CHAIR REPORT FOR ANNUAL ACCOUNTS – BEES UNITED

Introduction

This year for Bees United, the overriding theme is that of milestones. 2026 represents the 25th anniversary of the formation of Bees United, the 20th anniversary since Bees United saved Brentford FC by buying the club from its previous owner who threatened to put it out of business and additionally represents an historic 6th season in a row in the top-flight for Brentford (and in its 100th year of league football). Bees United exists because we, as fans, were faced with an existential challenge that threatened to see the end of Brentford FC but because of so many fans and so many BU members that fortunately never materialised and instead we are enjoying watching glorious football by our team. So, as ever, I want to thank all Bees United members who have been involved in engaging and supporting what we represent as a supporters trust throughout all these years. I also have to thank and acknowledge the efforts of all the Bees United board in particular as it is important to note that everyone involved is an unpaid volunteer and commits their time to try to ensure that Bees United continues to be a force for good in the community and in its engagement with the club.

Membership

Bees United is the official supporters trust of Brentford FC and remains the largest single fans group, with an increasing number of international fans joining as members as they also come to know and appreciate Brentford FC and want to learn about the history and culture of the club. I have to thank once again all those fans who contribute financially through ongoing donations or through giving up their free time. Bees United was set up 25 years ago to ensure that we fans had a club to support and the financial contribution at that time helped save the club and today it helps ensure that Bees United can continue to represent the fans through our seat on the board and in promoting and protecting the history and heritage of the club.

While we are the largest single fans group we would like to expand our numbers so that we can be ever more representative of our fan base and so I would ask all members to ask their fellow Bees fans if they are members and if not to encourage them to join. We continue to welcome international fans and hope to do more with these groups in future. If you are an international fan reading this then get in touch and let us know what more we can do for you and your local fans group.

Fan Engagement

Bees United continue to act as co-chair of the Brentford Fan Advisory Board (FAB) and has a total of four members on the FAB, with other fan groups represented at the FAB meetings. This year the FAB was expanded to offer up a wider representative selection of fan groups and our feedback to the club has been that we consider that the engagement at the FAB is positive and constructive. I would recommend that fans do take time to read the reports of FAB meetings and to raise any concerns that they have with BU so that we can highlight concerns.[1]

Additionally, Bees United does continue to have the unique advantage in its engagement with the club of having a board director (in addition to the other excellent work that board members do on the FAB and club working committees) and therefore we have a voice at all board meetings in a non-executive oversight capacity, but which means that the fans voice is heard by the executives on a regular basis. This also allows us to make early contributions to matters

[1] https://www.brentfordfc.com/en/the-fan-advisory-board

being discussed and to hopefully steer decisions to an optimal, balanced outcome as between club and fans.

Bees United Communications and events

We continue to send our monthly newsletters to members and continually challenge ourselves internally to ensure that this feels fresh and relevant. We welcome thoughts and comments on articles and the newsletter itself and would encourage any members to suggest ideas for us to consider!

Members will also hopefully have noted that this year we have also updated our BU logo to bring a clean, fresh look to the logo. We hope you like it!

In terms of events, most recently we held an in-person and live stream Q&A with Brentford CEO, Jon Varney. We thank Jon and the BFC fan engagement and media and comms team for giving up their time to speak with us. Jon was frank and open with his views on where the club is and the ambition for next steps and ducked no question or challenge, and feedback was that it was refreshing for a Premier League club to care enough about its fans to have its CEO be so closely engaged with fans.

Our Remembrance Day event has now become embedded as a traditional event held at the club and this year we refreshed the plaque – increasing its size and moving the location (it is now next to the players entrance at the Gtech just past Entrance C) so that it has increased prominence.

And finally, our most recent event was the unveiling of the Bill Dodge plaque at The Express Tavern. If you haven't seen it already I'd encourage you all to search it out on your next visit to the area as it marks an important figure in the history of Brentford FC (even if Bill did cast his vote back in 1889 for rugby rather than football…).

Our latest members survey (thank you Peter Turner for your dedicated and detailed analysis!) also has given us useful viewpoints on key issues and these are things that allow us to inform our discussions with the club, so I thank every member who completed the survey for sharing their views.

History and Heritage

Members will be aware that a key pillar for BU's work is history and heritage ("To Promote and protect the history and heritage of the Club"). Further efforts and any number of hours from BU board members have resulted in our memorabilia being now mostly catalogued, organised and boxed safely. This will be an ongoing project to ensure that we can keep our collection safe and accessible as needed and to support exhibitions (most recently the 100 years centenary) and I want to particularly highlight the work that Jonathan Burchll has done with support for these events.

Finance

We remain grateful to our members who continue to make donations to Bees United. I would just take a moment to thank everyone who does support BU, as the rights that BU have to

appoint a director to the board and to have a veto over the sale of the stadium unless certain protections are in place – now contained in the Protective Rights Deed – are personal to BU. In other words, if BU were not to exist then the fans would not have these rights. Therefore, a focus on ensuring that BU is financially stable and sustainable remains key to these rights remaining in the hands of the fans.

The overall level of donations has shown a small decrease compared to the prior year, this trend has been the case over recent years as the number of ceased recurring donations is more than new donations.

We have continued with the cost-free way that members can support BU by giving via retail purchases through the Easyfundraising website[2], this is shown as other operating income.

The vast majority of the cash balances are on fixed term deposits across a number of different banks in order to maximise the amount of interest, which is subject to tax.

Heritage expenditure has reduced on the previous year due to some significant repairs of heritage assets in the previous year not recurring in the current year. This was compensated by higher costs of memorial plaques in the current year, both new plaques and repairs to existing ones. Non-heritage expenditure was higher than in the previous year due to one-off election costs, other areas of non-heritage expenditure have remained broadly the same.

AGM

Our AGM was fortunate earlier this year to have Ben Ryan (the Brentford FC Performance Director) join us for a fascinating insight into elite level performance in sport. We continue to try to ensure each year that we have interesting guest speakers from the club – and are grateful that this year there has been no "BU Curse" (which seems to have affected former guests Thomas Frank, Christian Norgaard and Stephen Torpey) and Ben very much remains at the club and helping to drive the performances we are seeing on the pitch!

To the future

I'll finish by saying that the next time I write one of these we may be having more to celebrate on the pitch perhaps with a first European adventure since the Anglo-Italian cup or a decent domestic Cup run but that in the meantime BU will continue to be the critical constructive friend to the club and to continue to keep its focus on its pillars.

20 October 2026

[2] https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/panel/