



**BRENTFORD FOOTBALL COMMUNITY SOCIETY LIMITED
CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022**

Introduction

The success of Brentford FC's first season in the Premier League has been mirrored off the field by the continued growth and momentum of Bees United. Growing membership, a strengthened board, a successful AGM and increased overall influence have all been achieved against a stable financial background.

Membership

Over the past 3 years our investment in communications and events to make membership an attractive offer to Brentford supporters has paid handsome dividends. At the start of 2020 there were 459 BU members on the newsletter database, in 2021 we passed our target by reaching 2,500 and now in 2022 we have passed the next target of 3,000 to stand at almost 3,500 at the time of writing, further enhancing our position as the largest Brentford supporters' group with a democratic and formal structure. A membership of 3,750 is our new target.

Of particular interest has been our growth among supporters living outside the UK. At the start of the Season we had 340 members across 36 different countries.

Europe		Rest of the World	
Country		Country	
Ireland	38	USA	85
Norway	26	Australia	52
Denmark	24	Canada	10
Sweden	12	New Zealand	9
France	10	Malaysia	7
Germany	10	South Africa	5
Spain	10	Thailand	3
Holland	8	Singapore	2
Finland	3	Hong Kong	2
Iceland	2	Brazil	2
Malta	2	Japan	2
Italy	2	Indonesia	1
Greece	2	Kazakhstan	1
Czech Republic	1	Nigeria	1
Croatia	1	Senegal	1
Belgium	1	Samoa	1
Portugal	1	Israel	1
Switzerland	1		
Cyprus	1		
	155		185

So much of this success is down to our Membership Secretary, John Scott, who not only keeps excellent records but is a valuable personal link with individual members around the world.



Bees United Board

At the time of our AGM we sent members a customary invitation to apply to join our board. In past years this has attracted one or two applicants so we were surprised and delighted to receive six. Under our rules there is a maximum of 15 board members and there were already ten which left room for only 5 of the 6 applicants. Therefore, for the first time in recent years there was an election and we were delighted to welcome to the board Jeff Dent, Stuart Hatcher, Keith Macinnes, Colleen Wong and Sharon Wright and all of them have brought new energy and ideas which we have put into action.

In other developments in the 'BU Board family' David Anderson moved from being a board member to an advisor on communications, a role he shares with Stuart Hughes who will also give us extra expertise in video. To strengthen our links with our members in Scandinavia, Rune Dahl from Norway became an advisor on international matters. Rune and colleagues from Norwegian Bees were able to meet up socially with Irish Bees before the final game of the season and to sit in groups as part of an experiment which we organised with the Club.

AGM

In a symbolic step out of COVID lockdown our Annual General Meeting, which had previously been either an all in-person or an all virtual event was a 'hybrid' one linking members sitting in the Oxford and Cambridge suite of the stadium with those watching online around the world. BFC Chairman Cliff Crown took questions from members on a wide range of questions and every question answered by a member was answered either live or in writing later. The organisation of the event in conjunction with the club required considerable input and I am particularly grateful to BU Secretary Don Tanswell, John Scott and Stuart Hughes.

'Fan Engagement'

In my Annual Report last year, I reported on the work which Bees United had done to assist the 'Fan-Led Review' conducted on behalf of the Government by Tracey Crouch MP. The Government of Boris Johnson confirmed that there would be legislation to implement her principal recommendation of an independent regulator for English football but by the time of the departure of Mr Johnson it had not reached a final view on the detail of proposals such as 'shadow boards' of fan representatives plus a version of the 'golden share' held by BU in BFC. We await the decision of the new Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak. Meanwhile the Premier League, as part of its campaign against an independent regulator has announced that every PL club will have to meet a 'Fan Engagement Standard' part of which would be the creation of a 'Fan Advisory Board' (FAB). BFC has asked BU to work with it on the creation of an FAB at Brentford.

Bees United Communications

Our monthly newsletter has continued to be the bedrock of our communications with members and it continues to attract praise for its content and design. Our Contributing Editors, Greville Waterman and Bill Hagerty, provide regular high-quality articles. Building on that success and harnessing the ideas and energy from new board members we have developed new features, begun member surveys and strengthened our output on social media thus increasing our followers on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

In another development, shortly before the start of the new season in August 2022 we held an 'Ask Phil Giles' online Q&A in which Brentford's Director of Football answered members questions and provided a witty and entertaining hour and a half for BU members and guests.



BFC Board

So much of the work of the BU representative on the BFC Board is inevitably low profile because of board confidentiality but in summary it can be reported that BU continues to press for even greater fan engagement and that as the newly appointed Chair of the Audit Committee I have the ability to propose further improvements in the governance of the Club which is already amongst the best in the Premier League.

As Chair of Audit, I succeed Mike Power who although never a member of BU was a respected and authoritative member of the Club board for many years. In particular he played an important role in the development of the new stadium. Mike stood down from the Club board alongside Donald Kerr who was well known to many BU members. Donald served on the Club Board as a Bees United director and then as an Independent non-executive director and Club Vice-President. He was also Secretary of BU for a time. Both Donald and Mike now become Honorary Vice-Presidents of the Club and leave the Club board with the thanks of all who have known or worked with them.

Compliance and BU Governance

Led by our Secretary Don Tanswell, BU continues to meet the high levels of compliance required of a Community Benefit Society registered under the Co-operative and Community Societies Act 2014. Don has done an enormous amount of work on compliance, governance and other secretarial duties and I am very grateful to him.

Heritage

Our exhibition 'Farewell Griffin Park - the Fans Story' came to an end at the conclusion of the season and the principal exhibits were either returned to donors or put into storage by the Club who are investigating other opportunities to display them. Our thanks to BU Board member Ron Cooper for his role in creating the exhibition at the London Museum of Water and Steam and for welcoming visitors most match-days. Ron has also campaigned for many years to ensure that those who once bought memorial bricks to raise funds for the Club should be remembered in the new stadium. We are informed by the Club that this will be done.

Finance

In the financial section of this report our Treasurer Jim Walsh records how BU has managed its finances prudently and cautiously. We are very grateful to him as we can now budget with confidence for a small surplus next year. This situation is only possible because of the donations which our members make, and we thank them. We are redesigning our website content to give greater prominence to the 'Donate' button and we will be monitoring our income closely to see the effect.

One important change in our accounts that may be of interest to BU members relates to our loans to the Football Club. £402k of the £680k loaned by BU to the Club is secured. Previously, this security was held against Griffin Park. This had to change when the Club moved to the new ground at Lionel Road. The £402k is now secured against the new Community Trust Building, which has had an independent valuation to ensure the security is adequate.



Finally, can I thank all the past, present and hopefully future donors, plus all the BU Board and wish Thomas Frank and the squad all the best for the 2022-23 season.

Stewart Purvis

Chairman

Dated: 1st November 2022