

**Minutes of a Special General Meeting of the members of the  
Wimbledon Football Club Supporters' Society Limited (The Dons Trust)  
held at Plough Lane and online on Thursday 9 October 2021 at 7.30pm.**

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Co-Chair of the Dons Trust, Jane Lonsdale, opened the SGM and welcomed everyone to the first live meeting from Plough Lane Stadium, and also the first hybrid meeting live at Plough Lane Stadium and with online participants.

### 2. Approval of 28 April 2021 Special General Meeting minutes

**Resolution 1** - To approve the minutes of the SGM held on 28th April 2021

There were no questions and the draft of the minutes of the 28 April SGM was approved.

Published Results:

	In Person	Online	Proxy	Total
For	35	63	55	153
Against	0	0	0	0
Abstain	6	6	0	12
%age of votes cast in favour				100.0%
%age of votes required to be passed				Simple majority
Outcome of resolution				Passed

### 3. The Papa John's Trophy (Football League Trophy)

**Resolution 2:** The club is entitled to promote attendance at matches in the Papa John's Trophy (Football League Trophy) at Plough Lane.

Questions were invited.

1. What is the stance of the Dons Trust Board regarding the Papa John's Trophy?
  - a. Jane: the Board suggests that members vote in favour to all four of the Papa John's Trophy resolutions.
  - b. Mark Robinson: my view and that of the players is that the best way to deal with the 'B team problem' is to take part in the competition, as it has been a great advert for EFL football, particularly the Portsmouth game.

Published results:

	In Person	Online	Proxy	Total
For	33	63	52	148
Against	1	5	3	9
Abstain	7	4	0	11
%age of votes cast in favour				94.3%
%age of votes required to be passed				Simple majority
Outcome of resolution				Passed

**Resolution 3:** The club is mandated to continue to register the owners' disagreement on principle of the presence of B teams in this or any other competition whenever this is discussed at EFL or FA meetings.

Questions were invited.

1. Was the Board allowing or instructing our CEO when he is at meetings?
  - a. Jane: the Board is instructing Joe to put the owner's view.

Published Results:

	In Person	Online	Proxy	Total
For	38	65	52	155
Against	0	3	3	6
Abstain	3	6	0	9
%age of votes cast in favour				96.3%
%age of votes required to be passed				Simple majority
Outcome of resolution				Passed

**Resolution 4:** The net profits from home gate money received when playing non-third/fourth tier teams in this competition (i.e. "B" teams, "U-21 teams", "U-23 teams") will continue to be donated to charity - split between the AFCW Wimbledon Foundation and Dons Local Action Group.

Questions were invited.

1. Do we make a profit at these Trophy games?
  - a. Tom Mak: around £8k was taken as gate receipts at the Portsmouth game. (Prizemoney not included).
2. Was this condition only relevant for B team games?
  - a. Jane: yes, the relevant profit figure would be that of the Palace game.

Published Results:

	In Person	Online	Proxy	Total
For	35	63	47	145
Against	0	13	8	21
Abstain	6	3	0	9
%age of votes cast in favour				87.3%
%age of votes required to be passed				Simple majority

Outcome of resolution				Passed
-----------------------	--	--	--	--------

**Resolution 5:** The club is entitled to sell hospitality places for matches at Plough Lane.

Questions were invited.

1. Would there be hospitality at the next Papa John's Trophy home game if this resolution was passed?
  - a. Jane: yes, there would be.
2. Is this resolution related specifically to Papa John's Trophy home games?
  - a. Jane: yes, it is, as all resolutions 2-5 relate to Papa John's Trophy.
  - b. David: the meeting's Paper 2 refers explicitly to this competition.

