

# HARTLEPOOL UNITED SUPPORTERS PANEL MINUTES OF MEETING 26.02.25



DATE: 21<sup>st</sup> August 2025

VENUE: 1908 Lounge, The Prestige Group Stadium

TIME: 6:00pm

ATTENDEES: John Pearson (Board Member), Sarah Rowntree (Head of Retail & Ticketing, Supporter/Disability Liaison Officer), Noel Bown (Hartlepool United Supporters Association), Neil Nottingham (Independent Season Ticket Holder/HUCSF Trustee), Ben Forbes (South East Poolies), Paul Shears (HOOC), Jill Simmonds (Her Game Too), Neil Appleyard (HUDSA)

APOLOGIES: Andy Stuart (HUWFC) Liam Wright (North West Corner)

JP Opened the meeting by clarifying recent events occurring on social media. Not everyone was familiar with what had been happening, so it was explained that there has recently been a number of fake social media accounts set up and in circulation claiming to be John Pearson. John wanted to make it clear, for the avoidance of any doubt that these are not genuine accounts, I am not active and do not post on Twitter, Facebook or any other social medium.

JP It was also explained that HUST have not been included in the Supporters panel. The Club do not believe that HUST have respected nor entered into the spirit of the supporters panel, and have been constantly negative against in their social media output.

The Club have no issue with constructive criticism.

JP Further went on to explain that he had spoken in length with HUST about it prior to the meeting and that he had explained that he also hoped there wouldn't be any email or statement release about it especially just before both the actual meeting and the upcoming games.

*All members of the panel fully understood the reasoning and all agreed with the Club decision.*

JP The Chairman has stated he is happy to come to further meetings, he was impressed with the last meeting and the positive involvement of the different groups.

## **1 Approval of minutes of meeting.**

JP Asked if all were happy to approve minutes of previous meeting.

ALL Agreed.

## **2 Review of actions from previous meetings**

SR Explained that the club are behind schedule in some areas of the off field operations due to the uncertainty in close season, but now it's business as usual and will strive to push forward.

### **The Pitch and Stadium.**

Money was put aside during close season, not as much as would have been if circumstances off the field re ownership had been different.

Dave Brown and his team worked hard and the pitch looks good.

**It was asked if a full refurb will be done in future?**

Further refurbishment is planned to be carried out in the future and it is hoped the club will be able to access grant / funding, this is currently being explored.

**it was mentioned that the signage above the Cyril Knowles Stand is shabby and not befitting of Cyril.**

Club are aware of this, not a straight forward or cheap job but is on the Clubs radar.

**Actions: Club to look at replacement of signage on CK stand.**

**It was asked if there is any update on the current state of the road behind the Acland Homes Stand which has been mentioned at previous meetings?**

This is still on the agenda, again, things need to work in order of priority.

**Actions: Club to look into the repair of the road behind the Acland Homes Stand**

**Poor state of women's toilets (Brunel mentioned specifically)**

It was stated all toilets have been painted and cleaned.

***Issue specifically in the CK ladies toilets has been raised.*** It was agreed to meet with the fan that raised the complaint prior to next home game.

The Corner Flag Club also experiences similar problems on match days, which could suggest there is problems with the plumbing.

*Discussion around whether poor drainage and the water plumbing system is a Council responsibility as we are tenants.*

**Actions: Club to ensure all toilets are checked regularly before every game.**

**Club to check the council responsibility regarding the on site plumbing and facilities as part of the lease agreement.**

**Service at the catering facilities behind the Acland Stand during the first home game was particularly slow and also one of the food outlets was closed. Yet the Kiosk in the Brunel stand had no queues but fans in the Acland Stand can't access it.**

**Queues are too big and service slow at the bars, a bottle bar would help reduce the queues.**

Ultimately access between stands is a decision for the safety officer, and this will be raised again. One of the food outlets was on holiday for the first match, alternative arrangements should have been made, but it is always a difficult time of the year due to school holidays. The Club has a pop up bar that can be moved around various stands.

**Why, if the ground is cashless and access is via ticketing bar codes do we need turnstile staff; can we not use those staff elsewhere?**

It was explained that turnstiles are still manually operated. Expense for new infrastructure would be huge, and you would still need staff to supervise to ensure no one is abusing



concession tickets, and also be on hand for any issues etc. Turnstile staff do often go and support other departments once they finish on the turnstiles.

