

**THE FSA.
ANNUAL REVIEW
2022-23**



BY FANS FOR FANS

**STRENGTH COMES IN NUMBERS...
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Email: info@thefsa.org.uk
PO Box 1449, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR5 9UW

FSA.

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Editor - Michael Brunskill

Editorial team - David Rose, Garreth Cummins, Liam Thompson

Every year we thank the huge effort made by all FSA members and it's never been more true than in 2022-23. The fan-led review saw thousands of supporters across the country investing significant time in lobbying their local MPs and clubs. Without volunteers campaigning and giving up their time to run events, engage their clubs, sift through emails, organise accounts and run social media, supporters would not be in such a strong position.

While this publication is pulled together by the comms team (with help from work experience lad David Rose) we would have nothing to write about if it wasn't for the great work of our FSA colleagues. Additional thanks to Andrew and Jon from Solution Group for their patience and design skillz.

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ABOUT THE FSA.



Hello and welcome to the FSA's Annual Review which looks back on our work during 2022-23. As ever there's a huge range of activity and we hope this publication gives a sense of the breadth and quality of that work.

A huge priority over the past year has been the Fan-led Review of Football Governance and the White Paper - setting out the Government's proposals for future legislation - which flowed from the review.

The King's Speech, set to take place in autumn 2023, will include details on the Government's plans and legislation will then make its way through Parliament. There is cross-party support for

football reform and the momentum is with our arguments (pp12-15).

The Government has said it will introduce a new independent regulator to protect our clubs and the long term health of our world famous pyramid. Protections for club heritage will also be implemented. Supporter engagement standards will rise while new tests for prospective owners and directors of football clubs will come into force.

Domestic clubs will also be prevented from entering closed shop European competitions, if they wish to participate in FA-sanctioned competitions. This is an effective block on a European Super League - the idea which kickstarted the Fan-led Review.

Of course that's not all we've been working on this year - elsewhere our

activity in the women's game (pp16-19) continues to flourish as we set up formal supporter engagement meetings with the FA and submitted evidence to the Future of Women's Football review, led by Karen Carney MBE.

There's a lot more work in progress with the Women's World Cup on the horizon and a whole host of FSA resources for travelling fans being prepared by our Free Lionesses team.

If you're reading this at the European Football Fans Congress or FSA AGM you'll know it's been a busy year at a continental level and that's all covered in pages 22-33. Of particular note was the determined work by FSE, Spirit of Shankly and Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association which we were proud to support in holding UEFA to account for last year's Paris debacle.

There was more fantastic work with an international flavour via our Fans for Diversity campaign and the My Country, My Shirt series (pp24-27) and a whole host of tournament firsts thrown up by Qatar 2022 - good and bad.

Our work supporting community-owned clubs continues to deliver effective results and its importance was highlighted this year with so much focus on “preventing another Bury” (pp28-29). That work is backed up by a crucial training programme (p32) for our members which ensures their own

governance structures are supported and robust.

We continue to help supporters with individual problems and complaints (pp30-31) and we are very proud of our work with the EFL over the past 12 months in this area, which sees new communication protocols between club and supporter, an appeals system, education programmes and restorative justice programmes.

The climate crisis is a global problem that requires global solutions, but that doesn't mean football can't do its bit

and we've partnered with Pledgeball to give supporters ideas on how they can do just that. We also helped to structure and promote February's Green Football Weekend.

This year also saw two hugely influential and longstanding FSA staff members leave in Amanda Jacks and Anwar Uddin. Their contributions are covered elsewhere in this report but we'd like to put on record our thanks for everything they've done for the FSA - they depart on good terms and we look forward to working with them in future in their respective roles at Liverpool FC and the FA.



NATIONAL SUPPORTERS SURVEY

Every few seasons we conduct a National Supporters Survey to assess the state of the nation, when it comes to football. Since the last one we've seen the COVID-19 pandemic, VAR, the defeat of the European Super League and the immense growth of the women's game, amongst many other new and emerging issues.

Find out more on pp8-11.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The FSA is an inclusive, independent, democratic organisation working with supporters, governing bodies, leagues and clubs to drive positive change in football through supporter engagement at every level of the game. We nurture and develop supporter networks at local, national and international levels, working with supporters' trusts, clubs and individuals to initiate and support campaigns on issues of concern to football supporters, encouraging good governance, supporter representation on club boards, community-ownership and sustainable stewardship of football clubs. A commitment to diversity underpins all of our activity and we oppose all forms of discrimination or violence in relation to football.

NATIONAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:

Chair	Malcolm Clarke (Stoke City and York City)
Vice chair	Tom Greatrex (Fulham Supporters' Trust)
Associate organisations	Ally Simcock (A Pint Of Vale), Tracy Brown (Chelsea Pride)
Championship	Roger Ellis (Sky Blues Trust), Roger Titford (Supporters' Trust at Reading), Tony Wilkinson (Blackpool Supporters' Trust)
Community-owned clubs Network	Martin Cantrell (Banbury United), Tim Hillyer (Dons Trust), Neil le Milliere (Exeter City Supporters Trust)
Fans for Diversity	Chris Paouros (Proud Lilywhites), Sachin Patel (Spurs REACH), Nilesh Chauhan (Villans Together)
FSA Cymru co-opted representative	Paul Corkrey (Cardiff City Supporters' Club / Wales Fans' Embassy)
Individual representatives	Anielka Pieniazek, Geoff Bielby, Christine Seddon, Jamie Dapaah, Nigel Davidson
League 1 & League 2	Ian Bridge (Bolton Wanderers Supporters' Trust), James Young (Robins Trust), Heather Alderson (Charlton Athletic Supporters Trust)
National Game	Matthew Kempson (North Ferriby United), Richard Tomkins (Hereford United Supporters' Trust), Sarah Stelling (York City Supporters Trust)
Premier League	Dave Pennington (Manchester United Supporters' Trust), Neil Dady (Wolves 1877 Trust), Steve Moulds (Foxes Trust)
Women's Game	Jude Morris-King (Manchester City Women FC Official Supporters Club), Rachel Major (The Gang:England), Sian Wallis (Proud Lilywhites)

Election process: Networks are responsible for electing their own representatives. Nine members are elected from the National Council to make up the Board alongside the chair and vice chair.

The National Council representatives listed have served the organisation during the past 12 months with some of the positions up for re-election at our 2023 AGM. Please see the FSA website for the most up-to-date Board and National Council membership.

The FSA Board

Ally Simcock, Chris Paouros, Dave Pennington, Malcolm Clarke, Neil Dady, Roger Ellis, Sachin Patel, Sian Wallis, Tim Hillyer, Tom Greatrex and Tony Wilkinson.

Networks are responsible for electing their own representatives who sit upon those Networks thanks to their nomination from an FSA affiliate (named in brackets). Nine members are elected from the National Council to make up the Board alongside the chair and vice chair.

FA Council

There are more than 120 FA Council representatives. The body, along with FA staff and the FA Board, aims to "deliver an effective and professional organisation for the greater good of English football". FSA Board members Tom Greatrex and Chris Paouros sit on the FA Council as supporter representatives, Chris having taken over the role from FSA chair Malcolm Clarke in 2021.



FSA Board: Nine members elected by the National Council plus the chair and vice chair

● Elected at AGM ● Selected by networks

NATIONAL SUPPORTERS SURVEY 2023

Every few years we conduct a National Supporters Survey to assess the state of the game and the views of football supporters on a whole range of issues.

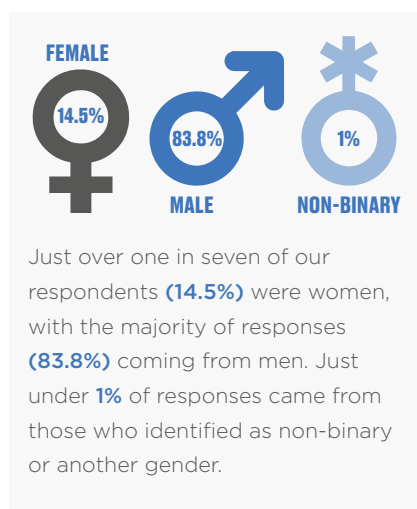
The last of these fans' censuses was conducted in 2017, and given how much has changed in the six years since - the introduction of VAR, the COVID-19 pandemic, the spectre of the European Super League raising its head and the subsequent Fan-led Review of football governance to name

but a few major impacts on our game - we thought it high time to poll fans again on the game's big issues. In total, nearly 10,000 fans gave us their opinions on all aspects of the game.

As a quick note, not all the figures on the following pages will add up

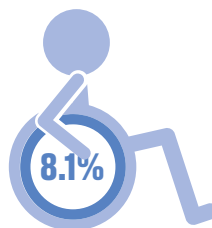
to 100%: percentages have been rounded to one decimal place; in some cases not all responses to a question will be detailed, while in others fans may have been able to select more than one option.