Published Results:

	In Person	Online	Proxy	Total
For	39	74	55	168
Against	0	3	0	3
Abstain	2	3	0	5
%age of votes cast in favour				98.2%
%age of votes required to be passed				Simple majority
Outcome of resolution				Passed

#### 4. General Q&A and discussion with members

Questions were invited, and the panel and others in the room responded:

1. How much did we make from the Arsenal game (Carabao Cup on 22 September)?
  - a. Tom Mak: ticket sales less costs was £228k.
2. What are the views of Xavier and Hannah (i.e. who are remaining as Board members next year) on the idea, put forward by Niall Couper and others, to 'enshrine' fan ownership/ constitution of the club?
  - a. Xavier: I would like enshrinement of fan ownership, along with regular litmus tests of members' views.
  - b. Hannah: I stood for fan ownership, listening to members, whilst overall ensuring that the club is sustainable.
  - c. Laurence Lowne: right from the start of AFC Wimbledon, the club has been fan owned, and has the strong protection of Restricted Actions in place.
3. What was the split of the proceeds from the Arsenal game referred to earlier?
  - a. Tom: 45% to both clubs, with 10% to EFL.

4. Why were those non-Dons Trust members that have contributed to the Bond, Seedrs and previous shareholdings excluded from voting on the name of the pub?

a. Jane: the vote was about asking the views of Dons Trust members as owners of the club and adding value to Trust membership.

b. Xavier: would prefer to focus on encouraging more fans to become members to add to the c4.5k currently who are in the Trust and who are thus the owners of the club, as the owners should be the ones where decision making is prioritised.

c. Hannah: agreeing with Xavier and adding that there is a low barrier to membership, and the right to vote is a tangible benefit.

*Note:* Following a short break to rectify a sound and vision issue, a link was now posted in the Zoom meeting to Youtube that improved sound and vision. Questions could be asked through the Zoom Q&A or the Youtube chat.

5. For away coach travel, could pick up points include South Wimbledon for easier public transport links?

a. Laurence: agree that South Wimbledon could be a stop, and the approach was to be fairly flexible and try and cater for traveller's locations on the day. To book a seat you can email [info@afcwimbledon.ltd.uk](mailto:info@afcwimbledon.ltd.uk) and mark as 'coaches'.

6. In the recent survey was there any significance to the question about members considering investment into the club?

a. Jane: the Dons Trust had previously agreed to sell down to 75% of votes, leaving 8% of votes left which is c £2.5m in shares.

b. Edward: the context was that £4.5m was needed by next April. There was one potential investor who we are talking with.

7. Could we have an update on the refinancing of the bridging loan?

a. Edward: it would be best to sell a big block of the c£2.5m shares to one person, otherwise a group, leaving c £2m of the £4.5m bridging loan to raise through bank loan and/or Plough Lane Bond.

8. How are we performing against our target income this season?

a. Tom: currently on budget, with match day tickets and the shop doing particularly well, plus the bonuses of the Cherry Red Records sponsorship, the cup runs and the Matthew Cox sale.

9. With a clearer idea of the cash flow expected from Plough Lane, is there an update on the likelihood of refinancing the bridging loan?

a. Edward: the general approach is the more that can be paid off, the less debt the business will have to manage. In terms of sources of finance, using Seedrs would involve their expenses, and I wonder how much more we can expect the fans to put into the Plough Lane Bond.

10. Jane announced that in response to fans feedback, half pints were now available, and tea and coffee had now been reduced to £1.90.

11. Why is it difficult to get attendance figures?

a. Joe: this problem is almost resolved. We now have a figure of 8113 so far for the Sheffield Wednesday this Saturday, and the attendance figures should now be made public on each matchday.

12. What is the sold-out capacity?

a. Joe: there are constraints currently restricting the 9200 theoretical capacity to c8200. These include the reduced capacity of the North Stand, the restricted view seats in hospitality, seats in the unused 3rd tier of the west stand, and the media/dugout/accessibility seats that aren't sold as such. There is a hope that with certain solutions, capacity could increase back up to c8500 in the future.

There are only about 10 of the 800 hospitality place remaining for the Sheffield Wednesday game, which shows the potential to sell out the stadium.

### **Ticketing issues and review**

At this point Jane apologised for all the ticketing issues that fans had had to put up with, and the queueing involved when tickets became available. Also thanked were the office staff who had had to sort problems out and the volunteers who had stepped up to help. Everyone was thanked for their patience during this frustrating time. A few weeks earlier the Dons Trust announced a review would take place.

Joe said that after all the hard work in creating the stadium, how disappointing the ticketing problems had been. Although other clubs have reported similar problems- and at Portsmouth even worse- the issues have gradually now been resolved. With the help and support of SecuTix now only debenture holders and scanning/downloading issues appear to remain.

