

**MINUTES of a MEETING of the
FANS FORUM OF CELTIC PLC**
held at Celtic Park, Glasgow
on 8 May 2017 at 19:00

Attending:

Club Representatives: Robin Buchanan (Stadium Manager) (“**RB**”)
Chris Duffy (Company Solicitor and Secretary for the Forum) (“**CD**”)
Tony Hamilton (Chief Executive, Celtic FC Foundation)
Chris McKay (Finance Director) (“**CMcK**”)
Michael Nicholson (Company Secretary) (“**MN**”)
Hollie Russell (Meeting and Events Sales Manager) (“**HR**”)
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

Other Attendees: Simon McMain (Operations Director, Centreplate UK) (“**SM**”)
Kirsty McDowall (Assistant Manager, Centreplate UK)

1. Opening

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

2. Operation of the Fans Forum

CD gave the first presentation regarding the operation of the Forum and the minutes circulated to attendees in respect of the first meeting. In relation to the minutes, CD asked for the Forum’s feedback on whether the minutes should be anonymised. The Forum confirmed that names of speakers should be included in the minutes to be published on the Club’s website. CD reviewed the feedback that had been received to date and requested feedback on the operation of the Forum on an ongoing basis.

CD presented an update on action taken on actions discussed at the previous meeting, including: the inclusion of opt-in and opt-out options for Rangers matches with the child season tickets; the changes to the student confirmation process; the decision to hold another ‘Relocation Day’; the decision not to make any changes to the Away Ticket allocation process for the start of the 2017/18 season; and the developments in the ongoing dialogue with the CDSA.

CD addressed scheduling for future meetings and confirmed that dates would be set for the next three meetings after the 2017/18 season fixture calendar was confirmed.

Gerry McDonnell (AICSC), Gordon Cowan (Evergreen CSC) and Alison Docherty each clarified some points arising from the previous meeting on concession tickets, away ticket allocations with Hearts and Hibs and ticket groupings, which JPT will address with them directly.

Gordon Cowan raised an issue he had encountered at the Ticket Office earlier that day where a disabled fan wasn't adequately assisted in his opinion. Kevin Mackin (CDSA) explained that this was usually well handled by the Club and stewards.

3. Celtic Park Parking Proposals Presentation and Consultation with the Fans Forum

JPT presented on the current status of the government proposals to introduce a 1km exclusion zone around Celtic Park and the Emirates Arena on event days, which included showing a video created by Thriving Places. He confirmed that no changes were expected to be introduced for the 2017/18 season and that further consultation together with local community engagement appeared to be the best way forward.

Joe O'Rourke (Celtic Supporters' Association) detailed an initiative from the time of Fergus McCann around encouraging bus and rail travel which was taken up well by fans but was ultimately unsuccessful due to the poor traffic management by the relevant authorities and the resulting long queues endured by fans. He noted that any newly proposed schemes would need agreement with all authorities and Police Scotland. He also cited examples from Man City and Monchengladbach where schemes worked well before asking for more information on Thriving Places.

JPT gave some more background on the body and noted that the Club had contacted Rangers FC and Partick Thistle FC to discuss matters.

Brian Gilmour reported the discussions he had had with the Council and other stakeholders to date. This highlighted that the volume of people likely to be affected would not be able to be adequately moved by public transport and also that the Council considered that this was an issue for Celtic to deal with. He further suggested that the SFA and SPFL should be doing more to assist the Club in this regard, highlighting the value that Clubs like Celtic bring to the local economy etc.

Peter Broughan considered that this was a damning indictment on the local authorities and the current transport infrastructure. He suggested that there were two sides to every story and the video didn't highlight the benefit that Celtic supporters bring to the local area. He suggested that the solution was engagement with the local communities with initiatives seeking to improve the immediate environment of Celtic Park and suggested that the Club could identify itself as an environmentally friendly club, which could raise the profile of the Club.

JPT noted that the club pay considerable sums of money to the local authority and agreed that engaging locally did seem to be the best way forward.

Brenden Darcey highlighted the problem that having a blanket 1km exclusion zone only pushes the problem out to that new area – noting that in Kilmarnock, a 2km zone was now being considered. He noted that traffic around the stadium was poor.

JPT noted that Police Scotland felt that the traffic lights should adequately deal with traffic, that Police Scotland were not obliged to do anything further and in any event there was no further budget available.

Alison Docherty added that everybody should be clear on the issues at play and not confuse things; for example, the antisocial drinking in parks that was flagged in the video was not likely to be caused by people who were driving and parking in the vicinity of Celtic Park and it was therefore unlikely that a parking exclusion zone will assist with such issues. She also noted the inconsistency across Scotland about similar issues.

