



DATE: 23rd February 2026

VENUE: 1908 Lounge, The Prestige Group Stadium

TIME: 6:00pm

ATTENDEES: Landon Smith (Club Owner), John Pearson (Board Member), Rose Stoker (HUFC), Sarah Rowntree (HUFC SLO), Tony Webster (Executive Director) Neil Nottingham (Independent Season Ticket Holder/HUCSF Trustee), Ben Forbes (South East Poolies), Jill Simmonds (Her Game Too) Donna Buckley (Hartlepool United Supporters Association) Neil Appleyard (HUDSA), Darren Hutchinson (HUDSA) Andy Stuart (HUWFC) Paul Shears (HOOC) Liam Wright (NWC) Ed Parkinson (HUST), Julia Newton (HUST)

1. Introductions

JP Welcomed everybody and asked for all parties to briefly give an introduction explaining who they were representing.

Approval of minutes of meeting.

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

ALL Agreed.

2. Terms of Reference

In relation to agenda item raised regarding scope, constitution and purpose of the fans panel, JP reviewed the TOR.

It was explained that the panel was selected to cover all areas of the ground whilst also offering representation of any relevant fan group.

The panel will meet quarterly throughout the course of a season as a minimum.

The purpose of the Supporter Panel is to engage in positive dialogue, sharing ideas, and conveying feedback on behalf of supporters that in turn assists the club to improve and progress by means of supporter engagement and experiences.

The panels' goal is for collaboration to improve communication between the club and its supporters, to identify and deliver projects that improve matchday experiences, facilities and encourage supporter engagement.

Club operational staff will attend on occasion when deemed appropriate and relevant.

It was suggested that maybe the Terms of Reference (TOR) should be reviewed, as things have moved on following the Football Regulator review body.

This point was noted, however these regulations are not yet in place and could well change again if ever they do become regulatory. It was also mentioned that lots of time had already been spent during the first 3 meetings of the group discussing and agreeing to the current TOR.



It was asked again that the TOR be reviewed and that dialogue must be positive is not conducive to open discussion.

There is nothing in the TOR that states dialogue must be positive, and it has been stated and minuted at previous meeting that the club have no issue with constructive criticism.

Landon Smith commented that he hears the concerns and that the agenda is set for today and will be followed. Not committing either way to reviewing TOR but it is not for tonight's discussion.

3. **Owner Chairman Introduction**

Landon Smith was then invited to give an introduction of his background and the story behind his purchase of the Club. This has been documented on many of his early Club interviews.

4. **HUCSF overview and update**

Neil Nottingham was asked to briefly update on progress of the Hartlepool United Community Sports Foundation.

The Foundation is in the process of a full rebrand, it had become very difficult to promote any of their work in the community due to negativity surrounding the Club. Taking the opportunity to refresh, HUCSF have a whole new board who are positive about taking the Foundation forward and hope that all supporters groups get behind it.

The Foundation is not just about football, it provides a massive offering across all fields and walks of life – education, disability, the prison service, mental health and much more.

The Foundation allows the Club to get back into the community no matter what is happening on the pitch.

5. **Review of actions from previous meeting and matters arising**

- **Review of actions from previous meetings**
- Car park barrier behind Acland Homes stand still being left up and unmanned on matchdays – club to ensure it is staffed **Action: - ongoing**
- Donna Buckley taking over from Noel Brown as representative of HUSA, needs to sign Code of Conduct (to be sent by club) –
- It had been stated that there are no baby changing facilities - Fold down changing tables have since been fitted in all stands
- Hot water issues – **Action: - as previously documented, it is all linked to the water pressure – club continue to look at ways to resolve.**
- Location of half-time school penalty competition currently takes place in the opposite corner from where the parents and family stand is located – Tickets are now allocated in the Acland stand directly behind where penalties take place, only the children sit in the CK Stand so that they can get changed easily.