Xavier said that the ticketing review announced some weeks previously should be both independent and constructive, so that we could learn from the experience. The Board had been provided a report from which the parameters and terms of reference would shortly be agreed upon. Then a review leader would be sought, ideally wholly independent. The degree of independence would determine if any validation may be required.

13. Can the good street feel of the Fans Zone be made equally accommodating during the inclement winter months?

a. Joe: we are looking to put coverings up soon.

14. When will the pub be set up with normal pub opening hours?

a. Joe: there have been supply chain issues that are now easing. Furniture will shortly be going in, and gradually the pub will open more hours heading towards November. Shandy drinks will also be looked into.

15. Can I get to the fans zone through the east stand rather than going up and down stairs through the west stand?

a. Joe: the route through the west stand to the fans zone is designed to spread incoming fans around the stadium as it fills up on matchday, and so minimising overcrowding. However, west stand lifts could be used.

16. Rather than a ticketing review, let's look forward. An enquiry is surely not needed when future financing is a far more important priority?

a. Xavier: we are not sure what happened with the ticketing. There are a whole range of issues that need to be looked at, some of which were out of our hands and some where we could have done better. The end result was that the club lost a significant amount of money. The review will be mindful to take up as little of Joe and his team's time as possible.

b. Jane: a review is needed, as we don't want to make the same mistakes in future.

17. Why don't we take the full allocation of away tickets, as they are sale or return?

a. Joe: we can always go back and ask for top ups.

b. Xavier: soundings of fans could be taken before matches to gauge the likely uptake of away game tickets.

18. When will the telephones be answered consistently?

a. Joe: to address this, there have for some weeks now been two people dedicated to phone answering. A call centre approach is now also being considered.

19. If there are staff shortages, why are there no requests for volunteers?

a. Joe: we have advertised for volunteers and used volunteers in many situations. However, with phone answering, for example, they may have to refer to a staff member, thus creating further time lags. As a result, we are looking at a company that could supply people on a retainer, building up their knowledge in particular areas on a regular basis, such as ticketing.

20. We appointed Mark Robinson as Head Coach (round of applause from audience). Are there any plans to appoint a Sporting Director?

a. Joe: we have considered for some years a Head of Recruitment, but we have settled on the more collaborative approach of a Football Panel.

b. Mark: the Football Panel is working well, and it means I find I can concentrate more on coaching and development of players.

21. Can we plan to invest in an additional first team player in January?

a. Joe: we have a budget to pay for one loan player, and will also consider possibly up to two free loan players.

b. Mark: there's often a bit of a panic when you have a few poor results, but there are often small margins between a win and a loss. Barring injuries, we have a lot of young players who will continue to get better, and so we should be in a good place in January. (Round of applause).

22. Is Elinor making a positive impact on the non-matchday event business?

...and

23. Are the marketing team being active enough in selling our stadium facilities?

a. Joe: we were fortunate to have the vaccination centre here in the West Stand, but of course covid itself has had a great effect on the events and hospitality industry. However, weddings, parties and other enquiries and visit requests have been picking up in the last 2-3 weeks, and the bookings should be looking good by Christmas. We now have a Plough Lane event hire website.

b. Jane: I am very pleased to announce the Junior Dons Christmas Party will be here in this room on Sunday 19 December. Many thanks to Robbo and his team for already making the offer of involvement on the day.

24. For answering the telephone, why doesn't the club get a phone system providing an automated greeting that routes callers to various departments of the club?

a. Jane: the club is looking at such a system.

25. For less popular fixtures, could hospitality prices be reduced so as to sell more?

a. Joe: we have been looking at such ideas to increase the number of people eating, similar to the Kingsmeadow top up system. Also, a company called Seat Unique is now helping us, and it has contributed so far to about 20% of this Saturday's hospitality number. This % has been steadily increasing each game that this company has been involved.

26. Could there be a version of the Plough Lane Bond at a higher interest rate and shorter duration?

a. Edward: this is like the set-up of the old Dons Trust Bond which was very useful for the club at that time. It did not raise a lot of money, but it is an idea worth reconsidering.

27. Would it help if Bond holders opt to convert their holding into shares?

a. Edward: No, as this would mean the Dons Trust would end up owning less of the club.

