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The spokesman for the consortium poised to take over Notts County Football Club has dismissed the notion that there are any plans for Notts County to enter into a ground-share arrangement with Nottingham Forest at the City Ground. The pledge was made at a positive and constructive meeting between Notts County Supporters Trust representatives and Sam McEwan on Wednesday 25th June. Mr. McEwan also played down talk of a move to a "super stadium" as highly speculative and confirmed the commitment of the Bhatia/Strang team to Meadow Lane as the home of Notts County.

We've come a long way - but there's a long way to go

The Trust has come a long way in a short space of time, but there is still a long way to go. Since being officially launched in April, NCST has emerged as a key player in negotiations regarding the club's future, ensuring that the interests of the supporters and the wider community are represented.

At the time of writing, the takeover by the consortium fronted by Frank Strang and Raj Bhatia is yet to be finalised. Understandably this is causing some anxiety amongst supporters, whose patience after thirteen months in administration is wearing thin. Furthermore, it is a less than ideal situation for manager Billy Dearden whose preparations for the coming season are severely hampered by being unable to add to the playing staff.

To a large extent this is indicative of the parlous state of football finances, with clubs crumbling into administration with increasing regularity. The air of rationalisation sweeping Meadow Lane suggests there will be no quick fix: a healthy dose of realism is necessary to ensure that in the short-term the club is put on a secure financial footing.

As for the future of Notts County, the Trust believes that the supporters need to be kept as

fully informed about developments as possible. There needs to be far greater openness and transparency.

The Trust is ideally placed to give fans the voice that they require. We are a democratic supporters' organisation, with a membership in excess of 1100, whose main concerns are the continued survival and success of Notts County and the fans involvement in this. NCST aims to build a meaningful relationship between the fans and the club through constructive dialogue. To this end we have been talking to Sam McEwan, and will be meeting Geoffery Richmond, Frank Strang and Raj Bhatia in the very near future.

This is an important time for supporters to have a say in the future of our club. The Trust has come a long way in a short space of time, but there is still a long way to go.

Dr. David Hindley
Interim Chair

BHATIA AND STRANG ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS ON PAGE 2 ▶

GROWING CONCERNS - BHATIA AND STRANG RESPOND TO YOUR QUESTIONS

There is growing discontent and uncertainty amongst Trust Members about the delay in completing the take-over process. The new season is only a few weeks away. Why is the process taking so long? What are the I's that need to be dotted and the T's that need to be crossed? When can we expect the take-over to be completed and when can we expect to come out of administration?

Both Frank and I understand the concerns of the trust members and indeed all Notts County supporters.

The delay is down to two factors. The first is the process of due diligence being undertaken by all parties involved. The second is the unsolicited offer of two additional sources of funding by financial institutions, both of whom have approached us after hearing of our plans for the club via the media.

We took the view that it would have been remiss of us not to consider these offers and in doing so we will ensure we secured the best deal for the club as we face up to the challenges of the future.

We are totally committed to moving the club forward in a sensible and prudent way and ensuring we never again face the traumas of the last two years. I don't want to lift people's expectation by

forecasting a date for completion but let me assure you we are totally committed to Notts County and are moving things along as fast as is humanely possible.

We have a squad that is down to the bare bones. On the first day of the season, what assurances can you give that well have new players available to play and that Billy Deardon will have the necessary funds to secure these players for Notts County Football Club?

The playing budget for the coming session has been agreed with Billy and is in place.

We currently have a number of new players in pre-season training who will sign for the club when the deal is finally signed. The positive aspect of this is that all of these players and indeed Steve Parkin have had the opportunity to go to other clubs and all have chosen to stay at the club.

What will be the position if the Club is still in administration when the new season kicks off?

I understand the concern but the club will be out of administration before the season starts.

Who will be on the new board of directors once the takeover is completed?

Plans for the new board have

not been finalized however both Frank and I will be actively involved.

Some people have said that you do not have the money to take over the Club. Can you confirm categorically that the necessary finance is in place to satisfy the purchase conditions?

Yes, most certainly the money is in place.

