

**MINUTES of a MEETING of the
FANS FORUM OF CELTIC PLC**
held at Celtic Park, Glasgow
on 5 February 2018 at 19:00

Attending:

Club Representatives: Alexis Dobbin (Disability Liaison Officer) (“AD”)
Chris Duffy (Company Solicitor and Secretary for the Forum) (“CD”)
Angela Forbes (Ticket Office Manager) (“AF”)
Ronnie Hawthorne (Head of Safety, Security and Operations) (“RH”)
Kerry Keenan (Head of Marketing and Multimedia) (“KK”)
Chris McKay (Finance Director) (“CMcK”)
Michael Nicholson (Company Secretary) (“MN”)
David Stothers (General Manager – Soft Services) (“DS”)
John-Paul Taylor (Supporter Liaison Officer) (“JPT”)

Brian Wilson (Non-Executive Director, Celtic plc and facilitator of the Forum) (“BW”)

Fans: A list of attendees is attached at Annex 1

1. Opening

BW welcomed everyone and opened the meeting, introducing the table of representatives from Celtic.

2. Fans Forum Update

CD updated the meeting about the future Fans Forum dates that have been set (9 April 2018 and a date in September/October TBC after fixtures are known).

CD referred to the actions update published online, highlighting the new Relocation Form that had been introduced by the Ticket Office and providing a brief update on the parking issues with the Council. He explained how the tracker would be amended slightly going forward to keep it to a sensible length and user-friendly.

CD once again highlighted that feedback is always welcome, as are suggestions for future agenda topics before handing over to CMcK.

3. Season Tickets 2018/19, GDPR and Consultation with the Fans Forum

CMcK explained the proposed timeline for the season ticket renewal campaign and the pricing considerations that are factored into Club decisions. CD then briefly touched on the changes that are being brought into force by the General Data Protection Regulation with effect from May 25th before handing over to KK to explain how these affected the season ticket campaign and the Club’s ability to contact fans going forward.

BW then opened the issue up for consultation with the Forum.

Gordon Cowan suggested that if there was decent content being made available then fans would be happy to sign up to mailing lists etc. Giving the example of an interview post-match from Brendan Rodgers as being something that people would sign up for.

Joe O'Rourke urged some caution when it came to those older fans who would not have the same access to technology.

Joe Miller suggested that content offering should be different from that available from the mainstream media and available cross platform, rather than behind paywall or log ins.

Jim Hamill agreed that quality content was the most important factor, as well as the nature of sales messaging via email.

Michael Bryant commended the marketing team for some of the content they had previously produced, such as the Christmas Ad and noted that many of the older generation were comfortable with technology.

Steven Bissett added that content in advance of games would be a good thing, an electronic match day guide for example that covered some of the content from the matchday programme. He also suggested the creation of a CelticTV app.

KK welcomed the feedback, confirming that the marketing communications plan and sales messaging had developed over time. KK confirmed that content and live streaming would need to be separated as a result of the football rules but would take on board the feedback when finalising the campaigns and thereafter.

Paul Thomson and Martin Gilmore moved the debate on to ticketing, querying whether the additional ticket costs over and above the season ticket itself (even just for home game such as a UCL/UEL 3 match package) could be published in advance and asking about possible pricing for any UEL last 16 tie.

CMcK explained that only home matches were within our control at all, that the opponent and level of demand were factors and that pricing had to be agreed upon with the away team for home cup competitions. Given these factors it is not possible to determine pricing until the opposition is known, so that pre-publishing was not possible. The Club always sought to announce pricing as soon as practicable.

Bobby McCullagh asked whether there was ever likely to be scope for giving out free tickets for certain games like had occurred before with Partick Thistle and Hamilton.

JPT confirmed that the level of season ticket sales meant that there was no capacity for this at the moment.

Joe O'Rourke flagged the earlier renewal date as potentially challenging, especially for the younger fans. He stated that price is always a key factor and suggested a price freeze for season 18/19.

CMcK noted the point and explained that the Club would consider all factors before making a decision. One factor is the rising costs of running the Club, including continued investment on players and player wages.

AF added that as a result of the increased number of European qualifiers, the Ticket Office required more time to process all the applications, relocations, waiting lists etc., hence the earlier deadline.

Michael Scott suggested that the Club consider further value in the season ticket if prices were increased– for example two qualifiers to be included rather than one and a friendly.

KK and CMcK confirmed that this would be considered.

Andy McMahon queried why the instalment dates for payments were 25th and not the last day of the month.

AF confirmed the historic rationale of this linking in with monthly pay days and agreed to review this.

Keith McGinty referred to the letter issued by the Club prior to Christmas regarding the transfer of season tickets, querying the rationale behind it and whether there was scope to have 2/3 people noted on a ticket as being authorised 'transferees'. He also queried why a ticket for the Rangers game cost £50.

JPT explained that the main two drivers were the misuse of concession season tickets and the issues that were encountered in the Ticket Office when being unable to deal with people who were not the named season ticket holder. AF added that there had been a marked improvement since the letter had gone out. On the ticket price, AF explained that it was down to the high demand against limited supply.

Terry Murphy added that while he now understood the rationale behind the letter he felt it was a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Following discussion the Club was asked to look further into the matter.

Alison Docherty suggested that the Club communicate the rationale for the decision on season ticket pricing.

Tommy Stevenson suggested that a price freeze was appropriate and asked that the Club consider that.