WHO FILLED IN OUR SURVEY?



There was a broad representation of different ages - one in five respondents (20.5%) were aged 35 or under, just over a third (34.8%) were between 36 and 55, while the majority (44%) were 56 and over.

One in 12 fans (8.1%) considered themselves as having a disability, up from 4.5% in our last survey.



YOUR MATCH GOING HABITS

There was a strong matchgoing contingent among our respondents, with more than nine in ten (90.6%) having attended at least one home match last season.

Almost two thirds (62%) of respondents held a season ticket in their own name, with a further 3.1% sharing with family/friends.

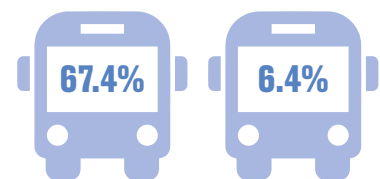
Around half our respondents (45.2%) attended 20+ home games, while more than three quarters (76.2%) had attended at least six home fixtures.

WHO DID YOU SUPPORT?

The majority of our respondents were fans of the men's game. Two thirds (63.9%) stated their support for just one men's team, and fifth (21%) said they supported both a men's team and a women's team.

One in twenty-five (4.2%) were fans of just one women's team, but there was also a significant minority who had a second club in both the men's (16.7%) and women's (2.6%) game.

More than 200 different teams' fans were represented in our dataset.





VAR

The most significant change to the laws of the game since the introduction of the backpass rule in the early 1990s, VAR continues to be divisive.

We have consulted supporters on these issues before, and one of benefits of the National Supporters Survey is that it provides us with the ability to track opinions on topics over time.

We first asked about video referees in 2017, and while at the time the question was theoretical, there was widespread support of trials of video referees for game-changing decisions – three-quarters (74.6%) of fans were in favour.

How has that changed now that fans have seen the reality of VAR?



Only a quarter (26.8%) of fans, having seen the impact of VAR, said they were absolutely or somewhat in favour of it, compared with almost two thirds (63.3%) who were against it.

Those who have experienced it in-stadium rate it worst – only one in twenty (5.5%) rated their in-stadium experience of VAR as either good or very good. For those on TV that number climbs, but only to one in eight (12.4%) who give it a positive rating.

More than three-quarters of matchgoers (79.1%) and two thirds of TV viewers (65.4%) rated their experience as either poor or very poor.

So what are the problems?

The delays to the game in terms of the length of time it takes to come to a decision are a major negative factor – an overwhelming majority (91.9%) agreed that decisions take too long to make.

The lack of clarity around the process is also an issue – four in five respondents (80%) said that fans should be able to hear discussions between the VAR and the on-pitch referee.

Despite what the PGMOL data may show, only a third (33.6%) of fans think that the overall number of incorrect

decisions has decreased with VAR, and two thirds (63.9%) say that the offside law needs changing as a result of the introduction of VAR.

Conspiracy or cock-up? A third of fans (39.4%) say their side has been unfairly treated overall by VAR.



Despite all this negative feedback, there's still a significant minority who think that VAR should be introduced in the Championship (35.1%) and WSL (29.6%).



COST OF LIVING

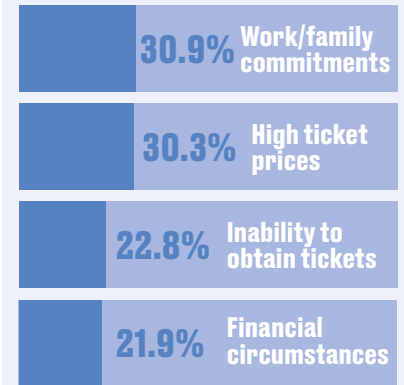
The rising cost of living has had an impact on how much people spend on attending football, with **40.1%** of respondents saying they were already spending less due to the financial climate.

Just over a fifth (**21.7%**) of fans said they were attending fewer games because of the cost of living, and almost a third (**31.9%**) said they had reduced their matchday spending on items such as food, drink and programmes.

A quarter of fans (**26%**) said they were now attending less than they had in recent seasons, compared with just **16.1%** who are going more often.

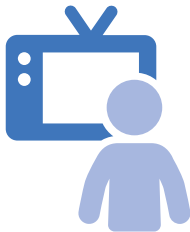
The most commonly cited factors from those whose attendance is dropping are work/family commitments (**30.9%**), high ticket prices (**30.3%**), an inability to obtain tickets (**22.8%**), and changes in financial circumstances (**21.9%**).

Attendance is dropping



BROADCAST

There remains majority support for the 3pm TV blackout, with **59.1%** of fans in favour of its retention. The picture is less than clear, however - support for the blackout is lower than in previous surveys, and with the advent of streaming we asked whether non-league and women's teams should be able to break the blackout to stream their fixtures.



More than half of respondents were in favour of non-league (**65.3%**) and women's (**55.6%**) streaming on Saturday afternoons.

Fans indicated they are not in favour of the multitude of subscriptions required

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was near unanimity on the issue of the power of broadcasters – 96.1% agreed with the sentiment that broadcasters have too much sway in deciding kick-off times and fixture schedules.

to watch the Premier League fixtures – two thirds (**63%**) said they would prefer a direct-to-consumer Netflix-style app rather than having to subscribe to multiple broadcasters.

Almost half of respondents (**44.6%**) had not been able to attend a match because it had been moved for TV in the last year, while one in five (**20.4%**) had lost money on travel/accommodation because a game had been moved.

Two-fifths (**41.8%**) of supporters said that football on TV is losing its appeal.

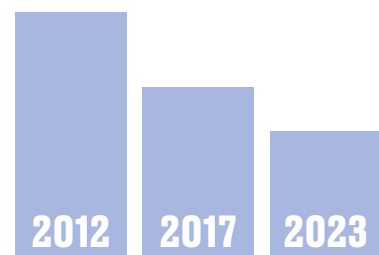
BAD BEHAVIOUR?

In line with previous surveys, roughly one in five fans has seen or experienced racist, sexist or homophobic language in and around a stadium in the past year, while three out of ten have heard language they consider offensive from supporters.

Much has been made of the increase in anti-social behaviour by supporters post-COVID (see news of the football-related arrest figures on p31) but our data doesn't necessarily support the anecdotal reports.

When asked if the overall standard of fan behaviour that they had witnessed at matches has deteriorated in the past few seasons, there was no consensus – a third of fans (**37.3%**) agreed bad behaviour had been on the increase, but 31.8% disagreed that standards of behaviour had got worse.

The number of fans who reported seeing anti-social behaviour on the concourse were identical to our last survey – **24.6%** – and the numbers who had seen or experienced pyrotechnics was down slightly to **33.1%** from **37.3%**.



Meanwhile, police behaviour continues to improve – only **16.7%** of fans witnessed unfair/unnecessary treatment from a police officer in the past year, down from **22.5%** in 2017 and **32.4%** in 2012.

Stewarding has also improved, with only a quarter of fans witnessing unfair/unnecessary treatment, down from **41.1%** in 2017.

ANYTHING ELSE?

Throughout the survey we offered up a whole host of (sometimes provocative) statements, with which fans could agree or disagree, or occasionally sit on the fence. Below we offer up some of those statements, and the extent to which fans agreed with them.



FAN-LED REVIEW

WELCOME BACK TO PRIDE PARK STADIUM

WELCOME TO PRI

An earthquake hit football more than two years ago when, on Sunday 18th April, six clubs from the Premier League attempted to annihilate football tradition by forming an invitation-only European Super League.

While the response of supporters killed that possibility in the short term the reverberations still ring out. In the immediate aftermath the Government announced the launch of the long awaited Fan-led Review of Football Governance which the FSA sat on and helped to structure. Around 130 FSA member supporter groups were able to give evidence to the expert panel.

Progress since then has not been at the pace we would have liked to see but there's no doubt that the direction of travel is very positive, eventually leading to a Government White Paper. These are policy documents setting out proposals for future legislation.

Thanks to our relentless work in Westminster the Government remains committed to football reform which will, in effect, prevent domestic clubs' participation in any breakaway league

while greatly improving supporter engagement models.

Throughout the year we've continued to engage key political figures and, behind-the-scenes, worked with civil servants to maintain progress.

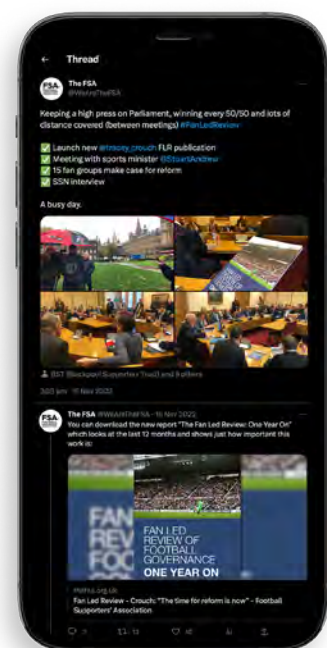
In September 2022 an FSA delegation featuring fan representatives Christine Seddon (Blackpool Supporters' Trust), Heather Alderson (Charlton Athletic Supporters' Trust) and Tom Greatrex (Fulham Supporters' Trust and FSA vice chair) met with the new sports minister Stuart Andrew, and he confirmed the Government would press ahead with reform by releasing its White Paper on football governance.