There has been confusion over the season ticket concessions and mixed messages over whether Steve Parkin will be Billy's number two. What is the reason for this confusion and what steps will be taken to ensure that consistent and accurate information is given to supporters?

We were not very clever with either of these examples. Overall however I believe communications is an area where we have been particularly strong. With Sam McEwan doing an outstanding job and it is no coincidence that in both the examples you cite Sam had not been involved but in fact moved very quickly to resolve both issues when they were highlighted to him.

Through Sam we have outlined our plans to ensure two way communication with the fans and we remain totally committed to those plans and will work with supporters to ensure their success.

What role will Geoffrey

Supporters' trust movement gathers pace

Richmond be playing in his capacity as Chief Executive?

Geoffrey is the Chief Executive of the club and will manage the day to day business of the club under the direction of the board.

Where do you see Notts County Football Club in five years time?

The first priority is to stabilize the club's financial position. The second isto move forward on the playing and commercial fronts. We will develop the commercial potential of the club with a view to increasing revenue flow into the club.

The playing side will be developed by a combination of home grown talent and a sensible signing strategy. Given prudent financial management allied to a responsible approach to team building I believe the first division is achievable and in five years time I would hope we are a first division side or mounting a serious challenge to become one.

Finally let me thank you for giving us the opportunity to answer your questions. I know this is a worrying time for all genuine Notts County supporters but better times are ahead and we are both looking forward to working with you as we move Notts County forward.

The rapid development of supporters' trusts up and down the country represents a sea change in the way that fans are becoming more involved in the game. Trusts provide an unprecedented opportunity not only for fans to gain a voice in their club, but a chance to increase community influence through the ownership of shares and/or representation on the club's board.

Supporters groups are demanding a say in the running of their clubs even when there is no immediate need on the part of the clubs to raise funds from fans. And this is happening not only at small clubs, but also across divisions, including the Premier League.

NCST aims to forge close links

STOP PRESS

Another Deadline Passes

Tuesday 15th July was the latest date that the prospective owners had set for the completion of the deal to take over Notts County. The Trust spoke to Paul Finnity, the Administrator, late that afternoon, by which time he had heard nothing to say why this had not happened. We were told that the draft contract was waiting to be signed, but no contact had been made with him on the day.

The deadline had no real significance in terms of the club's survival, but had been set by the consortium as their expected date to complete. At the date of writing, there had been no communication of why this had not happened. Any deal will be subject to the passing of the League Share to the new company. This could happen at the League's next board meeting, understood to be August 4th, or at any meeting with at least 4 board members present.

We await the next deadline with baited breath!

with other supporters' trusts to exchange best practice and to assist other trusts where possible. To that end, we have joined with representatives of trusts from Chesterfield, Derby County, Kettering, Leicester City, Lincoln City, and Mansfield Town to form the East Midlands Supporters' Trust. EMSTrust meets on a monthly basis, and so far have been valuable for the cross-fertilisation of ideas.

Representatives from Notts County Supporters Trust recently joined other members of EMSTrust for a training day to assist people to carry out their roles on the board of a supporters' trust. The event was jointly organised by the Midlands Co-operative Society and Supporters Direct.



Dr. David Hindley - an interview with the trust interim chairman

Dr. David Hindley recently took up the role of Trust Chair. In this interview, of which a fully version can be read on our website, he explains his motivations for taking on the challenge and his hopes for the future.

Why were you appointed as chairman of the trust?

That really is a question for the other members of the interim board of the Trust to answer. I would suggest that I was proposed (and received unanimous support by those in attendance) for the role of chair because of the hard work I have already put into the running of the Trust, in particular PR responsibilities and communicating with other supporter Trusts.

Professionally, I am a senior lecturer at Nottingham Trent University where I teach on the BA (Hons) Business, Leisure and Sports Education degree programme, and have strong research interests in stakeholding in sport, fan representation, and sports governance. Through this I took an active interest in the emergence of the supporter trust movement and have attended a number of conferences, and seminars hosted by Supporters Direct.

What aims do the Trust have with the new owners?

