AFC WIMBLEDON STRATEGY 2024

Member's summary

Produced by the Dons Trust & AFCW PLC boards



TOGETHERNESS | RESILIENCE | CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT

WRITING A NEW CHAPTER

...the journey was long...

We are rightly proud of our journey.

From our ressurection in 2002, to returning to league football in 2011, to coming home to Plough Lane in 2020, the club has proven again and again that when the fans, club staff, community, Dons Trust and countless volunteers come together then nothing is impossible.

This resilience and "never say die" spirit continues to form the foundation on which our club is built.

However, the club stands at a point where to grow and achieve more success on and off the pitch, we must harness the strength of our story and agree our future direction.

Writing the next chapter of the Wimbledon story.



OUR VISION

...it only took 9 years...

We've returned to the football league, we've got back home to Plough Lane, we've survived COVID.

But now we need a new vision, a "north star" to set our strategic direction for the coming years.

Our north star is a bold, ambitious goal that can't be achieved overnight, won't be achieved without our core values, and helps set the agenda for the next decade:

To fight for promotion to the Men's and Women's Championship as a sustainable, fan-owned, community football club.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

...we're never gonna stop...

Our boards have identified five key strategic goals that will create the platform for the club to deliver our north star vision for our fans and the local community.

01	OUR OWNERSHIP	Grow our membership, ignite our community and our international fan base. Fan ownership and control of the club is non-negotiable.
02	OUR FINANCIAL STABILITY	Manage and reduce debt, whilst growing revenue. Generate income from player trading but do not rely on this to cover business-as-usual operational costs or debt repayment.
03	OUR PLAYERS	Prioritise the development and progression of the academy, together with the identification and acquisition of young talent from other clubs.
04	OUR TEAMS	Drive the same level of ambition for our men's, women's and academy teams.
05	OUR HOME	Improve our club's infrastructure, particularly our training ground and Plough Lane stadium.

PRIORITISING OUR STRENGTHS

...he's one of our own...

Understanding our club's current strengths and the strengths we need to develop in the future is key to making our strategy a reality.

In the competitive environment that is football we need to understand how we will thrive and win, both on and off the pitch.

Building on a sound platform, we will look to develop the following **strengths** as a priority to help deliver our north star:

ACADEMY & TALENT ID

OUR BRAND & STORY

ONE CLUB, ONE COMMUNITY

DATA FOUNDATION

PRIORITISING OUR STRENGTHS

01 - Our Academy and Talent Identification

To compete and excel against clubs with greater resources, we need to build on the success of the academy and our recent player trading activity.



Developing this competitive advantage not only increases the probability of **on-pitch success** but also provides a **critical source of revenue** that can help the club to remain financially stable.

We will prioritise:

- Increasing the volume of quality young talent being developed by an already successful academy team
- Being the best lower league club at identifying and acquiring young and overlooked playing talent with sell-on potential
- Being the best lower league club at identifying and acquiring young and overlooked off-pitch talent (football operations and non-football operations).



PRIORITISING OUR STRENGTHS

02 - Our Brand, Story, and fan-ownership

The story of Wimbledon is unique and can provide the catalyst for growing the fanbase within the local community and internationally, with positive commercial implications.

Not only is the historical journey a tale that the club should find different ways to tell to a wider audience, but the club's brand and DNA also sets it apart in a crowded marketplace.



We will prioritise:

- Better marketing of AFC Wimbledon's brand as a club with a unique DNA. The fan-owned club with a challenger mentality, an audaciousness and a 'never-say-die' spirit that means that nothing is impossible; the club that has real soul, centred in the community

- Finding new and creative ways to tell the club's story and our ambitions to the current and potential fanbases both domestically and internationally



PRIORITISING OUR STRENGTHS

03 - One Club, One Community

Our South West London location and commitment to the local community can be a significant advantage for the club.

Our local area is home to a wide range of groups including many international communities and can provide the club with a strong source of new members, volunteer talent and diverse skills.