MPs continued to back the FSA in Parliament with cross-party support at a debate in November while the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Football Supporters, to which the FSA is secretariat, also wrote to the culture minister Michelle Donelan urging delivery of Government promises.

"Football clubs are not commodities to be traded and risked, they are often pillars in the communities in which they sit; many having been part of their

towns and cities for over a century. An independent regulator is essential to safeguard the future of football in the UK; a recommendation which has cross-party support," wrote APPG chair Ian Mearns MP.

Come November we held an APPG to launch a new publication looking at the Fan-led Review one year on, attended by 15 fan groups - it received strong coverage from Sky Sports News and kept the issue in the public eye.





IMMINENT

In December Donelan told Parliament's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee that the long-awaited Fan-led Review of Football Governance White Paper was "imminent" - a word with which the FSA was, by then, very familiar.

"Fans have been let down by certain owners coming in and not acting in a responsible way and prioritising the needs of their clubs and the fans. That is something the fan-led review sought to tackle and we will address with the White Paper," said Donelan.

"I get the pressing urgency, I get the frustration by fan organisations and by those who worked on the fan-led review. It is one of the top priorities as a department and we will come forward with it."

The Government White Paper was ultimately published in February and committed to the establishment of an independent regulator - something we warmly welcomed.

"The football governance White Paper clearly addresses our key concerns around ownership, rogue competitions and sustainability and of course we support any proposals that offer fans a greater voice in the running of their clubs," said FSA chief executive Kevin Miles.

Sports minister Stuart Andrew presented to Parliament what he called "the most radical overhaul of football governance since the rules were first invented back in 1863."

The proposals covered key issues around an independent regulator ownership, breakaway competitions, grassroots funding and supporter engagement.

WHAT DID OTHERS SAY?

Prime minister Rishi Sunak

– "These bold new plans will put fans back at the heart of football, protect the rich heritage and traditions of our much-loved clubs and safeguard the beautiful game for future generations."

EFL – "The Fan Led Review White Paper represents a once in a generation opportunity that must be seized to address the systemic issues that football has been unable to sort itself over the last 30 years."

Premier League – "The publication of this White Paper is a significant moment for English football. The Premier League and its clubs will now carefully consider the Government's plan for England to become the first major nation to make football a government-regulated industry."

The FA – "We welcome the publication of the White Paper today, and its commitment to improving the financial sustainability and governance of professional clubs."

CROSS-PARTY SUPPORT

The sports minister told Parliament a new independent regulator would make sure clubs are financially resilient. He received cross-party support from fellow Conservative MPs as well as those from Labour, Liberal Democrats, the SNP and DUP.

“Clubs will have to show they have sound financial business models and good corporate governance,” said Andrew. “Secondly, we will strengthen the owner and director test to protect clubs and their fans from careless owners.

“Thirdly, we will give fans a greater say in the running of their clubs, this will include stopping owners from changing vital club heritage like names, badges and home shirt colours without consulting fans first. Likewise clubs will have to seek regulatory approval for any sale of the stadium and fan engagement will be a crucial part of that process.

“Fourthly, we will give the regulator the power to block widely condemned closed shop leagues like the European Super League.

“Finally, we will give the regulator fallback powers over financial redistribution – supporting the pyramid is crucial. When the financial health of the pyramid is at risk the regulator will have the power to intervene,” said the sports minister.

Jeff Smith MP, Labour’s shadow sports minister, made clear Labour’s broad support for the proposals and urged the Government to put forward a Bill and move towards legislation.

“Historic clubs have collapsed because of the reckless actions of owners and the longer we wait for change the more clubs are at risk,” said Smith.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM LEGISLATION

The Government will introduce a new independent regulator with a “three specific primary duties” to ensure club sustainability, systemic stability (i.e. the overall stability of the football pyramid) and to protect club heritage.

Clubs will only be allowed to play in approved competitions, effectively ruling out an invitation-only European Super League if those clubs also wish to compete in FA-sanctioned competitions.

The regulator will also implement a minimum standard of supporter engagement and establish new tests for prospective owners and directors of football clubs.



Kevin Miles and Tracey Crouch MP in Parliament © UK Parliament

Westminster work continued into March as FSA chief executive Kevin Miles appeared in front of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and told MPs not to let the Premier League mark its own homework.

He added that while discussions with the Premier League on a Fan Engagement Standard (FES) were

initially very good, we’ve since found “that every time a proposal was sounded out with the clubs, the clubs were reluctant to sign up to [the proposal].”

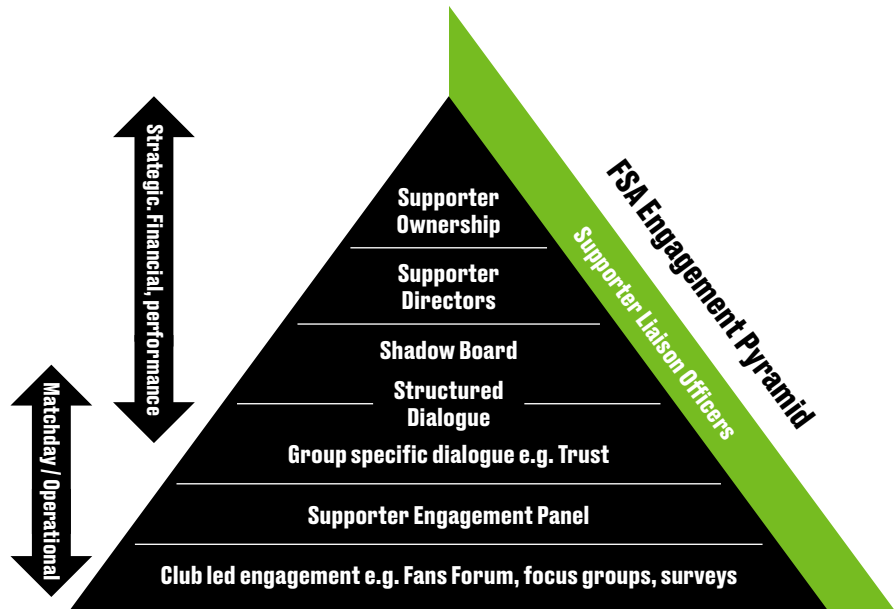
He added: “The clubs would rather set a low bar and the manifestation of the FES published by the Premier League now is entirely inadequate. There’s nothing in their FES which prevents

the chief executive of a club from selecting the Fan Advisory Board.”

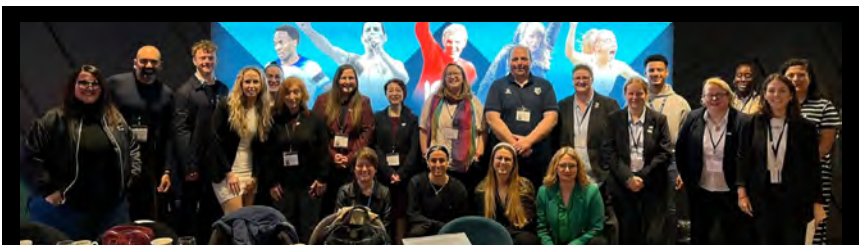
Tracey Crouch MP, who chaired the Fan-led Review, said the Premier League had attempted to kick the report into the long grass and erected a “whole series of hurdles” to delay reform. Crouch said the EFL and FA had been more willing partners to reform.

WHERE NOW?

The King's Speech, scheduled to take place in autumn 2023, will include details on the Government's plans and football governance legislation will then make its way through Parliament. As this has cross-party support, as well as the backing of the EFL, FA and FSA, the outlook is sunny, although we'd still encourage fans to contact their MP and express their support for an independent regulator and greater supporter engagement.



Southend fans protest against owner Ron Martin



ASHLEY BROWN - the FSA's head of supporter engagement and governance

"Clubs are reaching out to the FSA and asking how best to build supporter engagement models, often mediating in difficult situations. We're in a strong position and are influencing positive change.

"Good quality engagement can be challenging for supporter groups and we're building a strong package of training programmes for our members at all levels of the game.

"It can create complexities too - balancing out a shadow board which has the expertise to look at strategic financial information while also being broad enough to reflect the fan base across matchday, stewarding or ticketing issues isn't easy.

"They need to be two different entities really, or the former is a sub-committee of a broader fan engagement panel."

WHAT IS A SHADOW BOARD?

A shadow board should strengthen the relationship between the club, its supporters and supporters' groups. It should ensure that the club actively consults with supporters and takes their views into account at all levels of decision making.