**Actions: Club to look to improve speed of service at bars and catering, in particular Acland Homes Stand.**



**It has previously been identified that people are parking on the Acland Stand side of the ground, on the land behind the barriers with no control in place for fans to ensure a safe exit. In future it is planned this will be staffed.**

**Actions: Club to investigate and monitor the use of the Acland Homes Stand car park barrier.**

### **3. Club Engagement**

**Fans raised concern regarding Club Engagement, The recent Think Fan Survey has us ranked as 106 out of 116.**

It was explained that the Club were not informed of the release of this survey prior to it going public, The findings for the survey were simply done via a simple Google search of the club website.

Since the launch, the club has been in touch with the Think Fan Engagement team to arrange a meeting. This is something the club are looking to improve on and will work hard to do so. Some of the areas are easy to implement e.g. Supporter Liaison Twitter Account, fan engagement on the website. Yet other things like a full time SLO with only one role on a match day is less likely for the club to achieve.

The panel agreed that not enough positive news stories are made public. it was accepted that this has been difficult under the recent circumstances, but the club can no longer allow the negativity to control the narrative. It was suggested things like fan photos and videos that Club can retweet. First games, long journeys etc. anything which promotes fan experiences could be used to help build a connection.

The Panel understood and agreed as to the reasons why the supporters panel has dragged on so long without it being launched and it was agreed that the club now need to officially launch the supporters panel, produce minutes etc.

**Actions: Club to work with Think Fan Engagement.**

**Club to launch SLO X account (done)**

**Club to create engagement with fans – asking for photos from away trips, special games etc**

**Club to launch Supporters Panel officially – section on website, who we are etc.**

### **4. Media**



**Fans have made some valid concerns regarding the quality of the media output over recent months.**

Hopefully the fans will have already seen improvements. The club had a period where there was no media staff and this was covered by staff internally. This has since been rectified.

The club know that the website and app have been big issues and they are high on the list of priorities to improve.

The club also now have TikTok up and running.

**Actions: Club to work on improving media output**

**5. Club Car Park**

**Asked about the possibility of some Corner Flag members using car park during the week.**

**Actions Corner Flag to provide list of names and car registrations to be allowed to use Club car park.**

**6. Any Other Business**

**Are there plans to restore the Hartlepool Cable Services Stand to full capacity, revenue being lost.**

This was discussed at the last meeting.

The loss of revenue is mitigated by the reduction in policing by putting this preventative action in place.

The club have thought about capitalising on bigger away followings by moving the away fans to the Town End but recognise this would cause upset to our loyal fanbase.

**Leg space in the seats in the Acland Stand are too close together for bigger people**

Noted, but not sure what we can do to resolve this quickly. Not currently selling out so a short term fix could be to find a space where they can have a bit more room between seats.

**Request for transparency on who is on the Board**

Very transparent about this, it is on the Club website and in programme. Announcement made recently about Andy Steele stepping down and Neil Pinkerton joining Board.

**Ticket Offers for midweek games**

This was spoken about at length at the last meeting.

The club have to ensure we reach a point in ticket sales whereby we achieve as close as we can to the budgeted figure. Reducing the ticket price by a significant amount to attract more supporters means we would have to increase the headcount to a certain point to reach that figure. It was decided, based on previous stats, the understanding that Tuesday or Wednesday

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evening fixtures and the current economic climate that we wouldn't be able to hit the required financial point. Secondary spend on Tuesday games, is also understandably reduced.

It is something the club will continue to look at.

We will be continuing our grassroots days and initiatives with schools and local community groups.

Also partnered with Tickets for Good to offer free tickets to those working in the NHS, Charity sector and teachers.

New for this season is Grassroots Getaways, fans buy a mystery experience and the Club receive income and hopefully some new fans!

**Actions: Club to look at ticketing incentives throughout the season.**

**Other Club staff members to attend panel.**

Absolutely, this was always the plan and we will look to invite key staff members to attend where appropriate subject to the agenda items.

***Next Meeting: Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 6pm.***