The Trust would like to act as a focal point for contact between the football club and its supporters, encouraging openness and consultation in the club's decision making. NCST aims to set up regular meetings with club officials so that supporters' interests and concerns are effectively communicated to the club, and taken into account in any planning or decision making. Meetings with Sam McEwan to date have been a positive

What are the aims of the Trust?

One, to strengthen the bonds between the club and the community which it

serves and to represent the interests of the community in the running of the club;

Two, to benefit present and future members of the community served by the Club by promoting encouraging and furthering the game of football as a recreational facility, sporting activity and focus for community involvement;

Three, to further the development of the game of football nationally and internationally and the upholding of its rules;

Four, to encourage the Club to take proper account of the interests of its supporters and of the community it serves in its decisions;

Five, 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;

Six, to promote, develop and respect the rights of members of the community served by the Club and people dealing with the Society as set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, having regard in particular to the need to provide information to members and conduct the affairs of the Society in accessible and appropriate ways.

Are there plans to vote for an elected board?

At present there is an interim board, made up largely of individuals who took a lead role in the formation of the Trust. They were given a mandate at the official launch of the Trust in April to form a Supporters Trust. Under the society's rules the chair is chosen by the Society Board be they interim or elected.

The interim board will serve until the first AGM and election, which must be held within the first six months of the launch meeting. Elections will be held annually, and anyone wishing to stand for election to the Board may do so. You will find more details contained within this letter.

What has the Trust achieved so far?

In the short time that the Trust has been in existence - members of the interim board (who are all volunteers) have been active, engaging in a range of activities, which we hope have benefited Trust members and Notts County supporters. These include:

Producing and distributing five newsletters to keep fans aware of events leading up to the takeover;

Holding discussions with all key players, for example the City Council, the administrator, prospective bidders, the Football League, and Supporters Direct,

Acting as a spokesperson for supporters in the media, setting up an e-mail mailing list for members to ensure they can get immediate information on key events concerning the football club.

Forging important contacts in key areas, namely Supporters Direct, the Football League, local and national media to ensure that the views of supporters can be taken into account regarding events that may affect our football club. For example, the Trust represented fans' concerns in writing to the Football League to ask that the deadline by which time Notts County had to be out of administration be extended.

Members of the interim board worked on a rescue package for the club in the event that the administrator could not find a suitable buyer, as well as being involved in fund-raising activities. The first of these - a penalty shoot-out at half time during the Chesterfield fixture - raised £640 for the club's Football in the Community programme.

We organised a members' forum at Meadow Lane at which there was an opportunity for supporters to ask the interim board and administrator, Paul Finnity questions.

How many members belong the Trust?

At the last count 1129. I would like to say a big thank you to each and every one of them. Our members are truly representative of the wider fan base. Our junior members are vitally

important. They represent the next generation of Notts County supporters, and they will be responsible for taking the Trust forward in years to come. Subsequently, after the AGM it is intended that the board look at the possibility of a youth sub-committee, with a member of the group as an advisor and point of contact to the main board.

More importantly, what would you like the junior section to do? The Trust would like to hear from junior members - please post any comments on the Trust message board.

Why did John Thornhill and Cheryl Thompson resign?

The resignations were both personal decisions.

With regards John Thornhill, it was made clear that the Raj Bhatia and Frank Strang consortium had issues with his leadership of the Trust. They stated publicly that they would not have any dealings with the Trust whilst John Thornhill was involved. He subsequently resigned from the interim board of the Supporters Trust so as not to jeopardise the Trusts' future dealings with the club.

Cheryl Thompson resigned from her position as Vice Chair of the Supporters Trust stating she could not work alongside a regime, which finds it necessary to exert such power over the Trust.

Why do people have to pay to be a member of the trust and where does their money go?

The cost of membership is a Trust decision. According to Supporters Direct "you have to set a subscription rate that at least covers the administration costs". They recommend that it should cost no more than the average price to attend a home match. We decided on £10.

The first pound makes you a shareholder in Notts County Supporters Trust and gives you a vote on all Trust matters. After paying for essential running costs (administration, printing costs etc.) all remaining money goes into an investment fund, which may

only be spent with the members' consent. At a number of Trusts this money has been used to buy shares in their football club.

Will you be asking the new owners if we are going to be returning to the traditional black and white striped shirts?

