

Number 10
January 2004

News Letter

Keeping Fans Informed



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Steve Thompson speaks . . .

When I sat down with a group of dedicated Notts fans back in January 2003 to discuss something called a *football Trust* I had no idea that it would lead to the fans of Notts County owning over 30% of this great club. The Trust has come a long way since its formation and I am delighted to represent the fans, via the Trust, at Board level within the club.

Notts County has always featured in my life. My father supported Notts all his life and his father before him. My first game at Meadow Lane was on 11 March 1970 when we played Darlington and beat them 4 – 1. I was only 4 years old and have been passionate about Notts ever since. My greatest memories have to be the Wembley appearances and Sir Charlie Palmer scoring our second against Forest a decade ago. It would be nice to see those days again and with proper control of our finances I see no reason why we should not. We can only do this by spending the money we have wisely. If we try to buy the dream the chances are it will end in financial ruin – look at the foot of the first division and see how many ex premiership clubs are in trouble. Other lower league clubs are on the brink of administration and it cannot be too long before a club disappears. Add to this the fact that a club in administration will be deducted 10 points next season and it all points to the requirement for control and reality within the club. If this club cannot afford a player

we will find one we can without banging on the bank's door.

NCFC has the opportunity to be in a great position if managed properly. We have no debt other than to the recent investors and the repayments are budgeted for. The club has a lease over all the ground now and control of the Meadow club and the executive boxes. This will raise revenue not previously available to us. It all means that if the club proceeds within its budgets then this club will have a sound foundation and a bright future.

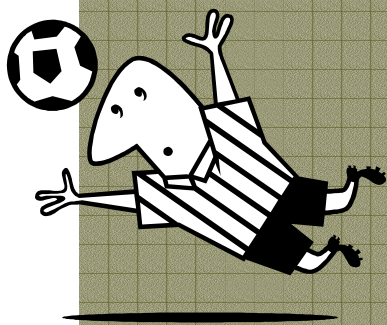
I am a solicitor and worked for the Trust with lawyers representing the other investors during the takeover of the club by the Blenheim Consortium. I therefore have extensive knowledge of the plans for this club and the difficult financial restraints placed upon it. For various reasons this club found itself in serious debt. It is important that we never find ourselves in that position again and it is for that very reason that you, the fans, now have direct access to the decision makers – the board of NCFC. That is one of the main reasons why the Government has sought to encourage the formation of so many Trusts at clubs throughout the county. Football is at the heart of our community and it is important to ensure the survival of clubs. By having a Trust we can do that.

Since my appointment as Director I have been asked

on numerous occasions what is the difference between the Supporters Club and the Trust? I appreciate that they may look the same but they are not. The supporters club has and does a great job of raising money for the club and arranging away travel for fans – long may this continue. The Trust is there to obtain supporters representation on a formal footing via the purchase of shares in the football club. They are not rivals; they exist for completely different reasons.

The plan when the club came out of administration was to have a chief executive and a chair in place. Sadly both prospective candidates turned us down. The chair is not as it once was within the club. The chair will not own the club as in previous years but will be a figurehead. Whilst we continue to search for a chair the club is not being damaged by not having one.

The lack of a chief executive means the directors have to take a very hands on approach. We meet regularly and are in contact with the club on a daily basis. This was not envisaged by any of us but on the bright side we are saving the club money! The long-term plan is to appoint someone but until then the directors will continue to lead the club. None of us is paid for this work and we do not claim any expenses. We do it because we are all fans of the club and want to see it succeed. With your



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help it will do.

My role as Trust director is to put forward the views of the fans and ensure the club is operating properly for its long-term survival. I intend to make every effort to give the fans a voice. If you see me at the ground please feel free to stop for a chat. If you have any issues you wish to raise you can contact the trust via its web site or speak to us at the back of the club shop on match days.

One thing I would encourage is for all our supporters to join the Trust and be able to say, "I own part of this club."

Stephen Thompson, Supporter Director and Board Member

Supporter Director: the Board view

One of the Trust's Objects is to:

"To encourage and promote the principle of supporter representation on the board of any company owning or controlling the Club and ultimately to be the vehicle for democratic elections to the board"

However to stabilise the club at this time the board is in favour of Steve Thompson remaining as the Trust's director on the club board until the AGM at the end of September. Then an election would be held with any elected member of the Trust Board eligible to stand*.

We acknowledge that this will be quite some time since we obtained the supporter directorship – thus we would like the Trust Membership to ratify this decision.

Hence we will be holding a Trust Forum on March 10th at Meadow Lane, where the membership will be asked to ratify this position. If you are unable to attend them and wish to state your support for or discontent with this position please either e-mail us at enquiry@nottscotrust.org.uk

or contact us by post:

The Secretary,
Notts County Supporters Trust
Notts County FC
Meadow Lane
Nottingham NG2 3HJ

Whichever method you choose, please contact us as your views count.