A shadow board might discuss matters such as: club business performance, priorities and plans, club heritage protection, stadium issues, community strategy, equality, diversity and inclusion commitments as well as operational and matchday items of a strategic nature.

WOMEN'S GAME

Back in September 2022, the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced plans for a review into the future of the women's game, to be chaired by former-England international Karen Carney MBE.



DCMS said the review would “look to deliver bold and sustainable growth of the women’s game at elite and grassroots level” with a primary focus on audience growth, financial sustainability, prize money, facilities and existing structures in the women’s game.

All interested parties were invited to submit evidence and here at the FSA we pulled together a group of experts and supporter representatives to draft our initial submission.

A “Vision Day” held in July with members of the FSA’s Women’s Game Network also helped us shape the response.

The comprehensive submission used case studies to focus on key areas within the game, with our main recommendations summed up below:

- Working group – a single review can’t solve everything but we would like to see a working group created with representatives from all major participants, a think tank that helps shape the exciting future that lies ahead in the women’s game, with significant supporter involvement.
- Audience and growth – Supporters should be embedded in the heart of the game, with the importance of equality and diversity emphasised while improving safeguarding and welfare.

- Commercial and broadcasting – a balance needs to be found between the interests of matchgoing fans and the growth of broadcast. Let’s not replicate the mistakes of the men’s game. We’d like to see a reduction of the gaps in the pyramid caused by broadcast payments too as competitive balance is critical. More thought needs to be given to commercial partnering.
- Funding – supporters agreed there is the need for some form of central funding along with a fair distribution model. Football as a whole can afford to support the women’s game, in the same way solidarity payments are distributed in the men’s game, but the interpretation of fair distribution varies.

- Structures and governance – there should be a pathway to independence for women’s teams, an increase in transparency of finances, governance structures and supporter involvement embedded in all areas.
- Sustainability – environmental sustainability to be included in club licensing criteria.

Those recommendations are all critical, big picture items, although our research and consultation also hit upon many matchgoing issues which are massively important and deserve to be highlighted – especially those relating to away supporters, a group that can be overlooked by home clubs.

AWAY SUPPORTERS

Away support is a core part of fan culture, disproportionately enhancing the atmosphere at games in a way that we all enjoy.

Supporting the Lionesses away from home is extremely difficult. Lack of support with travel arrangements and a scarcity of information means making plans can be really difficult. Ticket information for internationals is often provided with less than three weeks notice.

On the domestic front, away support is made difficult by multiple barriers including fixture clashes with men's teams, away ticketing schemes and kick-off times.

A lack of clarity as to whether seating is reserved forces supporters' clubs to research seating arrangements at each stadium and communicate in an unofficial capacity so fans know where to buy their ticket. We would like to see the clubs working together

to implement a standard way for purchasing away tickets directly from their own club.

We would also like to see the league and clubs implement away sections in the women's game. This is not about the segregation of fans (as we still believe there should be a mixed zone option) but it is about having the choice so away fans can sit together and help generate a good atmosphere in the stadium.

TICKETING & TV

Supporters said they also wanted to see greater focus given on the away fan experience in relation to customer care, ticketing and facilities. This was the case at domestic and international level.

"Supporting a club away from home is complex and requires supporters from the visiting team to create online accounts with the home team to buy a ticket," said FSA National Council member and Manchester City Women fan, Jude Morris-King. A WSL fan will need to register 11 different accounts in order to attend league away matches and that means 11 sets of marketing bumph from teams you don't support.

Unsocial kick-off times also have a detrimental effect on travelling fans and numbers. Increased visibility is welcome and the production values on the BBC and Sky Sports are generally very good, but asking supporters to leave home at 4.30am for an 11:30am kick off hundreds of miles away leaves fans feeling undervalued and replicates existing problems in the men's game.



Karen Carney MBE, pictured

PROGRESS

In April, a group of supporter representatives from the FSA's Women's Game Network met with Karen Carney to discuss their submission in an online evidence session, ahead of the expected publication of the report later this year.

Deborah Dilworth, the FSA's head of women's football, said: "The FSA's Women's Game Network has been

delighted to be involved at every stage of this review, from evidence submission, to panel discussions and now the fan consultation meeting with Karen and our members.

"We know supporters should be seen as meaningful stakeholders, and that they are key to the growth and development of the game, so we are grateful to Karen for the work she has done during this review."



WORKING WITH THE FA

Back in September the Lionesses faced Luxembourg at Stoke City's Bet365 Stadium and waltzed to a 10-0 win, which came as little surprise given their status as newly-crowned European champions.

However, a significant number of supporters experienced difficulties with the park and ride ahead of the game, and missed a lot of those goals.

Many fans told of waiting more than an hour for pre-booked park and ride buses which didn't appear, and being left with no choice but to walk the 2.7 mile journey to the stadium, while others missed the match entirely.

In the aftermath we collected case studies from around two dozen supporters who experienced problems on the night, with hundreds more requesting refunds on their match tickets.

We then submitted a report and, to the FA's credit, they have taken those fan testimonials seriously, and committed to a closer working relationship between the FA and FSA for future matches, and to refunding those fans who were affected on the day.

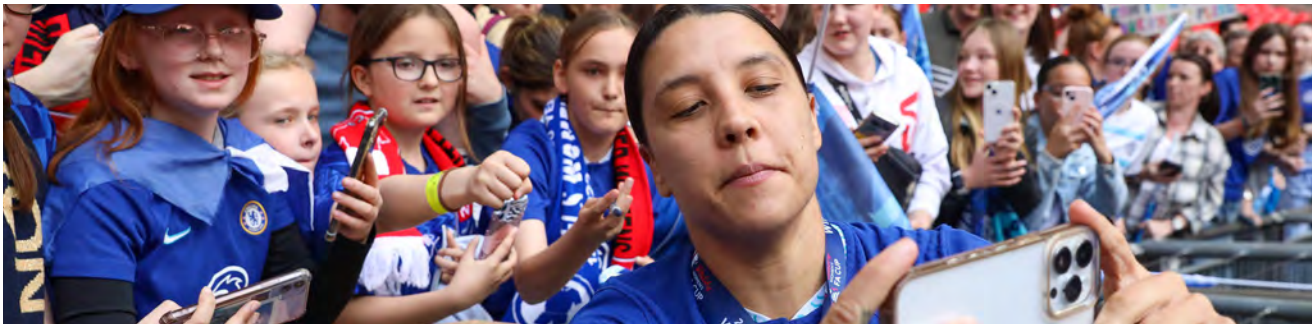
We also had a meeting with the FA to discuss all aspects of the report and possible solutions as no-one wants to see a repeat.

The FA said: "The FA would like to apologise to the spectators that experienced difficulties in attending

the England women's international versus Luxembourg on Tuesday 6th September at Stoke City.

"We fully recognise that due to transport issues and traffic congestion around the stadium that a number of spectators did not make it to the stadium, and others missed part of the match.

"The FA has reviewed spectator testimony from the match and is deeply sorry for all those that experienced distress in trying to reach the stadium, especially those of a vulnerable nature."



CLOSER COLLABORATION

The issues around the Luxembourg fixture notwithstanding, we have enjoyed much closer cooperation with the FA and an improved working relationship over the past year as the FSA has led all supporters in a series of specific fan engagement meetings with the governing body.

This ensures that fan voices from across the pyramid - from the Women's Super League at Step 1 down to the regional feeder leagues at Step 7 - are being heard by the

competition organisers in women's football, as well as supporting other stakeholders in broadening the discussion to groups such as accessibility experts Level Playing Field who represent disabled supporters.

Separate meetings have been scheduled to deal with issues specific to following the Lionesses.

Work is ongoing on the issues raised in our submission to the Carney

Review, including key progress on away ticketing and dialogue with away fans, to ensure that not only does the game retain its friendly and welcoming atmosphere but that away fans are able to build that sense of community that comes from following their teams, which in turn will help to grow attendances and improve atmospheres further.

Keep an eye on the FSA website for updates on that work in the coming months.



GET INVOLVED

The growth of the women's game in recent years is little short of amazing, with dozens of new supporters groups forming and joining our Women's Game Network.

These groups rely on volunteers, so if you are a fan of the women's game get involved with your local supporters group and help to grow the game. If there's not a group at your club and you want to set one up, get in touch with us - deborah.dilworth@thefsa.org.uk

FSA AWARDS 2022



© FSA / Matt Walder



© FSA / Matt Walder

Kevin De Bruyne became the second Manchester City player to scoop the Men's Player of the Year Award at the FSA Awards in association with BeGambleAware, following in the footsteps of former teammate Sergio Agüero, who won the prize back in 2014.

With more than 250,000 votes cast, the FSA Awards are the largest supporter-led awards in the UK and De Bruyne topped the fans' vote ahead of Man City teammate Erling Haaland, Bruno Guimarães, Harry Kane, Bukayo Saka and Ivan Toney.

