



## **Derby County Supporters' Board Meeting - 1st April 2025**

The Derby County Supporters' Board recently met with Stephen Pearce (Chief Executive Officer), John Eustace (Men's First Team Head Coach), Ed Smith (Joint Head of Sporting Intelligence), Rob Price (Sports Science and Medicine Lead), and Matt Hale (Academy Manager). Jas Gidda from the Supporters' Board sent his apologies.

The meeting focused on the club's football strategy, how it aligns with the club's long-term vision, and how it fits into the wider business plan. We appreciated everyone taking the time to speak with us and for their openness and willingness to answer our questions.

### **Update from John Eustace**

John began by sharing his experience at the club so far and his approach moving forward. He said it was an easy decision to join Derby due to the club's stability and the opportunity to build something long-term. His long-term goal is to help the club on its journey to become a competitive Premier League team and accepts this also needs to be a sustainable journey in line with David and Stephen's vision.

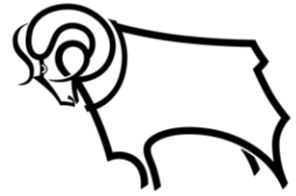
He spoke about his commitment to the club, highlighting its passionate fanbase, proud history, strong leadership, and quality infrastructure as reasons to be optimistic about the future. While the immediate priority is maintaining Championship status, he stressed that he and his team are giving their all to achieve this.

Since arriving, John has focused on lifting morale and building unity across the club. Ensuring that all staff continue to feel valued, further developing a family environment with togetherness around the training ground being central to the culture he wants to build. He's also been working closely with academy staff to build strong relationships and ensure a clear pathway for young players into the first team, which is a priority for him.

He emphasised the vital role fans play in supporting the team, saying the energy in the stadium gives players a real boost. Keeping that atmosphere alive will be crucial for the rest of the season and stressed how much he and players valued the support of the fans, particularly in difficult times. John called Derby a "special" club, recalling fond memories from his playing days, and reaffirmed his long-term commitment regardless of the outcome of this season.

### **Update from Ed Smith**

Ed introduced himself and shared his background in cricket, as well as his focus on applying cross-sport insights to football. Alongside Mo Bobat, he leads the Sporting Intelligence Department, which was created 18 months ago to identify and address gap in relation to the club's readiness to compete for promotion to and be sustainable in the Premier League. Ed explained that he's taken a collaborative and humble approach, working closely with people across the club who bring specific football expertise. He praised the club's excellent



physical infrastructure and said his work has focused on building out the systems, data, and structures needed to support long-term success in line with its Premier League vision.

The Sporting Intelligence Department includes:

- Sports Science & Medicine
- Talent Identification
- Talent Acquisition
- Data & Analysis

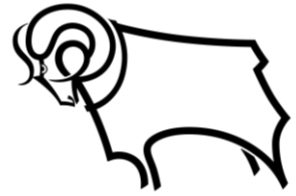
Ed discussed the importance of using a single source of accurate and reliable data in decision-making. While data is only one part of a complex puzzle, he stressed it's essential for sustained success. Another key element is recruiting high-quality people who align with the club's values and buy into its vision - individuals who are honest, skilled, and not afraid to speak their minds, but reminded us that is not a quick fix and takes time.

He explained that the club has a strong foundation in place with a strong club identity, rich history, passionate fans and high-quality stadium and training facilities. With the focus on bringing the right people into the club and developing the systems and culture it was important that the club remain measured if things get difficult, believe in the project and reflect on what is working and what isn't without starting from scratch.

Ed had reflected that organisations all make mistakes, but leading organisations make fewer mistakes than their competitors and that's what the sporting intelligence development was all about. Since Derby may not have the biggest budget, making smart decisions, developing talent through the academy, and maintaining clear direction are essential for building a sustainable future.

The Supporters' Board asked some follow up questions about the decision-making process on football matters. The club emphasised that they had focused on bringing people into the club to develop a culture of respect and to encourage positive and creative tension. Views are expressed before decisions are made and not after to encourage accountability and they are all aligned their shared vision and goals.

Stephen Pearce explained that the club wouldn't bring a first team player to the club without the final approval from John Eustace and that the football intelligence team worked collaboratively to find players in line with the Head Coach's requirements. A final question asked about the view on a director of football role. Stephen acknowledged that this could work well for some clubs but that for Derby, they saw it as a risk with one person holding considerable power without direct accountability for results and that the whole team were aligned to the structure and culture agreed, but equally accepted that there is work to be done on bringing that talent in to the structure as they want to find the right candidates for the permanent positions.



## Update from Matt Hale

Matt shared his experience since joining the club and discussed the academy's strategy. Since his arrival, he and the academy staff have worked together to shape their vision, focusing on elite standards, structures, and player provision to produce Premier League-ready players. The strategy is long-term and has been built with input from within the academy, rather than being imposed from above. All staff and players live the academy's core behaviours, which are also part of the appraisal process for staff and players. The academy's performance is measured not just in football, but also in its lifelong learning programme and education for players.

They ensure all players are given regular opportunities to play league matches to develop, whilst also balancing on trying to win competitions so player experience what it takes to win games of football. All players remain in education and work towards qualifications, supporting their personal growth as well as their football careers. The academy is also building a stronger pathway to the first team and is focused on creating an aspirational culture to support this.