I will make sure that the above issues are raised at the next NCST meeting arranged with Sam McEwan, and that concerns are passed onto Raj Bhatia and Frank Strang. The first priority of NCST is to ensure we have a club to support next season and as that becomes more secure, we can start debating what issues we want to push - whether it is replica shirts, season tickets, bond holders, home fans in the Kop and so on. Members can make suggestions via the message board on the Trust website, or at the Fans Surgery details of which can be found in this newsletter.

Most fans wanted the Strang and Bhatia bid to takeover the club, why didn't the Trust represent that opinion?

The simple answer is that the Trust wished to remain neutral in the takeover process, largely because we would have to work with the new owners and even when the bids had been formally handed in, the identity of the successful party was unclear. This stance was adopted after much discussion, particularly with other supporter trusts that have been in a similar situation. For example, York City Supporters Trust initially backed the 'wrong' party and consequently lost a great deal of credibility, and damaged their relationship with other interested parties.

Do you think we are financially safe as a football club for the next few years or do you fear for the future of Notts County?

Football finances are in a parlous state, and the fact that Notts County had run up debts reportedly in excess of £6 million suggests that in the club's recent history it has been run beyond its means. It is apparent that the club

cannot be completely reliant on promotion, cup runs, broadcasting revenue, or a rich benefactor to finance spiralling wage costs.

I hope that the takeover will put Notts County on a sound financial footing and that lessons will be learnt from administration. The conditions of the takeover imposed by both the administrator, Paul Finnity and the City Council (the holders of the ground lease) suggest that the new owners have the necessary finances to secure the short-term future of Notts County Football Club. With regards the mid to long-term, it is difficult to predict whether Notts County will still be playing at Meadow Lane in ten years time or which division we will be playing. Similarly, it is an impossible task to forecast with any great authority that the football club will be in financially secure state. What is clear is that the number of news stories of clubs falling into difficulties is increasing, with Barnsley, Wimbledon and Oldham Athletic the latest to express fears of liquidation. Unless there is a sea change in the way that football clubs are run and more equitable distribution of money from the Premier League downwards to the Football League and grassroots development, tales of administration and mismanagement will continue.

The fear of liquidation at Meadow Lane has now abated, but NCST is still vitally important in ensuring that the interests of the community and supporters are represented, and assisting fans to influence the direction of the club.

When do you plan to hold an open evening so questions from the members can be asked to the Panel?

The issue of a fans' forum was raised during last week's meeting with Sam McEwan. It is my understanding that the new owners wish to host an open evening once the Chairman, the Chief Executive and the board of directors are in place, when they can inform supporters of their plans for Notts County.

Supporters direct conference

Trust representatives recently attended the national conference of Supporters Direct at Highbury stadium. The event proved a valuable experience in bringing together members of Trusts from up and down the country to discuss key issues facing the game and share experiences. Also present were representatives from the Football League, the PFA, and the Independent Football Commission (IFC) as well as club chairmen.

The opening debate, entitled 'governance, regulation and the integrity of football' highlighted the lack of meaningful regulation within the game. The first speaker, Professor Derek Fraser (Chair of the IFC) provided a frank admission of his bodies 'limited power' but countered this by identifying some areas where the IFC has been successful - in particular its role in monitoring clubs' charters and procedures for dealing with customers. Tom Bower - investigative journalist and author of Broken Dreams - in contrast offered a damning critique of the IFC ('stitch up of a good idea') and the game in general, which in his view was 'deeply corrupt'. He asked why, when football was attracting record revenue from the sale of broadcasting rights, sponsorship and ticket receipts, were so many football clubs experiencing financial hardship and going into administration. The answer seemed to be the lack of effective regulation, and the failure of the FA to deal with the culture of lies and corruption endemic with the sport.

Later in the day examples were

given of the success supporter trusts can and have achieved at their football club. The session highlighted the influence trusts can have, through raising significant amounts of money and forging partnerships with local businesses. Moreover, supporter representatives are not massaging their egos or trying to make a profit - they simply wish to secure the long-term future of their football club.