The awards event, hosted by BBC journalist and presenter Victoria Derbyshire, also paid tribute to the achievements of England's Lionesses' Euro 2022 win, with a Special Achievement award for the England

squad, picked up by England legend Kelly Smith.

Arsenal and England forward Beth Mead took home the Women's Player of the Year award for the second time, seeing off competition from Ashleigh Neville, Ella Toone, Kate Longhurst, Keira Walsh and Sam Kerr.

On accepting her award, Mead said: "Thank you so, so much to everyone who voted for me for FSA Women's Player of the Year. It's an incredible honour for me to be voted for this award, especially by you, the fans.

"What a year it's been - not only for me individually but as an England team what we did this summer was incredible. Hopefully you loved, and lived and breathed every single minute with us. I just want to say thank you for the support."

Elsewhere Ian Wright picked up the trophy for Pundit of the Year for the second time - beating previous winners Alex Scott, Jamie Carragher and Gary Neville - while the Guardian scooped a range of prizes with wins in the Newspaper of the Year, Podcast of the Year and Writer of the Year in the shape of Barney Ronay.

Peter Drury proved he remains a favourite among supporters, once again winning the vote in the Commentator of the Year category - receiving the award for the third time.

"Thank you so much for affording me this fantastic honour," Peter said. "And an honour indeed it is, particularly in the face of competition from a shortlist full of people who I both like and admire hugely. To receive this sort of acclaim from genuine supporters of the game means the world to me."



The full list of winners of the 2022 FSA Awards in association with BeGambleAware:

WOMEN'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Beth Mead

FAN MEDIA OF THE YEAR

The Square Ball

COMMENTATOR OF THE YEAR

Peter Drury

FANZINE OF THE YEAR

My Only Desire

ONLINE MEDIA OF THE YEAR

The Athletic

TV/RADIO PUNDIT OF THE YEAR

Ian Wright

SUPPORTER LIAISON OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Louise Formston & Nina Crombie

NON-LEAGUE COMMUNITY AWARD

Solihull Moors FC

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT

The Lionesses

MEN'S PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Kevin De Bruyne

CLUB PODCAST OF THE YEAR

Blue Moon

FANS FOR DIVERSITY AWARD

Rainbow Blades

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

The Guardian

PODCAST OF THE YEAR

The Guardian Football Weekly

RADIO SHOW OF THE YEAR

The Warm-Up

SUPPORTER ENGAGEMENT AWARD

Watford FC

WRITER OF THE YEAR

Barney Ronay

CLIMATE ACTION AWARD

Bristol City

EUROPE



The FSA is a member of Football Supporters Europe (FSE) alongside many other national supporter organisations from across the continent. FSE was founded in 2008, has members in more than 50 UEFA nations and is the sole, democratic voice of European football supporters. What have they been up to in 2022/23? Read on to find out more...



EUROPE WANTS TO STAND

FSE and supporters' organisations from across the continent, including the FSA, have long campaigned for UEFA to lift its outdated ban on standing through the 'Europe Wants to Stand' campaign.

In July 2022 UEFA's Executive Committee approved the use of safe standing facilities in three countries for the upcoming 2022-23 season. It meant that clubs in France, Germany, and England were permitted to use standing terraces for UEFA's club competitions.

Gregor Weinreich, coordinator of the 'Europe Wants to Stand' campaign and FSE Board member, said: "While this will be seen in a few years' time as a natural development, it is also an historic victory for the European supporters' movement. We welcome the evolution of UEFA towards an evidence-based safety and security policy, taking into account the needs and expectations of active fans."



FSE AND UEFA AGREE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Productive work with UEFA continued as FSE agreed a 'Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)' with European football's governing body in January 2023 which recognises the critical role that fans have to play.

FSE executive director, Ronan Evain, said: "This is an exciting milestone for FSE. The MOU demonstrates that UEFA understands the value and importance of football fans, whether it's through protecting the future of European football, helping supporters have influence within their clubs and at national level, protecting human rights, or raising awareness around the positive contribution that supporters make to the game.

"We believe the joint commitments of the agreement will benefit all fans and we are excited to begin a new chapter of work together."



FANS' EMBASSIES A SUCCESS STORY

Euro 2022 broke countless records with previously unseen attendances for a women's international tournament - and marked the first dedicated Fans' Embassies project in women's football by Football Supporters Europe.

Nine fans' embassies working in conjunction with FSE were in operation during the tournament, with five fans' embassies - England, Finland, Northern Ireland, Spain and Sweden - working on-the-ground.

FSE's Fans' Embassies project manager, Matt Willis, said: "The fans' embassies project was a success, ultimately helping supporters attend tournaments with confidence, safe in the knowledge that they have a familiar trusted point of reference should they need any support, or simply to join and meet with fellow fans. This lays fantastic foundations for future tournaments, particularly Euro 2025."



UEFA APOLOGISES FOR CHAMPIONS LEAGUE CHAOS

Serious failures in crowd management at last year's Champions League final meant many Liverpool fans missed their team's final against Real Madrid as tens of thousands were trapped outside the stadium in dangerously congested areas.

In the immediate aftermath UEFA and the French police tried to blame supporters but it was clear to those present that the failures were those of the authorities and event organisers.

FSA-affiliates Spirit of Shankly (SoS) and Liverpool Disabled Supporters' Association (LDSA) led the way, supported by FSE and the FSA, in fighting for an apology and investigation into the reasons why things unfurled as they did.

In early June 2022 UEFA announced an independent investigation, led by Dr Tiago Brandão Rodrigues, which delivered its verdict in February 2023.

The FSA and FSE were represented on the investigation's panel which found that serious safety failures could have led to fatalities and UEFA bore "primary responsibility" for the pre-match chaos.

Supporters were entirely exonerated.

Numerous issues with access delays, congestion, crushing, turnstile closures, brutal policing and criminal attacks by local groups came close to causing a disaster in which people could have been killed. "It is remarkable that no one lost their life," said the report.

French police were criticised for not working with other stakeholders organising the final, failing to address congestion on notoriously problematic access routes, using tear gas and pepper spray without sufficient justification on fans, failing to engage with the local community, and "standing by" while supporters were being mugged.

The findings were welcomed SoS and LDSA who, in a joint statement with the FSA and FSE acknowledged the "sincere apology" made by UEFA general secretary Theodore Theodoridis and implored the governing body to implement "all key recommendations of the review to improve fan safety and experience at future events".

Merseyside MP Ian Byrne was relentless

in his support for Liverpool fans which also resulted in sports minister Stuart Andrew telling Parliament that the Government would continue to lobby UEFA on the recommendations of the Paris report.

"The expert panel concluded that the behaviour of Liverpool fans was a key reason that the mismanagement was not fatal. I commend their action and welcome the judgement of the report that the fans behaved faultlessly under extreme pressure and duress," said Andrew.

In March 2023 UEFA began refunding fans who were caught up in the chaos outside the Stade de France before announcing in May "measures to enhance safeguards for supporters at UEFA finals".

UEFA said it was "fully committed" to "enhancing the welcoming, service-oriented and inclusive experience for all supporters attending its finals" with a focus on two main objectives - to make fans an "integral part" of UEFA finals and ensure "collaboration between all stakeholders involved in the staging of these finals" - an announcement which was welcomed by FSE.

FANS FOR DIVERSITY



Having been founded in 2014 the Fans for Diversity campaign, which we run in partnership with Kick It Out, has been breaking down barriers to football for the best part of a decade now.

The 2022-23 season has been another busy one for the campaign, with a huge catalogue of fan-led diversity-focused activity taking place up and down the country at all levels of the game.

That work has been led by ex-pro, and the first British Asian to captain a professional outfit, Anwar Uddin, who has since left the FSA to join the FA.

Through the Fans for Diversity campaign Anwar helped establish more than 200 supporter groups at clubs in England and Wales, produced thousands of usable resources for clubs and fans, and helped more than 15,000 people watch their first live game.

“I’m extremely proud of what we’ve achieved over the last nine years,”

Anwar said. “The campaign has clearly demonstrated that supporters are central to tackling racism and discrimination while making football more inclusive for all.”

“We’ve helped build an incredible network of new supporter organisations across the country that will do lasting good for fans and the game as a whole.”

While there’s been success across all strands of diversity in the last nine years, Anwar pointed to the significant growth of both the LGBT+ supporters movement and the flourishing of south Asian fan groups as particular highlights.

Anwar said the work of fans, and supporter groups, through campaigns like Fans for Diversity is vital to the success of any effort to increase participation in football from those communities.

“The fan groups in our network have been doing great work,” he said. “They’ve all done so much to break down those barriers to getting involved in football.”

“What’s most pleasing to me is not just how they’re getting people into seeing their local sides, but following England and Wales too.”