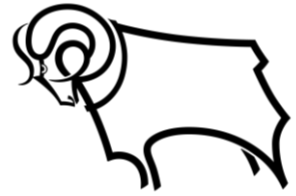
When asked about support for released players, Matt explained that the academy places strong emphasis on education to help players succeed beyond football through their life at the academy. A dedicated staff member handles player exits, helping them find new clubs, organising trials, and providing showcase matches in addition to supporting wellbeing.

There's pride in the academy's recent achievements, including currently holding third place in the Under-18 league behind the two Manchester clubs. The academy is seen as key to Derby's long-term sustainability - producing players for the first team, reducing transfer costs, and potentially generating income through player trading. The first team staff are actively involved with the academy, and plans are in place to strengthen the connection even further.

## Finance Update

Stephen Pearce updated us on the club's financial outlook. The club has submitted its projected Profit & Sustainability figures to the EFL, showing compliance with financial regulations for the current season.

Next season's budget is being developed with two scenarios in mind - staying in the Championship or potential relegation. Planning is already underway to support John Eustace and the squad in either case. Stephen also shared that season ticket renewals had started strongly, which was encouraging.



## **Supporters' Board Reflections & Next Steps**

We're grateful to John, Ed, Rob, and Matt for speaking with us, especially during a busy time for the club. Hearing John's passion for Derby and his long-term vision was inspiring, and it's clear the academy is being rebuilt with great care and collaboration from the staff throughout the club.

There was a strong sense of unity across the club. While data and analysis are important, it was reassuring to see just as much focus placed on building the right culture, recruiting and developing talent, and supporting people to work together effectively towards a vision that runs throughout the club.

The Supporters' Board exists to ensure the club is run in the long-term interests of fans, with a focus on sustainability, governance, and overall club strategy. We were pleased to see the alignment between different departments and a shared commitment to long-term goals. Sustainable success - on and off the pitch - will help strengthen the club's role in the community for its fans for years to come.

Despite the challenges this season, the club appears to have a clear plan for developing its football operations in line with its financial planning and the continued backing of Clowes Developments (UK) Ltd. The club confirmed that these plans would continue - with adjusted budgets - even if relegation occurs.

## **Next Meeting**

Our next meeting is scheduled for mid-May (exact date to be confirmed). We'll focus on next season's budget planning and review the club's annual strategic report. We also plan to dedicate time in a future meeting to discuss the development strategy for the Women's team.



## Appendix

The Supporters' Board received several questions relating to finances from the Supporters' Charter Group ahead of the meeting. We prepared the following answers and wanted to include them in this article in the interests of transparency so that all fans could see the outcome.

### **1. How are non-football revenues being grown to support the footballing side?**

We discussed this in our meeting in February. A commercial update was provided and the club assured us that the club were exploring ways to increase non-football revenue. It was explained they had focused on developing long term relationships with some key partners and that all three of these had resulted in positive results. These are Delaware North (catering / hospitality) Puma (kits and merchandise) and Fanatics (retail). The club is also focused on securing medium term and seasonal deals with revenue potential dependent on the division that the club plays in. The club is engaged with multiple organisations to generate interest across a range of non-football revenue opportunities and from a hospitality / events perspective focus on delivering high quality service to generate repeat business.

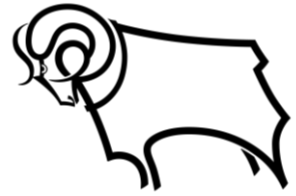
### **2. Of the Derby County losses posted as a subsidiary of Clowes Developments (UK) Ltd, how much of that counts as Profit & Sustainability losses and how much is exempt from those calculations?**

For the latest published accounts (covering last season in League One) there will not be a P&S calculation as this scheme is only in place for Championship clubs. In League One and Two there is a different regime to control costs called the "Salary Cost Management Protocol" The SCMP requirement is that a club's Player-Related Expenditure shall not exceed the sum of 60% of the club's relevant turnover in League One. The club published its headroom in relation to this in the financial reports last season (53% Headroom) The club confirmed to us that they have just submitted their forecasted Profit and sustainability rules to the EFL for this season and they will be compliant with the regulations. The values cannot be shared publicly at this time.

### **3. Two directors seems a low number for any company. There have been comments around bringing a Chair in at points in time. Is there a plan for a broader board and what sort of number of board members does the club see as optimal?**

It was confirmed that the club do not have immediate plans for increasing directors, and that the right time to review this would be in the future together with potential investment.

### **4. It's been stated publicly that David Clowes came in with a 3-year plan. As we now come towards the end of that, is there a plan now in place for the next three years? What is the on-field target for that plan? And is David comfortable funding that plan and/or are we any closer to further outside investment?**



The club did assure us in the March meeting that David Clowes was committed beyond this season with a committed funding arrangement in place and because of that there is no immediate need or rush to secure investment. The club outlined its vision to us detailed above and are working to establish themselves in the Championship in the short term but are working to long terms plans of building the infrastructure of the club to compete for promotion to the Premier League.

**5. Can you comment on how the risk of relegation is factored into budgeting?**

We have covered this a few times to ensure that appropriate planning is in place. The clubs commercial budgeting for next season has been modelled on both scenarios. The club is therefore confident in its ability to adjust costs in line with the funding arrangements agreed with Clowes Developments (UK) Ltd should they be relegated. We asked this question back in November when reviewing the financial accounts and the club shared with us the full financial auditors report which confirmed they were also satisfied with the club's ability to adjust financially should relegation occur.