John Flannigan (Barrowfield CSC) noted that he was a resident in Dalmarnock and urged the meeting to respect local residents as there certainly was an issue with parking around the stadium. He summarised some initiatives that had been considered to assist the local communities. He noted that local residents, Celtic and Celtic supporters should all be working together for the benefit of both the local community and the Club's fans – perhaps involving the identification of ground in the area that could be used for parking.

JPT agreed that there was a big issue and that it would be necessary to find new parking areas. Discussions were ongoing with the Council but no solutions had been identified yet. JPT confirmed that the Club would continue to search for solutions.

Peter Joyce noted a practical point about traffic flow after matches and a bus that always parks on the Gallowgate blocking a lane and also more specifically on the blue badge parking in the Jock Stein Upper car park where a steward was desperately needed in order to maximise the number of cars that could be fitted in. JPT noted that these concerns would be addressed.

BW then summarised that the blanket 1km exclusion zone was clearly not a viable solution and that the Club would continue to proactively try and find other workable solutions.

4. Centreplate Retail Catering and Consultation with the Fans Forum

SM, as representative of Centreplate led a presentation on the Centreplate operation at Celtic Park, detailing recent measures that have been taken to improve service, the challenges faced by Centreplate, certain sales figures, an analysis of pricing against other UK football clubs and proposed future changes.

The price of the catering on offer and the benchmarking exercise was challenged by the Forum and SM responded noting in particular that, leaving aside alcohol, Celtic Park was on a par with prices at Sunderland rather than Arsenal.

Peter Broughan queried the healthy options that could be made available. DS detailed the trials with healthy options that had been undertaken previously and noted that demand had not been substantial.

Lee House suggested that Centreplate should work with the club to perhaps have some vouchers included with season tickets for meal deals or kids offers. SM will consider this for future seasons.

David Barret noted that the quality and variety was better now than previously available but that more was still needed to be done – particularly around the pricing of snacks targeted at children.

SM acknowledged that confectionary had been identified as a problematic area and noted that the supplier for season 2017/18 would be changing to offer better choice and cheaper, 'entry level' options.

David Barret continued that speed was also an issue and that he thought the staff could be better trained/retained to assist here. Also, having people manage the queues more effectively could be helpful.

SM confirmed that Centreplate were working to address these issues but that there were challenges in retaining staff given the irregular nature of the work. The stadium layout also presented some challenges on queuing. SM confirmed that

studies carried out showed that Celtic Park compared well against other stadia Centreplate managed in the UK.

Keith McGinty queried whether contactless payments could assist with the speed issues and again highlighted cost issues.

CMcK outlined the contactless trial that had been undertaken and noted that it actually slowed things down. He added that the cost was also disproportionate given the limited number of games and the small window for sales but that the Club would look at the possibility again in the future.

Jamie Garamanli suggested that, compared to the options and quality on offer in the US, Centreplate were way behind in the UK.

SM noted that sports events were different in the US and that there was a much longer window for service which means that quality can be markedly improved (similar to cricket in the UK).

Kevin Lyons raised concerns regarding the South Stand and issues with the quality of staff.

SM reiterated the issues with staff retention but also added that a full site survey was to be undertaken in the close season and options for improvement would be considered.

Paul Thomson (By the Min Celtic) accepted the issue with the short half time window but suggested that more could be done to enhance the pre-match offering, especially in the wider Celtic Park footprint. He added that getting people along earlier would further extend the time available for sales.

Alison Docherty stated that she would like to see more local produce, better quality and perhaps more variety, such as home-made soup in winter.

SM undertook to take all comments into account. BW noted that the pricing message was coming through loud and clear.

5. Celtic Park Events and Consultation with the Fans Forum

HR presented on the full range of events that Celtic Park hosts, touching on some future proposals and some ongoing initiatives.

Jim Lewis asked whether the Celebrate '67 event would be beam-backed to Celtic Park at all. HR confirmed that it would not.

Gordon Cowan queried whether there were any plans to have any Glasgow tourist bus stop at Celtic Park. HR confirmed that the Club had been working on this for some time and that a joint offering with Tennents was being considered.

Jeo O'Rourke suggested that we could try and tap into the cruise liners that docked in Greenock. HR confirmed that this would be considered and that the Club was represented on panels and forums as detailed in her presentation, which assisted the Club in lobbying on issues like this.

Brian Gilmour asked about other languages being made available on Celtic Park tours and suggested that finishing the tour in the shop and/or a cafe would be helpful. HR confirmed that catering options were being looked at over the summer and the different language options (or at least small summary sheets in different languages) for the tour were being considered. Consideration would be given to the potential cost against potential growth.

Peter Joyce (CDSA) mentioned the poor experience he had at Celtic Park for the beam back of a St Johnstone game. DS acknowledged there were some issues for that match in particular and noted that the Club was working on improving quality of beam backs for the future.