QATAR: TOURNAMENT FIRSTS

December saw the World Cup held in winter for the first time which brought the domestic season to a halt, but for a number of groups representing fans from south Asian communities here in England and Wales, it was a unique opportunity to experience tournament football.

Over recent seasons three fan groups – Amar England, Apna England and Amar Cymru – have been helping supporters from south Asian communities get into following their respective national teams.

That work continued with the 2022 World Cup and supporter-led activity

taking place both here and in the Gulf state.

“The three groups all had fantastic World Cups – they’ve done so well bringing together fans in places like the Midlands and Wales,” Anwar said. “For many of them it was their first taste of tournament football, that experience of being in one place with a whole load of other England and Wales fans.

“They’ve obviously gone to a World Cup host nation that often shares their religion and some of their cultural practices and norms – so that’s helped them step into tournament football.

“But I think they’ve been conscious of all the issues around the World Cup and understand that the ways in which Qatar was particularly welcoming for them made it unwelcoming for others – particularly around LGBT+ issues and alcohol.”

The Fans for Diversity fund has been instrumental in helping fan groups like this get up and running, who in turn are introducing a new generation of fans to the matchgoing habit – even supporting their national teams on the road.



THAT CHELSEA CHANT

There's an all-too-familiar chant aimed at Chelsea fans which has sadly once again been in the news this season - a problem that culminated with the arrest of three supporters at Molineux.

We've heard or read various excuses as to why the chant is just harmless banter and we don't buy that at all. LGBT+ fans have consistently said they find it is homophobic and distasteful.

LGBT+ fan groups make a huge contribution to our organisation across a range of campaigns, and not just those related to diversity issues. We will not tolerate homophobic chants which make football a less welcoming place for our members.

Supporters reflect society and the vast majority of matchgoers are not homophobic but much like society

there will be outright homophobes in any large crowd - as well as other people who might "go with the flow". We hope they read this and understand why the chant has to stop.

The FSA will continue to challenge homophobia, and any other form of discrimination, and strive to ensure that football stadiums are free from illegal bigotry.

FANS FOR DIVERSITY IN THE WOMEN'S GAME

Earlier this year we were proud to launch our new publication Fans for Diversity x Women's Game to mark International Women's Day 2023.

Fans for Diversity x Women's Game aims to give individuals and clubs guidance, support and funding information, along with inspiration via other projects run with the help of Fans for Diversity. Download it here: bit.ly/ffdxwomensgame





MY CLUB, MY SHIRT

Another of Fans for Diversity’s most high-profile successes recently has been the My Club, My Shirt campaign - which celebrates fans from all walks of life and the history of their shirts.

Since its debut at Cardiff City many clubs and fan groups have taken part in the My Club, My Shirt initiative producing a wide gallery of supporter portraits from across the country - Newport County, Carlisle United,

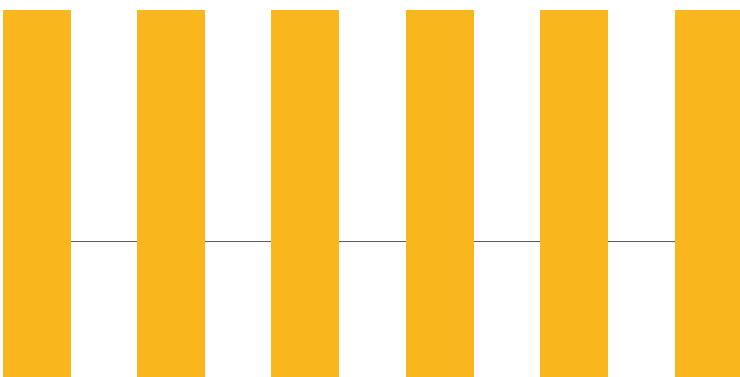
Nottingham Forest, Bristol Rovers, AFC Wimbledon, Bath City, Blackburn Rovers, Wolves and Lincoln City.

Most recently, the format was also taken up with a national twist by fans of the England women’s team as we launched our Euros Fans’ Embassy work last summer.

Deborah Dilworth, who leads the FSA’s Free Lionesses work, said the

project had been a long time in the making but the final results had blown everyone away.

“It gave great pride and pleasure to invite Lionesses supporters from across the country to take part in this project. The fans involved have a range of different experiences - from those just starting out to matchgoers of 20+ years,” said Deborah.



COMMUNITY-OWNED CLUBS AND NON-LEAGUE



At the forefront of many of the discussions around the Independent Football Regulator was the need for a mechanism within the game which would “prevent another Bury”.

In the immediate aftermath of the club’s expulsion from the EFL, the FSA worked with a determined group of local supporters keen to see football continue in the town, and in setting up the Shakers Community Society they gave birth to Bury AFC. The community-owned club only narrowly missed out on promotion this season, had excellent runs in both the FA Vase and FA Cup and developed a strong following in non-league in a short time.

The success of Bury AFC notwithstanding, there remained a strong desire within the town for football to return to its spiritual home at Gigg Lane.

Bury FC Supporters’ Society, the supporters’ trust from the former Bury FC, worked to obtain funding from central government’s Community

Ownership Fund, matched by local benefactors, which secured the future of Gigg Lane.

The local council, as well as national government officials, have worked hard to support the project to re-establish senior football in the town. The FSA’s community ownership model under which Bury AFC operate was critical in securing funding and support from both.

The two groups saw a unique opportunity for supporters to rescue a club crashed by reckless owners, and explored options to merge and bring football back to Gigg Lane.

At the first merger vote in October a huge turnout of more than 75% in both societies voted in favour, but fell just a handful of votes short of the 66%

majority in both societies required by the law in order to proceed. A failure to merge threatened the loss of the council and government funding, and with it the future of the ground.

Both societies reflected on the result and the huge desire expressed by supporters for a merger and worked together to put the proposition to members once more, and at the second attempt the legal threshold was met, and work has started on preparing the stadium for the upcoming season.

Cementing Gigg Lane at the heart of the Bury community will be key to the long-term sustainable future of the club, and the FSA will continue to offer our assistance to help supporters meet the ambition for the name of Bury Football Club to be restored, back where it belongs.



UNDER THE RADAR

While high-profile cases such as Bury grab a share of national attention, the FSA works with dozens of fan groups each year, big and small, concerned at the plight of their club.

One such team is Frome Town in Somerset, who play in the Southern League Division One South at Step 4 of non-league.

The supporters group contacted us concerned with the financial situation

at the club, having discovered borrowing from the previous owners at exorbitant interest rates beyond the level at which the club could generate the income required to pay back. As the lenders looked to call in their overdue debt, the existence of the ground and club were under threat.

Working with the FSA and the local council, the supporters convinced them of the value of the club to the town, and the council agreed to step in to buy the land and cover some of the

debt, allowing the club the breathing room it required and keeping a vital asset in the hands of the community.

Cases such as Frome's show the importance not only of vigilance and an organised and dedicated supporter group, but of engagement with local stakeholders such as the council, without whose support we would have most likely seen yet another small club going under, and another community facility fall into the hands of developers.

THE ONLY WAY IS ETHICS?

Following a motion passed at our AGM in 2021, the FSA resolved to devise guidance to enable clubs to make decisions concerning ethical procurement.

A simple definition of ethical procurement is one where there is both the minimum exploitation of workers in the industry in a particular country and also an element of fairness towards contributors to the early part of the supply chain.

Currently there is no simple way for a purchaser of football kit in the UK

to make an informed choice and the FA has not provided any guidance on this topic. As a result, we have been working with Labour Behind The Label, a national pressure group concerning workers' rights in this sector, as well as Professor Aziz Islam of Aberdeen University, a specialist in the underlying ethical issues in the clothing trade, on developing an ethical procurement policy for our community-owned clubs.

We will also be meeting with the representatives of Transform Trade, an organisation promoting legislation intended to improve matters in this

area, and Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), a national pressure group focussing on the need to avoid waste and encouraging recycling in relation to apparel.

Once established, we will engage with Parliamentary groups interested in these supply chain issues, as well as developing and promoting our ethical procurement policy with other supporter groups in the UK and in Europe through Football Supporters Europe.

CASEWORK



As our National Supporters Survey 2023 shows (see P8-11 for more), the vast majority of matchgoing fans feel safe and welcome at football matches across the country.

Every season millions of us go through the turnstiles without a hitch. Over recent years there has been an improvement in supporters' perception of policing and stewarding, as our census data shows.

However, we're aware that there are still issues and flashpoints - and when things do go wrong at the match we're always on hand to offer help and guidance.

FAIRCOP: 16 years at the forefront

For the last 16 years Amanda Jacks (aka FairCop) has been fighting for the rights of football fans and leading our work on stewarding and policing - so it was with a heavy heart that we announced Amanda was moving onto new things back in February.

She's staying in the football world, and we'll still be in regular contact with Amanda, but such has been her enormous contribution to the FSA we thought it right to pay tribute to her once again.

