

Preston North End And Preston Supporters Collective



Minutes of scheduled meeting held on Monday 5th February 2024 at 6pm in the Boardroom at Deepdale

Attendees: Ben Rhodes, Jonathan Counce (PNE), Ben Astley, John Billington, Kim Ramshead, Charlie Winyard, Daniel Duckworth, Jo Harwood and Bill Whisker (PSC), Ben Thomas (Sodexo).

Apologies: None.

1. Review of items from the last meeting

It was agreed that there was nothing in the minutes of the November meeting that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

2. Catering

BA asked about feedback received on catering from the first time fan surveys that were mentioned at the last meeting. BR explained the process of the information being shared around all areas of the club to allow departments to consider and use the information to make necessary amendments. BA stated that queuing levels seemed decent. JB said there were a lot of positives. BA provided some feedback from supporters on coffee, asking for a better coffee; from a landlady in the IP stand asking about the line cleaning and BT explained the bi-weekly process for this. BA continued by asking for brown sauce along with the pies as well as ketchup, which BT said he would look at. BA also asked if there was any update on eBars, BR agreed to take this back, as it was a SAG (safety advisory group) decision. JB asked about the opening of the fanzone before big away trips when coaches are travelling – BR said he would take this back and speak to Jack Gayne to move this forward. BA added that Sodexo should continue to change the menus and add new items, like the curry, the plant-based burger and the pie, mash and peas. DD asked about enhancing the offerings for disabled supporters via the kiosk at the bottom of the STF, BT said he would look at this with the retail manager. BT left the meeting after this section.

3. Merchandising

BA said there was still some negative feedback about stock and online purchases. BR explained that shirt sales had this year been their biggest in over two decades. He explained the process for ordering in 2023/24, whereby Castore has received the last three years of sales to base their order on, but sales had far outstripped this. A re-order was made in early July and this had to be manufactured overseas and then shipped over. This arrived late November and again many sizes sold in huge numbers; demand was a lot higher than anticipated. BR continued to say that many of the ranges of accessories had not arrived until late, but the preparation for 2024/25 is a long way ahead, with huge ranges of items ordered, to massively increase what was available. He also explained that Castore had recently made changes of their mail order system – as all online sales were sold from their distribution centre – not Deepdale, and they were looking to improve this. BA and BR agreed to try and broaden the breadth of sharing of this information as well as including on the minutes for the meeting.

4. Stadium update

JC talked about the plan to add a covering around the splash statue, allowing the information from the bricks to be transferred onto the walls and he explained this process was one they were looking to move forward with Signs Express over the coming months. JC also confirmed that the next stage of the Gentry Wall was now up and would be available for fans to view from the Middlesbrough game onwards. JC explained that the maintenance team were now planning the summer works including a jet washing of the stadium. BA asked if there was any update on safe standing, saying fans had enjoyed the experience at Chelsea and that a survey of fans on a couple of forums had shown over 85% in favour. BR said there were no grants available to the club to assist with this project and that any decision to do it would be a financial one.

5. Matchday experience, fanzone and fan engagement

A discussion was had about atmosphere and improving this within the stadium. It was agreed that a separate sub-meeting would be held, with other groups and members of the fan base, to see if ideas could be generated that were fan led with the club's support. CW asked about leaving the music off at the end of a win for a short period, or pick something based on what the fans were singing, BR agreed to talk to Rob Charles to make this happen. BR talked about the new role that had been instigated in the Family Stand and that work was being done with other outside agencies to further enhance the experience for families. JH talked about the ongoing issue with vaping, which BR agreed to raise again with ground safety. Praise was given the club's regular stewards and those who knew the fanbase. BW asked if splitting the Kop was now out of the question. BR said it was not off the table, but that it had brought a lot of challenges in 2023 and that for now there was no plan to re-introduce it. BA asked about the outdoor area for the fanzone. BR confirmed that the plan for this was progressing and that the police and council were supportive and that it was hoped this could be trialled at the last few games of this season ahead of a full application for a new licence for 2024/25. DD asked about accessibility for the Gentry Bar and it was agreed, that hopefully when the outdoor space is available, it would free up room inside. It was discussed about former players being present in the bar, BR agreed to talk to the former players' association about this. BA asked about further fan engagement opportunities and asked about a fans' forum, either in person or online. BR said he was expecting the government's bill in the next week or two and that once this published, he would look to further share ideas and plans and agreed to take back the forum suggestion to discuss internally.

6. Ticketing

BR said that the club would be getting a new ticketing system in the near future, as their previous partner had pulled out of the market. JH said that BWFC, who were on the same ticketing system did not have a loyalty scheme and asked whether PNE would still have. After the meeting BR checked with the new provider and confirmed that the system did have the function for a loyalty scheme and this would continue. BA asked if season tickets were planned yet. BR said discussions had not started yet, but would be happening soon. BA asked about allocation of away tickets and people feeling they did not have access to the best seats, BR explained that many clubs dictate what order the tickets were sold. As per the

last minutes it was confirmed that subject to the TV selections, Gentry Day would be Watford on 6th April.

7. Academy update

BA asked if there was any update on plans for the club to apply for Category Two status. BR said that the main thing in the way was still an indoor facility and that, like a number of other items on the agenda, this was restricted by what funding was available. BA asked about the Central League and the pathway for the young players. BR said Nick Harrison and the Academy coaches felt the Central League was a better games programme for the young players than the league games and felt it was very beneficial and that the work of James Beet to get some of the younger players loan time and men's football, was also a positive. BA asked if there was any plans for the Ingol site; BR said nothing was planned for it at the current time.

8. Women's football

A discussion was had around the women's team and opportunities, JH asked whether there would be a chance for a double-header at Deepdale at the end of the season, where a women's game followed the first team game. BR said he would take that away and discuss it with everyone internally.

9. Community engagement

BR discussed the plan for the new mascot, to replace the Deepdale Duck and said that information on this should be released over the next couple of months, with a positive piece of work having been undertaken on this topic. BA/ JB said they had met with Michael Barrett (PNECET) to discuss his heritage ideas and they were happy to help where they can. BA also said he had spoken to Mo Patel (PNECET) about another project in relation to the club's 2024/25 kits and said they would help, where needed. BR explained the PNECET had their strategy launch at the end of the month as well, which was an important day for the Trust.

10. AOB

- 10.1 JB asked about any update on a memorial garden. BR said he would take away and discuss with JC and Peter Ashworth, the groundsman.
- 10.2 BA asked if there was any news on 2024/25 pre-season. BR said progress was being made and that he hoped an announcement could be made over the next few weeks. BW asked about friendlies with first league winners or double winners from other countries.
- 10.3 BA said there had been some frustrations from fans on the manager's media output. BR agreed to feedback internally.

11. Date And Time Of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Spring, date and time to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.