Fred Mosselmans
Board Member

*Any member can stand for election to the Trust Board in the elections held before the AGM, thus any member has the chance to get on the Trust board and thus be eligible to be the Supporter Director.

A view from the Chair

On 15th January 2003 four hundred supporters crammed into the Oriental Suite to give their unanimous backing to the formation of NCST. Twelve months on, the Trust has a 30.2 per cent 'stake' in our football club and representation at boardroom level. Looking back, it has been an incredible journey, but it is now time to look forward and for the Trust to adapt and change to meet the fresh challenges that lie ahead.

We have said as a Trust on many occasions that we wish to work in partnership with the club to take things forward. It is encouraging that the Blenheim Consortium has been open to the aims of the Trust and welcomed us to play an active role in helping to steady Notts County's ship. The next few months will undoubtedly be characterised by change, and I look forward to the Trust becoming firmly involved in the process.

We all need to play our part in this, and could make a start in two ways. One, try and persuade a friend to come to a home game and boost the gate. Second, try and persuade a friend to join the Trust. By increasing our membership, the Trust becomes more representative of the fan base, we have a greater number and range of skills and expertise to draw upon and allows us to do so much more.

Let's go forward then in confidence, looking forward to a future when our football club is secure, both in the Second Division and financially.

David Hindley
Chair

Supporters Direct

the supporters' trust initiative

NCST has responded to a call for help from Darlington Supporters Trust, which has set an initial target of trying to raise £250,000 to help stave off extinction. Two Board members attended a rally at a packed Central Hall in Darlington, passing on words of advice and encouragement. Darlo Trust has already begun planning a series of events large and small, and fans are being urged to help in any way they can. For more information on Darlington Supporters Trust and how you can help, see their website at: <http://www.darlotrust.co.uk/>

East Midlands Trusts

The regions Trusts get together on a regular basis to share their experiences under the banner of EMTrust. This group (including NCST) started last year and now represents Trusts from Premiership Leicester City to Kettering Town of the Ryman League.

The meetings held in Coalville have been an ideal opportunity for supporters from clubs across the region to exchange views and ideas. In recent meetings we have been joined by representatives from West Midland Trusts, who are keen to learn from and replicate the EMTrust model.

Trust Membership

On the membership front, a surge in applications means that we are very close to 1500 members. In fact, I reckon we'll have passed that figure by the time you get to read this. 1500 members represents roughly a third of our regular attendance, which I suppose fits nicely with our "roughly a third" share holding and is not bad going in under a year.

However, we shouldn't rest on our laurels. There are obviously plenty of Notts' fans that aren't yet members, you probably know one or two. Why not try and persuade them to join. I reckon it's an easy sale, just list the successes of the Trust in

the last six months. If someone still has their head in the sand, just remind them that the Football League and the local councils have both stated that the take over wouldn't have taken place without the involvement of the Trust and it's members.

18 month memberships

Quite a few people have taken advantage of the 18 month membership we started offering just before Christmas and someone asked why their membership card says 2003/2004 rather than expiring in 2005. Don't

worry, we have made a note of the expiry date of all memberships and will send you a card for next year in the summer.

Life members

A few people have signed up for the long run and we thank them for the faith they have shown in the Trust and its aims. Again, if you have taken out a life membership, we have recorded your membership details and will send you your new cards out in the summer.

Phil Marshall
Board Member
(Membership, Recruitment and Retention)

End of season bash

We have the Oriental Suite booked on the 7th May for an end of season event. Let's hope it's a double celebration; staying in existence and then staying up! We haven't any firm details other than the date, so if you have any ideas on what you think we should be doing or if you can help organise or provide some music, please drop me a line or have a chat before the match.

Phil Marshall
Board Member



Membership renewals

Help us with your renewal, fill in a standing order form.

The end date for the Trust membership year is the 31st July. As part-owners of the Club, the Trust is here to stay and we hope that you intend to remain a member as well. You will have to renew to be able to stand or vote in next season's Society Board elections in September. Of course we will send a renewal notice nearer the time to all our members except the life members and those who

have availed themselves of the 18 month membership offer

However why not make easier for you and us in the renewal process by filling in a Standing Order form?

The amount you should put on the form is ten pounds for adult members or five pounds for those over 65. Please put your membership number on the form so we can trace the payments.

