



## Derby County Supporters' Board Meeting - 17th February 2025

The Derby County Supporters' Board met with Stephen Pearce (Chief Executive Officer), Dave Biggar (Chief Commercial Officer), and Simon Carnall (Chief Operating Officer) on 17th February at Pride Park Stadium. All members of the Supporters' Board were present. The meeting focused on the club's communication strategy with supporters, an update on the commercial strategy, and a financial update following the January transfer window.

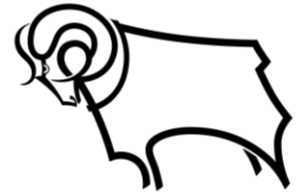
Ahead of this Stephen gave us a short football update following the closure of the transfer window and the changes in the first team coaching department focusing on the sustainability and future of the club. It was put on record how grateful the club was to Paul Warne and his team for the successes in bringing the club back to the Championship, and we shared that sentiment. We discussed the approach to this, and the club assured us that they had prioritised dealing with Paul on a human level in relation to how this was managed. There was excitement about being able to attract John Eustace to the club from a team competing for the play offs. The club explained that they were all completely focused on supporting John and the team in the final stretch of the season and were not complacent about the current situation on the field.

### Communication Strategy

We acknowledged the challenges faced by the club and its supporters in recent months, including disappointing on-field results, operating in the January transfer window and changes to the first team coaching staff. Leading up to the meeting, we noted increased anxiety among supporters through personal interactions, matchday atmosphere, social media, online forums, emails, and local media.

Ahead of the meeting, we had prepared questions regarding the club's communication approach, recent decisions, and overall direction. However, we welcomed Stephen's interview with RamsTV published just before our meeting, which addressed many of our concerns directly. We felt this was a positive step in engaging directly with fans and encouraged the club to consider how it could build from this. For context, the club feels it is important at this stage to stress that in the last 12 months that two Fans' Forums, two Supporters' Charter Group meetings and now four Supporters' Board meetings had taken place, during which time David Clowes and Stephen Pearce, in addition to other senior club officials, have been in attendance. A number of media commitments both with internal and external media have also taken place over the last year, including in-depth sit-down interviews with both David Clowes and Stephen Pearce with local media outlets.

Despite this, we discussed the club's broader communication strategy and suggested improvements. We highlighted that there was a perceived prolonged silence whilst anxiety amongst supporters grew, especially before and after the transfer window. This had created a negative perception of the club's direction and how seriously they were taking the current situation, especially given comments from the first team coach on transfer deals that did not transpire. However, the club refers to its earlier comments relating to the



staged events and media activities. It accepts that when results have not been going as well as everyone would have liked, there will be a perception of a lack of communication. David Clowes issued an update to supporters across club channels ahead of Christmas and the opening of the Transfer Window, while Stephen Pearce's interview with RamsTV was also factored into the communication plan to supporters but was delayed by a week owing to the change of Head Coach.

We had noticed supporters raising questions about the club's long-term vision. We suggested that the club consider more frequent executive-level updates to inform fans about progress on key objectives and its vision. We noted the potential for people to draw incorrect conclusions when little information is available but agreed that there had to be a balance to what was communicated. Given the club's confidence in its long-term plans and its success in attracting John Eustace to the club, we felt there was no need to be reserved in engaging with supporters on this.

The club agreed to further discussions to update the existing communications strategy and engagement framework. It was discussed that this could be delivered and built up through existing channels such as the Supporters' Charter Group, Fans' Forums, the Supporters' Board, and future interviews or written updates at key points. Both the club and the Supporters' Board agreed to provide greater transparency regarding planned meeting dates and updates to avoid the perception of reactionary communication. We acknowledged that dealing with operational challenges during the transfer window and coaching changes would have taken priority, but we were also pleased that the club listened and took our feedback on board.

### **Commercial Strategy Update**

Dave provided an update on the club's commercial strategy. Over recent years, the club has worked to rebuild partnerships, sponsorship and advertising relationships and revenue streams following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, administration, and the transition between League One and the Championship.

Whilst the club is primarily focused on securing long-term deals, with Puma, Fanatics, and Delaware North yielding positive results, efforts continue to secure further medium-term and seasonal deals, with the strategy and revenue potential varying based on the club's divisional status.

The 2025/26 season ticket and match ticketing strategy were briefly discussed. The club is currently reviewing renewal plans and an announcement is expected during the week commencing the 17th March. Additionally, we discussed how the club was looking to develop further revenue, and the club assured us it is exploring ways to maximise non-matchday revenue at Pride Park.



Regarding commercial revenue, we asked if the club benchmarks itself against other Championship clubs. The club confirmed that direct comparisons are difficult due to varying financial reporting practices throughout the league but assured us that revenue development remains a priority.

### Financial Update

Stephen provided an update on the club's financial position post-transfer window. The club remains compliant with EFL profit and sustainability regulations and within the funding agreements established with Clowes Developments (UK) Ltd. Plans are in place to maintain financial stability and competitiveness should the club face relegation to League One, in line with the cash funding arrangements established with Clowes Developments (UK) Ltd.

There were no further updates on the ongoing search for additional investment. The club reiterated that Clowes Developments (UK) Ltd is focused on finding the right partner aligned with the club's long-term vision, with no immediate pressure to secure investment. We requested the club evaluate how it could manage expectations regarding the potential impact of future investment, to ensure that supporters have realistic expectations about the effect of additional funding.

### Next Meeting

Our next meeting is scheduled for 31st March 2025, with a focus on the club's general football strategy, including the Academy and Women's teams and how the collective executive football team operates in line with the overall business strategy. We have requested the club share its long-term vision and roadmap for the club's future so that we can support the club in sharing this with the wider fan base.

### Supporters' Board Update

It has now been nine months since Derby County announced the formation of the Supporters' Board. During this time, we have established our terms of reference, held four meetings with the club, attended the Supporters' Charter Group meetings, participated in the Fans' Forum in October 2024, given an interview to BBC Radio Derby, and set up email channels for supporters to engage with us.

We are committed to developing the role of the Supporters' Board and we plan to work independently from the club to review our activity and communication methods. Our goal is to ensure we represent supporters as effectively as possible.

To help us achieve this, we encourage feedback and suggestions on the role of the Supporters' Board moving forward. If you have any thoughts on how we can develop and improve, please contact us at [supportersboard@dcfc.co.uk](mailto:supportersboard@dcfc.co.uk). Additionally, if you have any



questions or issues you would like us to raise with the club that fall within the remit of the Supporters' Board, please reach out. We have a standing agenda item in each meeting where we discuss these points with the club.

We also want to remind supporters that they can contact the Supporter Liaison Officer at [slo@dcfc.co.uk](mailto:slo@dcfc.co.uk) for immediate issues you need addressing and to raise issues for discussion at the Supporters' Charter Group. The Supporters' Charter Group meets regularly with the club to address various operational and matchday matters that fall outside the scope of the Supporters' Board. We will still respond to all emails to us and will ensure any emails where we cannot immediately help are passed to the correct forum.

We remain engaged with the club to question and understand their overall strategy and off-the-pitch operations. Our primary focus is on the club's governance and financial position, ensuring sustainability regardless of on-field performance. While current results on the pitch may be challenging, we are reassured that budgeting and planning are in place for various possible outcomes this season. In our latest meeting, we had some difficult conversations, but we were satisfied that the club remained open with us and receptive to our feedback.

Looking ahead, we will continue to refine and evolve our role by working closely with supporters, the Supporters' Charter Group, and the club itself.