium were in the lower leagues and we can and have created incredible atmospheres at our new stadium, we see it at the international games too when it goes to another level, so we know it is possible to create a passionate atmosphere here.

You do not always have to be up against the away fans, eye to eye exchanging verbals to create a good atmosphere, we have been at the forefront of rail seating and creating a singing section in the Canton stand. We are trying to create a place where fans can exude their passion but keep it on the right side of decent.

We are a 'broad church' and provide areas of the stadium for all types of fans, from the Family section for the children who grow up and eventually want to go to the Canton stand. Lots of people then prefer to sit in the Ninian stands for views across the pitch and finally fans who make a few pounds decide to opt for the corporate areas or have their own children and return to the family stand. So, it is a full circle and we must manage these different experiences to make sure we offer something for everyone.

Question 9:

Another fan stated he believed the atmosphere was better in the lower leagues with small crowds at Ninian Park than it is now.

WN Yes, there were some games with great atmospheres but that was not always the case, and our new stadium has and will continue to offer the club an opportunity to progress. Its chalk and cheese compared to Ninian park and the facilities here are excellent whilst still allowing for a great atmosphere and we have witnessed that on many occasions at the new stadium.

A fan followed up asking why the club stop fans standing in the Ninian stand, that would improve the atmosphere over there near the away fans.

WN It is a customer service issue and we provide safe standing in the Canton stand; fans pay to sit in the Ninian stand and if some fans stand over there it means those that prefer to sit cannot do so without suffering a degradation to their view of the game.

Another fan confirmed that she must sit due to disability and still chants all through the game along with her friends and chooses the Ninian stand because she is able to see the game sitting down. Traditionally at stadiums great atmospheres are created behind the goals in places like the Stretford End, the Kop or the Holte End and we can certainly replicate that here at Cardiff City. We have an agreement with the Sports Ground Safety Authority that we will provide safe standing in some areas but the vast majority of fans in the stadium want to come down to predominantly sit and watch the game and that is what we will provide.

Question 10:

Next question related to the Cardiff City women's team, the fan asked would it be possible to have a joint season ticket or games added to the season ticket to increase attendances at the women's matches?

LS Charging for Women's games is a new concept, and this is only the second year we have offered season tickets, and we have seen a great increase of support this year. We are trying to attract two types of supporters, converting those who follow the men's game and then bring supporters who have never been to Cardiff City before and without the women's game may never have connected. We can certainly look at some promotions throughout the season around season tickets and want to drive up attendances.

WN added we also drive-up attendance by also having a couple of games here at Cardiff City stadium, we all want to see the Women's team flourish and they had a highly successful season last year.

KC agreed the club will be looking at doing something in this area.

Question 11:

A fan asked about the expensive prices other clubs charge our fans for parking, especially disabled fans, Bristol City charged him £30, why does our club charge so little when you compare it to other clubs, it is not fair.

MS replied that we want to be fair to visiting fans and two wrongs don't make a right and hope other clubs see what we are doing and reciprocate it, we also have written to every club about reciprocal ticket prices and although some clubs won't agree we have had some success in getting fairer away ticket prices for our fans

Question 12:

Next question related to season ticket holders having free access to first/second round League cup matches to improve attendance.

MS the problem with cup games is that you have to share income with the visiting club and that means you must agree pricing with the opponents, we do try to make these games as cheap as possible for our fans.

Question 13:

A fan then enquired about hearing a report of the possibility of having alcohol in the seating areas, its currently against the law to consume alcohol in view of the pitch, what is the clubs view regarding this issue? We are concerned that fans will spill beer over each other and keep moving about back and from the toilets during matches if this was allowed. A lot of bad disruptive experiences at rugby games and we do not want that repeated here.

WN we are looking at it, to be honest we think the current licencing laws in the UK are sufficient, so there is no need for additional specific licencing rules just related to football. These currently prevent some activities such as drinking in view of the pitch. We believe these can be removed and still have sensible licencing laws in place to allow this to happen. The EFL are looking to introduce this through a pilot club, and we have suggested we may be interested in being one of those, so fans in certain areas, during this pilot, would be able to drink in view of the pitch.

There was some negative response to those from some fans who are worried about this development.

WN reassured fans that this would be monitored, and fans would only be allowed into the bowl with drinks but not allowed to re-enter, two drinks maximum per person with no re-entry to minimise disruption to other fans with bars closing during the game. Its then based on behaviour, if fans behave appropriately,

they will be allowed a beer but if this is not the case then they will not get one. It is a debate that ongoing in football at the moment and its definitely being considered.

Fans countered with the facts that there are risks associated with drinking and the throwing of drinking vessels

WN said of course this is a consideration and we would always be observing, reviewing, and make sensible decisions based on experience. When you look at continental Europe this is normal in the seating bowl with very few reported issues as a result of that, it does not necessarily lead to misbehaviour and it can be managed, so we should look at it.