We will prioritise:

- Making a significant, positive difference to the local community
- Appealing to a new local fanbase through our Women's team
- Becoming recognised as the best community club in London and within the lower leagues
- Using our position in the community and reputation as a community club to increase the fanbase and appeal of the club to commercial partners



PRIORITISING OUR STRENGTHS

04 - Our Data foundation

Achieving many of the initiatives and goals in our strategy will require the club to improve the way it captures, uses and analyses data of all types.

We will need to invest in our underlying IT systems and systems architecture.



The critical importance of data analysis across many dimensions of the club (on-pitch performance, club financial management, marketing, development of the fan experience, volunteer management, etc) means that developing a robust data architecture can provide a competitive advantage both on and off the pitch.

We will prioritise:

- Developing a new data strategy
- Developing the most effective performance and recruitment data analytics infrastructure in Leagues One and Two
- Developing the data architecture needed across non-football operations to support and maximise the commercial opportunities for the club.

FINANCES - MANAGING OUR DEBT

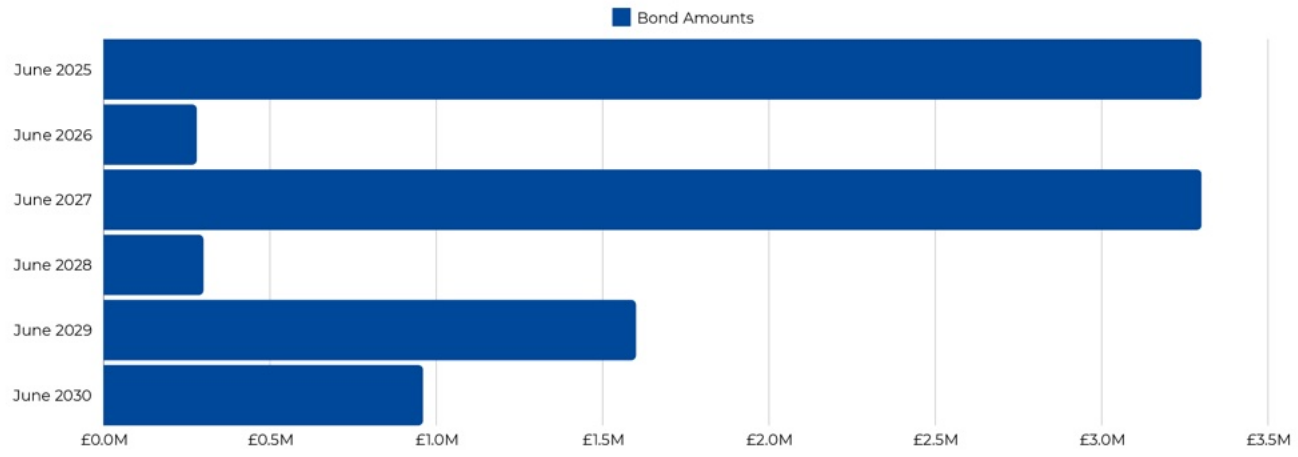
An essential part of our strategy is how we manage our debt.

The Finance Committee, on behalf of the AFCW PLC and Dons Trust boards, is responsible for managing the overall debt burden of the club at a manageable level to allow continued investment into playing budgets, ongoing club operations and capital investment projects to improve the club's infrastructure.

A key part of this role is continuing to plan for ongoing repayment of the club's debt, and particularly the upcoming redemption of Plough Lane Bonds due in Spring 2025 (£3.3m) and Spring 2027 (£3.3m).

The following options will be pursued to manage the upcoming redemption deadlines:

- Debt repayment - repaying bondholders using funds generated from annual revenue or non-recurring revenue (e.g. proceeds of player sales or equity investment).
- Debt conversion - bondholders converting bonds into donations or equity.
- Debt replacement/refinancing – refinancing through rollover of existing bondholder debt.



50.01% - Majority Rule

...we own our own club...

How would 50.01% help us to deliver this strategy?

Where possible strategic projects will be funded from operational budgets, however, many of them will need additional funding that cannot be covered by our existing budgets - we simply don't have the money to fund the work needed.

Our ability to create investment for strategic projects through the sale of equity that 50.01% would allow is crucial to ensuring that we can start to deliver this strategy and realise our longer-term vision.