The treatment of football supporters has changed dramatically over the last decade or so - and our work holding police to account, or challenging clubs' overly-zealous security procedures,

developing alternatives simply punitive measures, has been central to that.

"There are various reasons why things have changed," Amanda said. "And we've managed to shine a spotlight on how fans were treated as there was no real scrutiny beforehand.

"Camera phones and social media have also made a difference in discouraging poor practice from individual officers and the media have taken more of an interest in that, too."

Amanda's work over that period wasn't a solo effort of course, so we'd like to thank Melanie Cooke (Football Law Associates) whose serendipitous meeting with Amanda

has led to many hundreds of supporters receiving top class legal representation. Likewise, Lochlinn Parker (ITN Solicitors) who has been a huge support to Amanda and the FSA over the years.

Additionally - Owen West, Geoff Pearson, Cliff Stott and Mark James have been invaluable allies and Amanda says she "learned a huge amount from them about the psychology of football policing and legislation". Links with the EFL have really developed in recent years too thanks to Bob Eastwood and his approach to evidence-based crowd management, while Ashley Lowerson, an expert in football-related law, also co-authored our new, joint sanctioning guide with the EFL.



LEVELLING THE SCALES: New sanction guidelines in EFL

Back in December, the EFL unveiled its new supporter sanctioning guide, developed with the FSA, to assist its 72 clubs in dealing with supporter behaviour issues.

The guide seeks to help clubs deal with the small number of supporters that cause issues at their clubs and to improve standards of sanctioning across the country.

With the FSA's input, the sanctioning guide recommends new communication protocols between club and supporter, an appeals system, education programmes and restorative justice programmes. Assistant professor at Northumbria law school Dr Ashley Lowerson, an expert in football-related law, also co-authored the new sanctioning guide.

"The creation of the supporter sanctioning guidance will rebalance the rights of spectators and those of the football club. A process that is autonomous yet encapsulates proportionality and fairness," Dr Lowerson said.

EFL Sanctioning Guidelines
- read here: bit.ly/efl-guidelines

ARRESTS ON THE RISE (but remain historically low)

The latest arrest figures for football were released back in September 2022, covering the 2021-22 season, the first set of statistics since the COVID-19 pandemic and the return to full grounds.

In the 2021-22 season, there were 2,198 football-related arrests - a jump from the 1,381 arrests recorded across the 2018-19 season (the last full set of arrests statistics available).

Although this is an increase the arrest rate remains low, with one arrest for every 20,000 supporters. Across the Premier League and the EFL this equates to less than one arrest per match and compares favourably to many other large public events.

"Football arrest figures have been falling for decades and were at an all time low in 2019," said FSA chief executive Kevin Miles. "So an increase was possible at some point, and this post-COVID dataset shows a rise back towards 2013-14 levels.

"This matters to our members, match-going supporters, more than anyone. But it's also worth saying that football is a safe environment with hundreds of thousands of law-abiding fans and their families attending week in, week out."

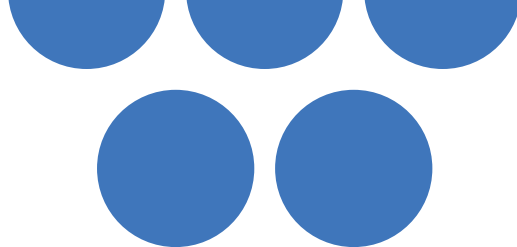
Throughout the season, the FSA has continued to work with the Premier League, EFL, FA and other authorities on projects which seek to reduce disorder via proportionate and effective measures.

HERE TO HELP!

As ever, the FSA is still here to help fans with matchday issues related to policing and stewarding. If it's a police matter or a fan is subject to legal proceedings, we can put you in contact with our friends at Football Law Associates or ITN Solicitors.

If it's club-related, get in touch with us and we'll see what support we can offer.
Email info@thefsa.org.uk

TRAINING



Healthy, well-run supporter organisations at club level are vital to the success of the FSA's national campaign work, which is why we now offer training on critical board-level roles to all of our member groups

Much is demanded of board members and elected officers at fan groups, supporters trusts and community-benefit societies - many of whom are volunteers thrust into the roles with little or no experience - and we now deliver core training for those board members to help them get to grips with their new roles.

Our core training course for supporter trust and community benefit society board members is suitable for those newly in post or for veterans of the scene looking for a refresher.

Delivered online across four sessions over a month, the course is free for FSA members and is taught by FSA training and governance manager Nicola Cave.

"We've had a great response to the course so far and it's been extremely worthwhile for those taking part," she said.

"The course is suitable for those newly in post or even experienced supporter representatives looking to update their knowledge. So if anyone's interested they should get themselves booked

onto a course as soon as possible!"

The course is flexible, offering the option for participants to dip in-and-out of the sessions, targeting subjects that are most relevant to them and their organisation. Short assessments are carried out online with FSA certification handed out to successful members.

We are also offering separate role specific training for society secretaries and chairs as well as sessions on finance and social media.

AUDITS

In addition to training we also offer society auditing to make sure your organisation operates within its rules and meets any other legal requirements.

Nicola says: "Auditing is vital to the health of your society, helping to ensure it is run in a way which represents its members - members who ultimately all have equal ownership of the society.

"It's all about helping your society be the best it can be."

FSA auditing helps our member organisations become or remain compliant with the requirements laid out by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and other legal obligations.

Audits help ensure the society has the most up-to-date model rules, side policies and offers recommendations on member engagement and processes like board elections.

RESOURCES

To find out more about our governance training contact Nicola via email: nicola.cave@thefsa.org.uk

All of the information on our training courses, auditing and resources for board members can be found on our website - visit: bit.ly/fsa-training

CLIMATE CRISIS

With no political solutions in sight on both a national and international level - as scientists increasingly warn of a pending climate emergency - football now has an opportunity to show real environmental leadership.

So the question is, has it shown that leadership? Well the picture is mixed with a host of clubs going above and beyond - but sadly many clubs do little beyond PR campaigns all the while routinely using short haul flights and making other poor environmental choices.

BAD HABITS: DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

The controversy around football's addiction to domestic flights reached its zenith this year as shocking research from the BBC revealed just how commonplace team flights are. Looking at a two month sample the BBC found that Premier League teams made 81 individual domestic flights to 100 games taking place in that period.

The shortest of these domestic team flights was 27 minutes, the BBC found, with an average journey time being just 42 minutes. The research also found a large number of "positioning flights" were taking place around games - flights where the mostly empty planes are getting into position to pick up private charter passengers. Domestic flights are the worst per-passenger form of travel for carbon emissions with substantial CO2 output.

It also leads to the absurdity of plush, modern, empty coaches driving around the country to pick up teams from airports to take them to the stadium.

Forest Green Rovers chair Dale Vance told the BBC: "I think the bigger impact is the emotional one, the intellectual one, you've got Premier League teams setting a very bad example for the rest of the country when we are desperately in need of getting to net zero."

GREEN FOOTBALL WEEKEND

Back at the start of February, the first ever Green Football Weekend took place and it provided supporters with an opportunity to contribute to tackling the climate crisis.

Throughout the weekend clubs wore green armbands during games to promote the message, pundits' microphones were coloured green and supporters pledged to make environmentally-conscious choices around travel and food.



Pledgeball founder Katie Cross: "It was fantastic to be a part of Green Football Weekend - so many fans got involved and pledged to take action against climate change as well as supporting their club to score green goals and attempt to win the inaugural Green Football Weekend cup, with Manchester United eventually taking the crown."



Pledgeball

WHAT IS PLEDGEBALL?

The FSA has partnered with Pledgeball as we look to do our bit to tackle the climate crisis and improve things for matchgoing fans. Pledgeball rallies football fans to bring about change - and supporters can make lifestyle pledges via the Pledgeball website.

The passion and stubborn drive that helps supporters keep the faith during bad times is also the energy needed to drive positive change and reduce the game's environmental impact. Fans can be a force for good.



BROADCAST AND KICK-OFF TIMES

It's been another year of frustration for fans getting to games - home and away - as late changes to kick-off times was the norm once again.

The broadcasters were the usual suspects of course, moving hundreds of games across the Premier League and EFL, but this season they were joined by the Metropolitan Police (and even the death of a monarch) adding to the fixture chaos in 2022-23.

BUCK PASSING: TV & the Met

Early on in the Premier League season the problem of conditional TV selections - games picked for broadcast that will undoubtedly have to be moved a second time due to cup clashes - reared its ugly head in the very first round of TV picks.

With just five days notice, Chelsea's home game against West Ham United had to be moved from its new Sunday 2pm kick-off time back to a traditional 3pm Saturday kick-off as Chelsea were (predictably) drawn to play Champions League football on the following Tuesday night. This farce led both sets of fans to accuse the Premier League and its broadcasters of treating supporters with "complete contempt".