FAB members requested that fans would be consulted before anything was put in place,

WN agreed and said currently this was only a conversation that is happening within football and nothing has been proposed let alone agreed, and it would eventually be a CCFC Board decision.

Question 14:

The next question concerned the food outlets outside the stadium and the loss of income the club derive because of these and are the club missing an opportunity to bring fans in earlier to eat and drink inside the stadium?

HW We are now at a stage where we are able to run special deals and promotions around food and beer pricing. We are continuously working with Compass to improve offerings and promote offers that will encourage fans to arrive earlier and use the refreshment outlets within the stadium. We are constantly monitoring this and looking at ways to improve things in this area.

JA we have created a match day experience survey, and we get great feedback from that about all aspects of the match day experience, including food and beverages and we encourage fans to promote and use this survey to provide us with ideas and a benchmark to come up with ways in which we can provide what the fans want.

Question 15:

A fan then asked the question about player recruitment, how we come to decisions about players and why is the reason we only have the one loan signing this season and are we looking to promote academy players or look to recruit in the window in January?

PD explained that the fans will see that over the past few years while we have had some excellent loan signings and necessarily some not so good, either way the club looks to generate long term value in the squad. The signing of loan players are usually short-term solutions to the composition of the playing squad over the season and especially in the January transfer window. We prefer to invest in our own players wherever possible.

This season was slightly different due to the sale of Mark McGuinness which enabled us to reinvest into recruiting players instead of opting for loans. This helps grow the squad and its value. This summer it also became apparent that Premier league clubs had hiked the price up of loan players instead of just covering some of the wages we were being asked to cover all the wages plus pay a large loan fee, so it becomes more difficult to get loan players. Thats not to say we will not look to loans if the right player and deal becomes available.

Question 16:

FAB enquired about an update on the Sala case.

MD Distressingly the chairman spoke about death threats he and other executives of the Club had received from various quarters due to the club fighting the Sala case. The police are aware of these threats, including some quite recently not just to himself but also other colleagues, and they take these very seriously but emphasised that we are determined to do the right thing.

There are two cases going on now involving Nantes, one is a civil action which was brought by Cardiff City against Nantes and secondly there is a criminal charge brought by prosecutors in France against Nantes.

The club's position is clear now that the court of arbitration has ruled that Sala was our player and the club have paid up in full which affected our finances due to it being a c. Euro20 million payment we had to make. We feel very strongly about this and the fact that we bought a player in good faith and delivery of the player went wrong and tragically two people lost their lives, when genuinely there was no need.

The club intend to pursue this to the very end. We feel very confident of winning our case and we are suing Nantes the sum of £120 million. It is possible we will not win the full amount, but we would expect to win a large part of our claim. More than money we want to establish that what Nantes did was wrong.

The criminal case is not really to do with Cardiff City but we are cooperating with the French police

We expect both cases to conclude late in 2025.

Question 17:

The next question reverted back to the playing style of the club , same principles etc and how that style is used at all levels from all ages so that every player is familiar with it, what happens if the first team coach prefers a different style of playing, there sometimes seems to be an inconsistency from the age groups style to that of the first team how does the club deal with this?

KC It is a prerequisite of any manager we employ that they adapt the Club's playing philosophy If they do not agree with this, they will not be appointed.

Question 18:

Finally, the fans asked about the possibility of subsidy from the club for coach travel to away matches in the event of games being moved due to the TV deal and the inconvenience that causes to fans. Sheffield Wednesday, who are expected to have very expensive match tickets, for example has moved to 12.30 am meaning a very early start.

WN said that at the SLO meeting we did agree that if a fixture changed from a Saturday to a Friday or a Monday the club would look to then subsidise the buses, this has been agreed in principle with the FD. Regards to match tickets then the FSA and the EFL need to work to make these fairer for fans, it makes no sense that it's a £30 maximum price for an away ticket in the premier league but for example Sheffield Wednesday can charge £40 in the Championship.

The fans responded by saying there a reducing number of clubs over charging, but Sheffield Wednesday are one of those clubs because they feel they can get away with it. Our prices are right here at Cardiff, and we believe are fair to both home and away fans. The FSA are always trying to get a price cap but there is very little appetite to voluntarily do this from the majority of clubs although some will entertain reciprocal prices. The Regulator once up and running may have a view on this.

WN Thanked everyone for their attendance and said it was an important meeting and then passed over to **MD** who also expressed his appreciation to the fans for their input and presence.

The meeting closed at 8 pm

Minutes - Paul Corkrey 05/11/24

Review – Wayne Nash 05/11/24

Review Phil Jenkins 14/11/24