Corporate Member

"Notts County is part of the fabric of Nottingham, and we felt a duty to help ensure it stays that way. We wish the Trust every success, and look forward to seeing the Club grow and prosper." – Neil Coles of Husqvarna Studio

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The Ripple Effect – book review

Put together a 3rd division football club in dire financial straits, a fanatical supporter or two, an absent millionaire owner and his unscrupulous lawyer, some property developers, a conniving football agent, a Tory MP, a corrupt local politician, a celebrity footballer with an uncontrollable temper and a kiss-and-tell ex girlfriend and you have all the ingredients for a hilarious story with a hidden message. *The Ripple Effect* by award-winning comedian Dominic Holland is due out in paperback in February and with the upsurge of interest in supporters' trusts and public awareness heightened about the fate of smaller clubs it deserves to be a blockbuster hit.

The book (dedicated to 'all the AFC Wimbledon's out there') has won praise from Danny Baker describing it as 'a belter of a novel – this could be the book of the season'. The narrative moves at a rapid pace, as Middleton Edwardians FC face oblivion due to a Chairman who has no interest and his lawyer who sees the chance of a nice little earner by selling the land to property developers and

encouraging the club to ground-share or vanish. Their plans are supported by a local politician who is promised a villa in Portugal for his pains. Of course these ruthless non-football people hadn't reckoned with the fans getting organised and doing their homework and uncovering all kinds of delaying tactics due to various clauses.

Yes, it is a far fetched tale, but it is thoroughly enjoyable and the gulf between the Middleton's of this world and the Manchester United's couldn't be wider, and this book exposes them all and shows supporters that they have what it takes between them to run a football club.

Competition

To win a copy of Dominic Holland's new book, *The Ripple Effect*, simply leave your name, membership number and contact telephone number via e-mail or post to the usual Trust address (see back page for details) by 1st March. The draw will be done before the Grimsby Town match.

Trust Board

David Hindley
(Chair)
Keri Usherwood
(Vice-Chair and PR)
Nigel King
(Secretary)
Eric Kerry
(Treasurer)
John Armstrong-Holmes
(Commercial and Corporate
membership)
Darrin Foss
(Community)
Phil Marshall
(Recruitment and Retention)
Fred Mosselmans
(Administration)
Carole Stapleton
(PR)
Stephen Thompson
(Supporter Director)

Contact us

Notts County Supporters
Trust
Notts County Football Club
Meadow Lane
Nottingham
NG2 3HJ

E-MAIL:
enquiry@nottscotrust.org.uk

Alternatively, call into the Trust
desk in the club shop on match
days, or use the message board
on the Trust website.

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.nottscotrust.org.uk

Community

One of the main challenges in 2004 is to fill as many of the empty seats in our stadium as possible. An effective way of doing this is by increasing the involvement of the football club in the community and vice versa.

Notts County has one of the best Football in the Community schemes in the country and Graham Moran and his team deserve huge credit. However, the Club itself has not been so effective. Last year a friend took his son to Meadow Lane to have a look around only to be told that he was not allowed in. He then took his son over the river where he was given a guided tour and refreshments at no charge. Posters have recently appeared at my son's school encouraging children to read. These posters have pictures of local sports stars such as Chris Read on them, but no-one from Notts County. This situation has to change and it is very encouraging that the new directors are meeting with Graham to hear his proposals for the future. The Trust hopes to meet with Graham soon to see where we can help. If you have any ideas about what the Club could be

doing please contact me at community@nottscotrust.co.uk or visit the Trust desk in the club shop.

Darrin Foss, Board Member
(Community)

The Trust, with FITC is planning a community event at Meadow Lane where there will be a series of presentations on the theme of using football stadia as a 'community hub'. *More details to follow.*

Ten Years On

Ask any Notts fan to name their favourite footballing memory and one moment wins hand down. Step forward Sir Charlie Palmer and his famous late winner against our neighbours across the river.

This February marks the 10th anniversary of the momentous day. And to mark the occasion Trust member, and Football Post columnist Richard Stanton is in the process of compiling a book that looks back on that famous game and our rivalry with the F-word.

With the support of the club and the Evening Post the book will relive the significant moments of the day in both pictures and words. It will include interviews with key players from the game and also focus on the reaction of the fans and the media.

All in all a great way to ensure the memories of such a wonderful day stay fresh in the memory.

How to order your copy Advance orders for the limited edition book are being taken now. The price is just £10. And anyone ordering in advance will be acknowledged in the book, which subject to availability will be signed by the great man himself.

Order your copy by visiting the Supporters Trust desk in the club shop. Alternatively you can contact Richard on 0115 963 7045 or via email at richard.stanton@talk21.com

Profits from the sale of the book will go to Notts County.

Trust merchandise



A range of items are available (when you make a donation) from the Trust stall in the club shop on Meadow Lane, both before and after home games.

Polo Shirts (pictured left)

Polo shirts with an embroidered Trust logo are now available.

Sizes: S, M, L, XL and XXL. Colours: Sky blue and white. Donation: £15

Iron-on Badge

Iron-on fabric badge featuring the Trust logo. Donation: £2