Fast-forward to October and Stamford Bridge was again the centre of controversy, this time with the visit of Manchester United. Bizarrely selected for broadcast in July without a kick-off time, it wasn't until two weeks

beforehand that a kick-off time was finally confirmed. Chelsea Supporters' Trust described the scheduling of the game, or lack thereof, as "unacceptable and deeply irresponsible".

London's Metropolitan Police originally deemed the game too high risk and would not agree to police the fixture until it was moved. Eventually a compromise was reached, cutting Manchester United's away allocation to just 624 (down from 2,370) despite away tickets having already been sold, travel arranged and accommodation booked. Manchester United Supporters' Trust sought advice on behalf of fans left out of pocket and considered legal action saying the saga set a "terrible precedent which could have easily been avoided".

The disruption wasn't contained to just these two clubs however, with Newcastle United's visit to Tottenham Hotspur being moved by 24 hours

to the Sunday evening kick-off to accommodate both games in the weekend's broadcast schedule.

Another disastrous intervention from the Met came in April when they refused to allow Arsenal to host Chelsea at the Emirates Stadium in the Saturday evening kick-off slot, despite the game already being signed-off by broadcasters. The game was eventually moved to a Tuesday night with barely two weeks' notice. Supporter groups from both clubs called the fixture change an "insult to supporters".

Since these high profile incidents we've requested a meeting with Met to discuss the issues and concerns supporters have around their interventions on kick-off times. At the time of publication that meeting had yet to take place, but keep an eye out on our website and social media for updates on those discussions.

TV DEADLINES

In last year's Annual Review (and years prior) we dished out some heavy criticism to the Premier League and its broadcasters for repeatedly missing their own deadlines on TV selections.

Across the 2022-23 season that wasn't as big an issue as previously, but there was a flashpoint in the autumn when the TV picks for the Christmas and New Year period were announced more than two weeks late. This meant many fans wanting to book travel to games in the busy December period losing out on cheaper travel options.

Premier League officials were unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for the delay, despite requests from the FSA and other fan groups.



NEW DEAL IN THE EFL

In early May the EFL announced that it had reached a new five-year broadcasting deal with Sky Sports worth £935m.

The deal will see the number of games broadcast in the EFL increase to 1,059 - an almost ten-fold increase on the current number. Pledging to increase the notice period for TV selections, the EFL has also said it will be retaining its commitment to the 3pm blackout.

Each League weekend fixture round will see 10 live EFL fixtures shown. Five matches will be shown from the Championship and the remaining five fixtures will be selected from League One and League Two. Fans will also be able to watch every match from the Carabao Cup and EFL Trophy.

This agreement makes more matches available to stream and will effectively replace the current Sky Sports EFL red button coverage

and the EFL's domestic streaming option provided via iFollow and club streaming services.

Our EFL Networks will be awaiting more detail on the critical details of the deal before the FSA pulls together a formal response. Additionally, in June we are expecting to meet the EFL as part of our regular structured dialogue process - giving fan reps an opportunity to put their concerns directly to senior EFL executives.



It's been a busy 12 months for our Fans' Embassy teams following England (Free Lions) and the Wales men's national teams (FSA Cymru) away from home.

Our Fans' Embassy teams supported travelling England and Wales fans who made the trip out to Qatar which presented unique challenges - it was the first World Cup to be held in a Gulf State and the first to be entirely hosted in one city. And in the women's game we're continuing to develop our work as we look forward to this summer's Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

FUTURE OF THE WORLD CUP – lessons for FIFA?

The 2026 World Cup will be taking place in Canada, USA and Mexico making it one of the largest World Cups geographically since the tournament's creation. So what can FIFA learn from Qatar to improve future tournaments?

"When we look back at Qatar it's clear that fans were way down the list of considerations," Ashley said.

"When you look at the cost of accommodation, tickets, kick-off times and so on it's hard to come to any other conclusion."

Qatar was a huge challenge for our Fans' Embassy service but one regarded as a success in supporting fans out there. With a largely trouble-free Qatar behind them, the Fans' Embassy team's focus turns to the European Championships due to take place in Germany 2024.

FREE LIONESSES: Expanding our presence in women's game

Following on from the success of the Lionesses at Euro 2022 last summer - and the host of activity from our Free Lionesses Fans' Embassy team around that - we're once again looking forward to a busy summer in the women's game.

July sees England head down under for the 2023 Women's World Cup in

Australia and New Zealand and we'll be announcing our plans around the tournament in the coming weeks, so keep an eye on our @FreeLionesses Twitter account for up-to-date information on that.

Behind the scenes, our Free Lionesses team have been working with the FA ahead of the tournament to get the

best information we can out to fans making the trip to the tournament.

It's a long trip and for many fans of the England women's team it will be their first time following the team away across such a big tournament. No doubt it will be an incredible experience and we'll be offering whatever support we can along the way.



QATAR 2022 - low expectations met

Given its controversial history, Qatar had a battle on its hands to win hearts and minds, and that got off to a bad start on the eve of the tournament when the state decided to ban alcohol sales at the tournament's stadia (but not in the VIP sections) – despite previous promises that this would be allowed.

This last minute u-turn pointed to a deeper problem about the lack of communication and clarity from the organising committee towards supporters. Supporters then experienced huge delays with the tournament's ticketing system, with digital ticketing failing at the turnstiles – hours-long queues were seen outside ticket help centres as supporters struggled to get into games. Fans reported tickets for games disappearing from the tournament app while attempting to get through stadium security and turnstiles.

“The ticketing problems at the start of the tournament were well publicised,” Ashley Brown of our Free Lions Fans’ Embassy Team said. “At Iran vs England we had reports of England fans queuing for more than two hours to try and get into the game.

“Ticket office staff weren’t prepared for the problem and couldn’t deal with it initially – at one point the technology went out the window as a guy with a wodge of paper tickets was simply writing seat numbers on them and handing them out.”

Beyond ticking and alcohol, accommodation was a huge challenge for supporters throughout the tournament. While transport in Qatar was cheap and pain-free, the same could not be said for hotel rooms and other abodes, which became increasingly hard to come by and unaffordable for many.

Thomas Concannon from the Free Lions team said: “There were a lot of accommodation issues in the latter stages of the tournament.

“FIFA didn’t start offering the cheaper cabins and villages for rebooking once most nations had gone home. This is part of the reason we saw so many supporters travelling in and out of the country for each match, staying in nearby destinations like Dubai, Saudi Arabia – because it was cheaper than staying in Doha.”



ENGLAND WOMEN FAN REPS MEET FA

Supporter representatives from the women's game met with FA staff back in December 2022 to discuss the supporter experience at England Women games and preparations for the 2023 World Cup.

The meeting took place under the auspices of the FSA as part of the FA's commitment to supporter engagement in the women's game. This meeting was attended by fans from different supporter groups drawn from the FSA's network of supporters in the Women's Game Network and we look forward to future meetings between the FA and fans of the England women's team.



There are always a few stories that don't fit neatly elsewhere in the Annual Review, but that we think are worth recapping anyway, just In Case You Missed It.

JOIN THE CLUB

This year we welcomed two new clubs into community-ownership: after seasons-long fundraising campaigns Hereford United Supporters' Trust managed to take their shareholding in Hereford FC over the 50% mark back in November 2022, and they were joined this year by Lancashire outfit Colne FC of the Northern Premier League. Congratulations to both sets of fans for securing the future of their clubs, and joining the ranks of dozens of others on the fan-owned journey.

NEW IFO

How many supporters know about the Independent Football Ombudsman (IFO)? Not enough. If a complaint to your club fails to get the response that you'd hoped for, then you need to speak to the IFO whose chief ombudsman is appointed by the Premier League, the FA and the EFL. Kevin Grix took on that role in January 2022 and we look forward to liaising with Kevin and his team in the seasons ahead. Find out more and contact the IFO via www.theifo.co.uk

AWAY DAYS

Fan-owned Merthyr Town were the deserving recipients of this year's Away Day of the Year award, which we run in partnership with the Non-League Paper as part of their National Game Awards. Having been previously shortlisted for the award, this year they received more nominations than any other club in non-league; visiting fans praised their facilities, the warm welcome, and the atmosphere created by the home support at Penydarren Park. Congratulations to The Martyrs.

RIP IAN STIRLING

We were saddened to learn of the tragic passing of Manchester United fan Ian Stirling in March. Ian, a former FSA National Council member, played a huge role at the Manchester United Supporters' Trust in his role as independent supporter liaison officer, always ready to help his fellow fans, giving up hundreds of hours of his time over the years to improve things for matchgoing fans, as well as generally being just a top bloke. He will be sorely missed.





FANS FOR DIVERSITY X THE WOMEN'S GAME

Download our Fans for Diversity guide at:
bit.ly/ffdxwomensgame

FSA.

FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION

WWW.THEFSA.ORG.UK

Email: info@thefsa.org.uk

PO Box 1449, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR5 9UW