Alison Docherty queried whether there were any NHS discounts etc. when booking Celtic Park. She also queried whether more beam backs were planned as the Hearts one had been well received. HR confirmed there are various discounts available and that further beam backs would be planned once the fixtures were out – noting that, given lower demand for certain fixtures, not all games would be covered.

BW undertook that all issues raised would be considered.

6. Celtic Park Developments and Consultation with the Fans Forum

RB provided an overview of the proposed and planned development works at Celtic Park, touching on the recently publicised plans for a hotel complex, the works scheduled for the next two close seasons in respect of improvements to the pitch and the new dome structure training facility that was proposed for Lennoxton.

Tommy Stephenson asked about the rumours of the Kerrydale Bar being turned back into hospitality stating that he thought this would be a bad idea.

BW stated that no decision had been made yet and that options were being evaluated. MN added that the Club reviewed all facilities from season to season.

Martin Gilmore (Ballymena Shamrock CSC) noted that closing the Kerrydale Bar would be unpopular with season ticket holders who used the facility– in particular the Irish fans who used it.

DS reiterated that no decision had been taken and that consideration of the use of the facility for next season was ongoing. BW noted that the Club was trying to reach the optimum option.

Peter Joyce brought up the changing places toilet proposal, which had the required budget sign off and just needed a location to be agreed – noting the good PR opportunity it presented. He added that he and the CDSA would like to be involved in any future plans for new buildings or renovations. BW noted that cooperation would continue.

John Flannigan suggested that the Barrowfield area could be used for a fanzone. He raised concerns regarding the Wi-Fi on matchday and the speakers around the stadium.

RB noted that the pitches at Barrowfield were often used on match days. Consideration was being given to the use of land owned by the Club around the stadium for a fanzone. In relation to the speakers, RB noted that an upgrade was planned and that we had listened to the issues raised by fans in the past. In relation to the Wi-Fi, feedback would be passed on to the system provided and reviewed with them.

Gerry McDonnell asked that consideration be given to a memorial in remembrance of the Irish famine given the 170 year anniversary coming up. BW said it would be considered.

Mike Glancy queried whether the big screens were going to be upgraded. RB noted that the current contract was ending soon and that alternatives were being looked into, along with other technical improvements around the stadium.

The CDSA congratulated the Club on the TV monitors that had been installed

Gordon Cowan brought up the issue of hot water in the South Stand. RB stated that the project was being reviewed, but that the age, layout and structure of the stand presented challenges. RB noted it was one of a number of capital projects that were being considered.

7. Any Other Business

Joe O'Rourke commended BW for facilitating the Forum well again and noted the importance of the issues raised at the Forum being considered and addressed appropriately. BW assured the Forum that all issues would be considered and addressed appropriately.

Joe O'Rourke said the issue of the Kerrydale Suite was a great example of something that should be considered by the board given the importance of the issue to fans.

Peter Broughan raised the continuing issue of fan harassment by Police Scotland and urged the Club to take a firm stance in this matter.

Frank Smith queried whether there were any ideas or suggestions as to how to encourage people to stay at Celtic Park for the full ninety minutes of matches rather than gradually starting to leave from 75 minutes onwards. Lee House noted that supporters had different commitments and habits.

Keith McGinty raised a concern regarding the lighting at behind Celtic Park. RB noted that the land in question was owned by the Council and that the Club would raise it as an issue again with the Council.

Bobby McCulloch noted an issue with the Home Cup Ticket Scheme where supporters may not be able to afford the scheduled deductions. JPT noted that the HCTS was in place for season 2017/18 but that it would be reviewed at the end of the season.

BW thanked all attendees, noting that the broad representation and the open discussion throughout the evening was encouraging and that the Club considered that this was a fair and productive way of running the Forum. This would be reviewed on an ongoing basis. BW then concluded the meeting.

Annex 1: Fans in attendance

Simon Mullen
Tommy Stephenson
David Barret
Gordon Cowan
Michael Dyer
Lee House
Sarah Jane Conway
Julia Donohoe
Jamie Metcalfe
Keith McGinty
Alex Gallagher
John Flannigan
Brenden Darcey
Mary Cannon
Alison Docherty
Joe O'Rourke
John Andrews
Anne McElhinney
Gerry McDonnell
Kevin Mackin
Ronnie Reagan
Martin Gilmore
Jamie Sweeney
Jim Lewis
Kevin Lyons
Bobby McCullagh
Gerard Gough
Dan McGinty
Peter Broughan
Peter Joyce
Jamie Garamanli
Frank Smith
Brian Gilmour
Paul Thomson
Liz Anne Lewsley

* Note that no sign in sheet was taken on the night; apologies if anyone who was in attendance has been omitted from the list above.