At this stage we cannot be specific about which projects could be funded by the sale of additional equity.

Any sale of equity will create a pot of money that the PLC board can use to deploy to either fund strategic projects or crucially, reserve for repayment of the club's bond debt.

How much money from the pot is allocated to strategic projects will depend on a number of factors at any given time (like what league we are in, bond rollovers, commercial and fundraising incomes)

What does that mean in practice?

There are multiple strategic initiatives that we want to deliver.

If we were to raise (e.g) £5m through the sale of some equity then the PLC and DT boards, based on the financial picture at the time, may decide that we want to reserve £2.7m of that amount for debt repayment (which will allow us to reallocate debt interest payments to increase the playing budget) and allocate the remaining £2.3m to strategic projects.

The PLC board would then decide which strategic projects could be delivered for that money to generate the maximum impact towards our long-term vision.

£2.3m wouldn't build the club a new training ground but it would allow us to (for examples) build a leading data architecture to improve our player recruitment and trading, invest in our academy, better tell our story to increase our membership or attract sponsors, and/or build a volunteer management system to get the most out of fans who want to volunteer to help the club.

How many of these projects we can deliver and over what timeframe depends partly on whether the 50.01% conversation can arm the boards with the option of generating investment funds through the sale of additional equity.

MAKING THE STRATEGY A REALITY

... we're by far the greatest team...

When can all this happen? The reality is that given our determination to remain fan-owned, achieving our north star, delivering our strategic goals and building our strengths will take time and patience.

Some of the projects and initiatives that will deliver the strategic goals can be started immediately (indeed some are already underway) and concluded quickly. Others will take years to complete and require significant investment.

Some will seem incredibly hard and will rely on our usual refusal to accept that something is impossible.

"TELL US WHAT WE CAN'T DO NEXT"

Trevor Williams, founding member, former club secretary and kit man.

The important thing for us to define now is "what" needs to be done to allow us to achieve the vision for our club.

"How" we will achieve these things and "when" each goal will be realised will be planned by the AFCW PLC board over the coming years.

MAKING THE STRATEGY A REALITY

Here are a few of the key strategic projects that have been agreed by both the Dons Trust and AFCW PLC boards, contained in detail within the strategy that was signed-off in October 2024:

ON THE PITCH

Men's Football

- Sustainable return to L1 / challenge for Championship
- Define a strategy to achieve Cat 2 academy status
- Improve player trading planning
- Build a new training ground to benefit the Men's, Women's and academy teams

Women's Football

- Sustain a position in Southern Premier Division (Tier 3)
- Bring the Girls' Section under the Women's team
- Enhance the commercial proposition for our Women's side
- Increase our Women's sides use of Plough Lane for matches

OFF THE PITCH

Infrastructure

- Develop commercial usage of the West Stand 3rd Floor
- Build a new training ground to benefit the Men's, Women's, academy teams (boys and girls) and the foundation
- Complete the development of the Plough Lane Stadium

Commercial

- Develop ways to grow membership significantly (including DT rights and club benefits)
- Tell our story and grow the brand internationally
- Grow the club's social media presence
- Enhance the club's fan engagement strategy
- Continue to develop and improve the club's website, digital presence and ticketing platform
- Improve the size and scale of our commercial partnerships
- Improve the amount of revenue generated on match days
- Improve the current catering and hospitality offerings
- Expand our stadium hiring programme

Club Operations

- Implement a volunteer management system and develop a volunteer professional skills strategy
- Invest more in staff skills development, training and learning
- Develop a club-wide data strategy and data architecture
- Improve our IT systems and IT architecture

Community

- Develop a "one club" view of community activities
- Pursue appropriate club accreditations

WHATS NEXT?

...the Wombles had a dream...

The key question for us all now is “when can all this happen?”.

In working out the answer to this question, the next steps for both boards are:

- Agree how these projects are prioritised
- Cost out the initiatives to determine which projects can be started now and funded from the club’s current budget
- Continue to create an overall plan that shows the timing for delivery of each project and the dependency between projects
- Hand over the initiatives to the Club staff to deliver and report back on.



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