- a) Flooding and roadway – Photographs were provided showing recent flooding behind the Neale Cooper Acland stand – **Action: - The club are committed to solving this issue, hopefully with the help of HBC.**
- b) SEND provision - Several fans have asked about SEND provision whilst planning for the HGT day. **Action: - It's an important issue in itself, so could have an awareness day next season. This is something the club are very passionate about. The Club have a few ongoing events, activities, awareness days, and will continue to expand on these going forward.**
- c) Do we still have an Audio Loop for blind fans – **Action: - The Club used to offer this service and will investigate it.**

A few examples of the Club Awareness days are; --

Unite for Access – The Club are taking part in the Level Playing Field Unite for Action at the game versus Carlisle. An annual period of inspiration and celebration of good access and inclusion at sports venues. This includes

- Highlighting the excellent work HUDSA does in our matchday programme and providing complimentary tickets
- A feature on CLIP (Community Led Inclusion Partnership) and providing complimentary tickets
- Seaton Comets (PAN disability team) acting as junior poolies
- Level Playing Field representative in attendance

Down's Syndrome Awareness Week – The Club will be taking part in Down's Syndrome Awareness week again this year, with the players wearing odd socks the club will be inviting Down's Syndrome NE (who the club work closely with each season) and Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group to attend the game on 21st March versus Eastleigh

World Autism Acceptance Month – The club are continuing its relationship with Daisy Chain and inviting Hartlepool Special Needs Support Group to the game on 6th April. Versus Rochdale.

Young Carers Action Day – The club have a strong bond with Hartlepool Carers and Hartlepool Young Carers Action Day and will continue to promote the incredible work they do at the game on 7th March versus Halifax.

- d) Stewarding in general is not considered to be 'up to scratch' examples of this are unhelpful, language barrier, layout of the ground – This is an ongoing National issue at most clubs. Stewards are briefed prior to each game. Stewards need to have a minimum of L2 in Spectator Safety. The club need a minimum of 33 stewards to comply with its safety certificate. There may be government funding available to train stewards as a sideline to the football, and the club can also link with the Hartlepool College to become a training centre, but you still need a level of resource to manage this. **Action: - It is a priority for the Club and is being reviewed.**



6) Panel and supporter two-way communications – The Club have numerous methods of communication for fans to contact the club with suggestions or complaints: --

- Dedicated Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO) X account
- Dedicated SLO email account
- Dedicated SLO section on website including contact us section and SLO contact details
- Dedicated SLO section on app

Any written method of communication will receive a response / acknowledgement within 48 hours, and the above are the preferred methods to allow the club to monitor and respond effectively. Telephone communication doesn't always capture the full facts.

If fans experience a problem during match day this should be reported in the first instance to a steward, if they are not able to assist the steward should contact the dedicated SLO who will be able to assist.

It was agreed that a lot of fans still don't know this and was suggested the club put signs around the ground with the relevant contact information on them.

An improved scoreboard would also assist in better messaging.

7) Any Other Business

- It was suggested that some agenda points are not being discussed properly, whoever raises the topic should be given more opportunity to explain it. - Others felt that they were being heard appropriately regarding their concerns and items they raise. *Point Noted.*
- It was suggested we need to talk in more detail about the scope of the panel to anticipate the football regulators. It doesn't cover as much remit as the football regular says it should. Should be able to discuss finances etc. - **This is a new chapter; Action: - the TOR will be constantly reviewed as the panel progresses.**
- It was suggested that there are supporters who have expertise who would put their skills in that the Club don't know. - The club have lots of local businesses signing up to the business network, Monkey Business, this is an ideal platform, all are welcome.
- Are there any plans for the big screen to make a return? The existing screen and scoreboard is currently under review and a big screen is on a wish list.
- The Acland stand is causing a concern, NWC seats are not functional. It goes back to stewarding - they aren't doing the necessary checks to ensure that the age restrictions are followed. It's an ongoing problem that is constantly under review, trying to enforce an age restriction is not always viable or possible.
- Discussed upcoming Her Game Too and Youth Alliance days. 900+ tickets to be given away over three fixtures to grassroots junior teams.
- General feedback regarding the programme – out of date information, small details but looks unprofessional.
- Ongoing state of pitch? - The club have had contractors looking at it, waiting for final report, the club realise the pitch can't stay as it is.

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- Ideas re plans and budgets for next season? - The owner said he has modelled on a 1 year/3 year/5-year plan on field. The plan is then to structure a budget around that. Then we do a reverse business plan and plan on how we get there. From a business perspective, it's more like a 10–20-year plan.
- Discussion around recruitment, and agreement from all that the ethos needs to change – Landon Smith said there are plans in place to fix recurring problems and improve the infrastructure. A 10-year business plan for businesses inside the business.

Date of Next Meeting: - Prov. Monday 20^h April 18:00hrs