For a more comprehensive report on the conference and the workshop sessions, please see the Trust website at <http://www.nottscotrust.infopop.cc/>

Rams trust AGM

Representatives from Notts County Supporters Trust attended the first RamsTrust AGM at the Council House in Derby on Saturday 31st May. Observing the AGM and talking to board members before and afterwards, was a valuable experience from which NCST can learn, as we prepare for our AGM later this year.

ELECTIONS COMING TO A TRUST NEAR YOU

Do you want to play a more active role in the running of the Trust? Do you fancy standing for a position on the board? Well your opportunity has arrived. The first ever NCST elections will take place later this year. Eleven board members will be elected and the process involves two stages.

Initially all Trust members will be sent a nomination form together with a copy of the election rules. Anyone

wanting to stand for election to the board will then have to get two fellow full trust members to nominate you. The form, together with a two hundred-word election statement promoting your candidacy, should be sent back to our election working group, an independent body overseeing the process. No members of this working group are standing for election. Their job is to check that the nomination forms and statements are in order and then send them to the Electoral Reform Society, who is conducting the ballot for us. They will send all full members a ballot slip and a booklet of election statements.

The election will be held on a first-past-the-post system, thus each member will be able to vote for up to 11 candidates and the 11 candidates with the most votes will be elected. Members will have about three weeks to return their ballot paper to the ERS, who will count the ballots. The results will be announced at the Trust's first Annual general meeting towards the end of September. In future years half of the elected board members will resign each year and elections will then be held to replace them. As the Trust is an Industrial and Provident Society, junior members are not allowed to vote in the election and only members aged 18 years or older may stand for election.

Fred Mosselmanns

Concern over new ticket prices

Recently announced season ticket and match day prices have risen significantly when compared to last year. The rationale for the increases were set out in a letter from Geoffrey Richmond (Acting Chief Executive) to existing season ticket holders.

There appear to be two schools of thought on the new pricing structure: The view of Geoffrey Richmond as expressed in his letter is that the most important thing is to bring in a period of financial stability.

A more popular viewpoint is that the increase in prices will act as a disincentive to supporters to either buy season tickets or turn up on the day. An initial Trust survey of 22 second division clubs shows that Notts County will be the third most expensive club in the division to turn up and watch on the day as an adult home fan.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment is the decision to offer no further discounts or special offers such as "kids for a quid" or "admission for a fiver" throughout the season. This decision seems rather short sighted and restrictive and will do nothing to attract the occasional visitor to Meadow Lane. Moreover, by scrapping free entry to children aged under-12 the club has watered down a major incentive for families and young kids to watch football at Meadow Lane.

The Trust has raised the issue of ticket pricing on behalf of its members, in recent meetings with both Sam McEwan and the new owners. We have also suggested ways in which the Trust could play a more active role in attracting supporters to Meadow Lane. We await a response with interest.

COMMUNITY

One of the Trust's stated aims is to promote closer links between the club and the community. There are a number of ways to promote to achieve this.

Football in the Community is acknowledged as one of the best schemes in the country, as was evident through Graham Moran who spoke so passionately about their work at the Trust launch meeting. We aim to provide further support for this scheme wherever possible, and indeed raised over £600 at the Chesterfield match last season.

However, we believe that Notts should be at the forefront of further community involvement, and we are in talks with a number of groups (including the representative of the new owners) about how we can help to make this happen.

Ideas include providing space within the ground for use by the community during the week, whether for Childcare, After School

Clubs, teaching about computers, or as centres for business incubation units. Aside from good PR, the benefits of such a scheme would be easy to see. Most importantly the club would be a focal point for the community and help them attract new supporters at a time when competition for the next generation of football fan has never been greater.

If you have any comments on the issue of Club and Community, please contact us on the message board, or via the usual address.

Members Surgery

Saturday 26th July is the date for the next Members Surgery. This will take place between 10:00 and 12:00am at the Council House. Whilst we cannot promise to help with any medical ailments, members of the interim board will be available to talk about any Trust related matters. Anyone wanting to attend should simply turn up at the Council House reception and they will be shown where to find us. We look forward to seeing you on the day.