BW confirmed that the Club would consider all of the issues raised.

4. Match Day Experience 2018/19 and Consultation with the Fans Forum

JPT provided an update on accessibility at Celtic Park and many of the recent, ongoing and planned improvements in this regard. Jim Lewis of the CDSA acknowledged the great work that has already been done and thanked JPT and AD in particular for their hard work and support in this area.

RH then talked through the stewarding and safety aspects involved in a typical matchday at Celtic Park before MN and DS gave a brief update on the work being carried out to create a 'Fanzone' at Celtic Park and what this could look like.

BW then opened the issue up for consultation with the Forum.

Gordon Cowan queried the price differentiation for away matches in terms of what clubs charge Celtic fans compared with other fans.

CMcK explained that these prices were set by other clubs and that the Club would continue discussions with away clubs with a view to finding a workable solution.

Ronnie Reagan of the CDSA reiterated the praise for JPT and AD, acknowledging the challenges facing the Club in implementing some of these measures and suggesting that other supporters may not appreciate the challenges faced by some supporters – noting as an example the work done at the front of the North Stand where supporters had been standing in front of supporters in wheelchairs and requesting that similar work be undertaken in the South Stand.

Joe Miller highlighted the lack of action from the Council in respect of the recent bad weather which made getting to Celtic Park problematic. Citing the proposed parking exclusion zone he urged the Club and the fans to press the Council wherever possible to improve.

BW strongly backed this call to action as being an effective route to change and gave some background on the work he was involved with in looking at the economic impact

of Celtic in the local area. MN also recapped on the current parking position with the Council. Supporters would be encouraged to respond to the public consultation.

Gerry McDonnell flagged an additional matchday issue with the early KO's for those travelling from Ireland in particular. Frank Smith echoed these sentiments, noting the forthcoming Rangers match was again a 12.00 KO.

MN noted that the Club recognise the challenges faced by supporters and always sought to have later kick offs but ultimately we had to comply with the SPFL rules on the matter. RH noted that the Police preference was always for an earlier KO. JPT also added that the Club had requested a 12.30 start at the earliest.

David McComish asked about the previously mentioned plans to build a sensory room at the stadium.

JPT confirmed that this was planned for next season and suggested an update be given at the next Forum meeting.

Frank Smith suggested that the club could perhaps assist supporters by producing a letter setting out the issues around the parking exclusion zone. Bryan McDonald added that it could perhaps be linked together in a project with KK and the Multimedia team.

BW confirmed that the Club would consider these suggestions.

Paul Thomson raised the issue of the positioning of the family section beside the away fans.

JPT and RH confirmed that the section had been moved further from the away fans,. KK noted that many families liked the location given the interaction they had with the standing section and the atmosphere there.

Brian Ainslie agreed with this and asked whether it was possible to have toilet facilities available for kids pre-match and before the turnstiles opened.

DS noted that the Kerrydale would typically be available and that if gate 43C wasn't already open pre-turnstiles opening then it could possibly be arranged. RH/DS agreed to look into it.

Bryan McDonald raised the point he had flagged at the AGM around whether anything could be done to prevent so many fans being relocated for UEFA matches at Celtic Park, or whether some sort of reduced package could be agreed given the change in type of seat typically offered as an alternative.

AF explained that up to 4,000 supporters require to be moved for various reasons and explained the process whereby relocation letters were sent out and original seats were offered back if they became available again from UEFA. The process was introduced following consultation with supporters affected but the Club was always looking to try and improve the situation.

Jim Docherty recounted his recent experience at Ibrox where his daughter was hit by a coin but there was very little intervention or assistance offered by the stewards. He added that the lack of a proper barrier was unacceptable and queried how or where he could follow up his complaint.

RH noted that there was always a pre and post-match meeting with the Police and stewards and agreed to bring this matter up for discussion at the next such meeting.

Keith McGinty raised issues regarding the varying volume of the tannoy/PA system in places, the quality of the big screens and the lifespan of some of the smaller TVs in the concourses.

KK, CMcK and JPT addressed the PA and the strategy for upgrade which was underway and should be finalised during the close season. The big screens had been upgraded but some final improvements were also planned for the close season. Concourse TV's are reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Keith McGinty then raised the issue of the South Stand toilets and any potential upgrades before Alison Docherty added that there were recurring problems with flooding in the Lisbon Lions upper.

DS explained the inherent issues given the age of the South Stand and agreed to look into these issues.

5. Close

BW thanked all attendees for their contribution, confirmed that all issues raised would be considered and then concluded the meeting.

Annex 1: Fans in attendance

Aidan Harkin
Alex Gallagher
Alison Docherty
Allan Kinniburgh
Andy McMahon
Anne McElhinney
Bobby McCullagh
Brenden Darcey
Brian Ainslie
Bryan McDonald
David McComish
Eliot Jordan
Frank Smith
Gerry McDonnell
Gordon Cowan
Jamie Metcalfe
Jim Docherty
Jim Hamill
Jim Lewis
Joe Miller
Joe O'Rourke
John Andrews
John Flannigan
Julia Donohoe
Keith McGinty
Kevin Lyons
Martin Gilmore
Mary Cannon
Michael Bryant
Michael Dyer
Michael Scott
Mike Glancey
Paul Thomson
Ronnie Reagan
Sarah Jane Conway
Simon Mullen
Terry Fitzharris
Terry Murphy
Tommy Stevenson