

BEES UNITED

CHAIRMAN REPORT FOR AGM



INTRODUCTION

The past 12 months have been historic ones for Brentford FC with our promotion back to the top tier of English football for the first time in over 70 years. Just like the Bees on the pitch, Bees United have constantly tried to raise our game and I believe we have been successful in doing that again this year. In this statement, I report on the progress since our last AGM in March 2021.

IMPACT OF COVID-19

At the time of last year's AGM the UK was still in lockdown, many fans had not yet been inside the new stadium and more than 100 members registered for our first online gathering. In my report to that AGM I said that after the disappointment of the play-off final against Fulham 'we hope that automatic promotion will avoid the need for a return to Wembley'. As it turned out we did have to return to Wembley but this time there was victory and promotion on a day those of us who were there will never forget. Our congratulations to Thomas Frank, the coaches, players and other staff who achieved this remarkable success and, of course, to the Club's owner Matthew Benham. Now in January 2022 we will be gathering again but this time as supporters of a Premier League team.

MEMBERSHIP

In January 2020 there were 459 BU members on the newsletter database. This year we passed our target of reaching 2,500 members and then went on to achieve our next ambition- a total of more than 3,000. Special thanks to our Membership and Technology Secretary, John Scott, who has again worked tirelessly reconnecting with fans with whom we had lost contact. Thanks too to Bruce Powell whose conscientious paper record keeping over many years proved invaluable. John Scott also delivered on our commitment to qualifying members that they would receive a free copy of our book 'Bees, Battles, Buckets and Ballot Boxes; How Brentford Fans Paved The Way from Griffin Park to Lionel Road'.

BEES UNITED COMMUNICATIONS

Our newsletter and website continue to be our principal communication with existing members and an incentive for new members to join. We have also increased our activity on social media with more than 3,000 followers on twitter and we have added more video and audio to our monthly newsletter. Many thanks to the BU members and other supporters who have contributed.

FINANCE

The investment in building our membership has meant that each year in recent times we have spent more money from our healthy reserves than we have earned in donations and other revenues. The details are in the Accounts. With the investment programme successfully completed we are now budgeting under the wise stewardship of Jim Walsh for a return to annual surpluses. This is a good moment to thank again those who originally built BU's financial strength and also those who continue to donate to cover our annual running costs.

In the Accounts we show, as we do every year, Bees United's long-term loans to Brentford FC. These were secured by a charge which Bees United had on Griffin Park. At the time of the sale of Griffin Park the Bees United board agreed with the club that this charge should be replaced by one on a new building next to the new stadium which was being constructed for the Brentford Community Sports Trust. The building is now completed and is occupied and an independent valuation of the property that is charged is being undertaken to validate the fact that the value of the building provides sufficient security to cover the loan.

GOVERNANCE

For Bees United governance has always been a key issue and none more so than in this the year of the Government's 'Fan-Led Review' of English Football. Building on the achievement of our predecessors in creating BU's 'Golden Share' in the Club, we set out to persuade Tracey Crouch MP to recommend some of the aspects of the 'Brentford model' for other clubs. We gave direct evidence to Ms Crouch and her advisers and we were also invited to meet the Secretary of State at the time, Oliver Dowden MP. who in an interview with The Times called Brentford 'a model club'. We were delighted that in her recommendations to Government Ms Crouch called for a Golden Share at English clubs to safeguard a total of six 'heritage items'. BU will continue to monitor developments. Meanwhile at Club level Brentford's management has continued to develop its dialogue with BU, BIAS and other supporters groups. In addition, BU's director on the Brentford board continues to serve on the Club Audit Committee and as the Club's Adjudicator on complaints from supporters.

COMPLIANCE

Having argued for good governance at a national level it is vital that BU continues to meet the high levels of compliance required of a Community Benefit Society registered under the Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Tracey Crouch's report specifies that this qualification plus the holding of democratic elections should be the necessary qualifications for Supporters Trusts who wish to hold a Golden Share. Our Secretary Don Tanswell has led a committee of the BU Board which continues to focus on ensuring our compliance with this and other relevant legislation. Many thanks to Don and his committee.

HERITAGE

Bees United has always given special emphasis to helping to safeguard the preservation of the club's history especially at a time when the owners and management were understandably preoccupied with the present and future. COVID delayed for many months our plans for an exhibition to mark the move from Griffin Park but eventually with financial and other help from the club and the co-operation of the Brentford Historians Group we were able to create 'Farewell Griffin Park- the Fans Story' at the London Museum of Water and Steam. This would never have happened without the ambition and energy of BU Board member Ron Cooper. In a further example of our commitment to the club's heritage, at the time of Brentford's promotion the names of hundreds of loyal Bees fans who did not live to see that achievement were remembered on our special 'In Memorial' web page.

BU BOARD

Every member of the Board has contributed to the success of recent times and I want to take this opportunity to thank them all.

Stewart Purvis

Chairman of Bees United