CALLING ALL JUNIOR MEMBERS

Unfortunately the rules that govern the Trust do not allow junior members to vote in our elections. But there is no reason to feel left out. From the start of the season we hope to change that. We intend to set up a junior committee, who would probably meet on home match days, to input views and opinions into the main board, and discuss ideas and events for junior Trust members.

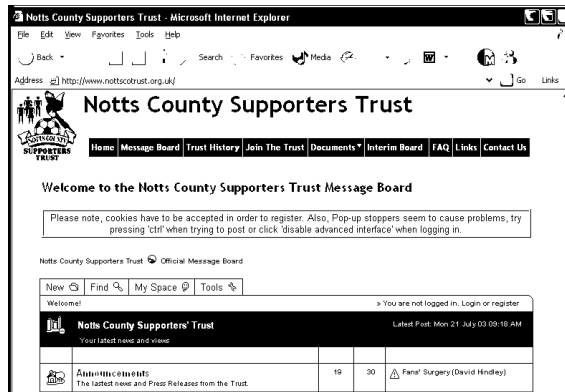
If you would like to be on the junior committee please contact us via email or post. Alternatively why not pop in and see us on

matchdays? We know adults and committees can be boring. Do not be put off; the Trust is a voice for all of us, young and old, so use it.



MESSAGE BOARD

Members with access to the Internet can swap and exchange views with each other via the NCST message board. Do you have anything to get off your chest and a question that needs answering? If so then visit the message board at www.nottscotrust.org.uk



Membership - 1129 and rising!

Membership of the Trust now stands at 1129. This is a remarkable achievement given that the Trust was established on 4th April, and already boasts a larger membership than many other Trusts around the country. The figure, which represents over 20 per cent of the club's core fan base, is rising daily and illustrates the groundswell of opinion amongst supporters that their voice should be heard.

Support for the Trust is truly global, with membership forms and letters of encouragement coming from as far as America, Australia, Bulgaria, China, Italy and Serbia. Members are from all backgrounds of the community, and all ages - with the oldest

member into their ninth decade and the youngest only three months old.

The formation of Notts County Supporters Trust means a stronger and more influential voice for the fans that are, after all, the real lifeblood and custodians of the club. We cannot emphasise too strongly how important it is for as many supporters to become involved as possible and to spread the word to friends, family and workmates at every opportunity. Whilst this is far greater than we had originally expected, we are not resting on our laurels, and we intend to try and increase the membership so that as many Notts fans as possible are members of the Trust.

DELAYS IN PAYING IN CHEQUES

One of the repercussions of the overwhelming support by fans for the recently established Notts County Supporters Trust with membership in excess of 1100 has been the delay in processing all the requisite forms and in opening up a Trust bank account. As Mark Durkin, Trust Treasurer explains "Banks now have a number of statutory requirements placed upon them when new accounts are opened. This is to prevent money laundering operations taking place. Unfortunately, this means that it is taking some time for us to open a bank account, much more than it would have a couple of years ago.

We apologise for the time taken to bank members' cheques, but rest assured that we are doing all we can to make sure our

account will be up and running as soon as possible. The bank we have chosen to bank with is the Co-operative Bank - they have offered us a deal in which they will not charge us any costs in the first year of operation. We feel that this presents the best value for money for Trust Members." The backlog should be cleared shortly, when any outstanding membership cards should be delivered. Thank you for your patience.

THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING

The Trust would like to place on record our special thanks to the Nottingham Brewing Company and the Vat & Fiddle, for their kind support. So if you fancy a pint why not show your support for those who are supporting us.



WHO'S WHO

The following members currently serve on the NCST interim board.

David Hindley (Chairperson)

Keri Usherwood (Vice-Chairperson)

Mark Durkin (Treasurer)

Nigel King (Secretary)

Fred Mosselmans (Administration Matters)

Andy Belfield (Membership)

Carole Stapleton

Phil Marshall

Darren Foss

Stephen Thompson

HELP WANTED

Want to get involved in the Trust but not sure how you can help? Then why not get in touch to find out more? The success of the Trust depends on its members. The more helpers we have the better. Whether it's handing out leaflets or writing newsletters, we need your help. Contact us:

HOW TO CONTACT US

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