



# MEETING MINUTES

Date : July 31, 2013

Location : Newcastle Labour Club

## Agenda

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

2. FANS FORUM

3. YOU TUBE

4. GATES

5. TICKETING ISSUES

6. STEWARDING

7. SINGING SECTION

8. JOE HARVEY

9. NUMBER 9 PLATFORM

[10. AOB](#)



# MEETING MINUTES

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Steve Hastie gave a brief introduction, outlining the agenda which all attendees received copies of, before introducing Newcastle United's Supporter Liaison Officer, Lee Marshall. Lee began by talking about some of the things that have been achieved by the Club working in partnership with Fans United. These include the return of the Gates to St James' Park and Steve Harper's 20 Years Charity Match.

## 2. FANS FORUM

Lee provided information on the Fans Forum recently announced by the club. He stated that much of the format and views have been shaped following meeting and talking to fans and fan groups. The club want to establish a robust structure for the forum so that it will stand up to scrutiny. They have worked to do this by working in consultation with the Football Supporters Federation who have provided feedback and constructive criticism to the club. They have also looked at examples from other clubs where forums are already operating. The forum will contain 15 fans. Three of these will be held permanently by established fans groups, NUFC Fans United, Newcastle United Supporters Trust (NUST) and Newcastle United Disabled Supporters Association (NUSDA).

The 12 remaining fan seats are open to all Newcastle United fans to apply and they will represent different segments of the clubs fans base. These will include season ticket holders in the Milburn, East, Gallowgate and Leazes stands, an Away Season Ticket Holder, A Long Distance Traveller (attending at least five home games a season), a Young Person's representative (under 21), an over 65s representative, a supporters club seat (for the secretary or chair of any supporters club containing a minimum of 20 members), a Black and White member (non season ticket holder), a corporate member and an equality representative. Two board members, John Irving and Lee Charnley will also sit on the panel, along with the club's heads of safety, security, ticketing and media. The Newcastle United Foundation and Wonga will also be represented. Lee stated that the forum will meet for the first time in September. Lee stated that the introduction of the fans forum does not signal the end of him attending Fans United meetings and that the club will continue to attend.

When questioned about how non-ST holders can be represented by the Fans Forum, Lee explained that that was why the Trust, Fans United and NUSDA have permanent seats on the Forum. We can act as funnels, gathering views and opinion from fans and non-ST holders and feed that back to the Forum.

People were concerned that the Fans Forum is just a UEFA box ticking exercise as UEFA have a directive about improving supporter engagement with Clubs and the Supporter Liaison Officer (in NUFC's case Lee Marshall) is a UEFA mandated position. Lee accepted this, but went on to explain that although the SLO is a UEFA mandate; the Fans Forum is not. The Fans Forum has been set up to give fans a line of communication with the boardroom, and two senior directors will sit on the Fans Forum when it meets quarterly.

People were also dismayed that Mike Ashley will not be in attendance and once again the question of why he does not address the fans, talk to the fans or explain his plans and motives for the Club to the fans was raised. It was suggested from the floor that Mr Ashley writes the programme notes occasionally as this would provide him with his own unedited platform to tell fans what is happening.



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Malcolm Dix, Steve Wraith and Ian Cusack all said at various points that the Forum is great progress, coming from a regime that has had such a poor relationship with the fans; and that it should be given a chance to see what it can achieve.

### 3. YOU TUBE

Linking in with Lee's information about the Fans Forum, Steve confirmed that Fans United will use our seat on the panel to pass on queries, comments and issued that have been raised by fans through ourselves. In addition to being able to do this via the meetings, social media, website and emails, Steve also announced that Fans United intend to create a You Tube account. This will allow fans to send video comments which will be uploaded to the Fans United website and can be viewed by other fans.

### 4. GATES

Both Lee and Steve updated the meeting on the progress of 'the Gates'. They are currently undergoing restoration which is nearing completion. They are set to be installed on Friday August 23, the day before the first home game of the season against West Ham. There will be an installation ceremony on the day of the game itself.

### 5. TICKETING ISSUES

Issues concerning away ticket allocations have been raised with the club previously through a number of sources including Fans United. The club has not always taken full allocations due to clubs having to reimburse the home club for unsold tickets. The club has pressed the Premier League to change this ruling and has obtained support from a number of other clubs. This has resulted in the Premier League changing the allocation rules to allow away clubs to take up the full allocation without being charged for unsold allocations, which is at present being ratified.

A number of ticketing issues from the floor were raised with Lee, in particular problems experienced as to how tickets are linked (with regards to applying for away games with friends/family members), and also the fact that though season ticket prices are frozen the compulsory membership fees are still rising year on year.

These are issues that Lee will feed back to the club on.

### 6. STEWARDING

Questions were raised with Lee regarding the possibility of allowing fans to bring in flags, banners and surfers. It was noted that on occasions the club and or sponsors have had large scale banners and surfers in the ground, yet fans have not been allowed to bring their own on the grounds of health and safety. Lee agreed that if this is the case, it needs to be looked at. He stated that fans wishing to bring flags and banners should contact the club, to meet with the security team for advice. It was raised from the floor that fans had already done that were generally fobbed off with health and safety commonly being used as an excuse. Lee invited any fans who would like to work with him on this issue to contact him.



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After a point raised from the floor, re flares and smoke bombs, Lee explained that prior to the Man City game all away fans were not routinely searched on entering SJP. Following the flare incident at that game, NUFC changed their policy and ALL away fans are routinely searched. Steve Hastie added that it might seem hypocritical to outsiders that we complain about away fans bringing flares into the ground when our away support routinely let off flares and smoke bombs during our Europa Cup campaign. Wendy Taylor (NUFC Head of Media) confirmed that NUFC were fined heavily for both flares and streakers by UEFA last season.

Points from Twitter included "why is the stewarding in the Strawberry Corner so aggressive and OTT?" and "even after Man City, flares were still a problem at SJP"

## 7. SINGING SECTION

Calls for the return of a singing section have been brought up with Lee previously and the issue continues to be brought up with Fans United. Lee was asked if he had any further progress on the issue. Lee has fed this back to the club and the matter is being discussed within the club, though he does not have any specific updates or information at this time. NUFC Fans United will continue to press the Club on this matter. The consensus from Twitter was if the singing section is to be reinstated can it be located in The Strawberry Corner.

## 8. JOE HARVEY

Steve talked about the recent Joe Harvey tribute night.. The organisers have raised £10,000 for a plaque which will be installed at St James' Park. NUFC Fans United extend their congratulations to the Fairs Club for their sterling work in ensuring that the Joe Harvey Memorial Plaque will be installed.

## 9. NUMBER 9 PLATFORM

A new online fanzine, The Number 9 launches in August and hopes to become a platform to promote various NUFC related angles online. The fanzine and Fans United hope to establish a regular #NUFCHour on Twitter to help in this.

## 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Lee was asked if there was an update on the issue of the club providing/running its own travel club for away games. No update as yet.

It was also suggested that the club set up regular 'Footballers Dinners' events at St James' to allow fans and players to engage with one another.