28 How much do we owe MSP (the bridging loan) and on what terms?

a. Edward: we will need to find £4.5m in April when the loan becomes due. The actual rate is confidential, but it is a bridging loan and so really expensive at more than 10%, so we need to repay as quickly as we can.

29. Does the recent news story by Russell Slade about the use of player's data impact us; and what data do we have and how do we use it?

a. Joe: this is a very complex area, as we use data that has been collected and managed by third parties, and we've also got our own data on players. I'm due to talk with our Data Protection Officer Mike Berry so we can assess the possible impact on us.

30. Can the MSP (bridging loan) end date be extended, and on the same terms?

a. Edward: an extension is not in the contract, so we're not sure.

31. Robbo, have you had follow ups to the presentations to clubs you gave in the summer, some of these which resulted in loans to us?

a. Mark: not as such, but we have developed an excellent reputation this season, so if we needed to go back for loanees, say in January, we would be one of the first choices of a lot of clubs.

32. Will the ticket office/reception be open to the public, and if not, why not?

a. Jane: a receptionist is joining on Monday, who will also do ticketing and PA work for Joe, and will be based here in the West Stand reception and which will be open to the public

33. How do we communicate with Joe?

a. Jane: from Monday it can be through the receptionist. Recent new staff will also help to spread the work- a Revenue and Operations Manager, a Commercial Executive and the Receptionist joining this Monday. Tom Mak has recently replaced the departed Financial Controller Tom Rawcliffe.

34. Can it be confirmed that we can now walk in and buy home and away tickets in person?

a. Jane: yes, that is the plan.

35. Any plans to stream away midweek games at Plough Lane?

a. Joe: this is a big discussion point within the EFL. There has been divided opinion amongst clubs when EFL sounded us out about streaming on Saturdays, after the last, covid-restricted, season raised c£54m in revenue against c£7-10m in a normal year. By the way, the next EFL broadcast deal could see us play Friday night and Sunday fixtures for TV to fit in with new broadcasters such as Amazon.



36. We actively search for good young players, but do we do the same for the best young coaches at u21 and u23 level?

a. Joe: we currently have a young coach from Chelsea here for 6 months, and probably we will get another young coach in for the second half of the season.

37. With loans, do we pay a % of the player's salary and the parent the rest, or do we pay it all?

a. Joe: this is normally a matter of negotiation, but a contribution of £500-£1000 is fairly standard. It does help in the negotiations if the loanee plays regularly for us - as our loanees do.

**Media Matchday Volunteers:** Laurence said that following an appeal earlier in the season, three supporters have now been added to the media matchday team, and are making a great contribution, which is very much appreciated.

**Induction loop for away games.** Laurence was pleased that these loops were now available for matchday commentary, and he thanked David Grows for making it happen. Laurence asked David how many people were actually listening in and how could we improve. David said it was early days but 3-5 people per game were asking Mandy in the office for the equipment.

**Sensory Packs.** Jane said that these were available, and could be booked through the club.

**Thanks.** Peter Miller wished to record his thanks to Iain McNay for his recent stadium sponsorship, and to Jane and Edward, who are stepping down from the Board at the end of the year for their commitment and devotion to the football club. (Rounds of applause followed each citation).

**AGM.** Jane said her last formal meeting with members as Co-Chair of the Dons Trust would be the AGM, the date of which would be confirmed when the accounts had been finalised.

38. How can we improve this situation: when the football club puts out, such as, matchday ticket information on social media, there is always a long list of people complaining that they can't contact the club or that the club has not responded or replied? It makes us look like a club that doesn't pay attention to complaints. On the other hand, Graham Stacey does a good job to actively monitor and respond to posts on the Dons Trust social media sites.

a. Jane: we put out a request (on the website late July) for a social media working group, and they are looking at how to address this issue. In addition, we are planning to establish a Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO) role, drawing on advice from Supporters Direct Europe and Kevin Rye of Think Fan Engagement. The SLO would have their own site, and part of the role would be to look at frequently asked questions and ensure people get a response. Also, the new receptionist will contribute to creating an improvement in the coming months. In addition, Xavier and myself meet with Joe every Friday where we raise fan's comments and queries.

39. Tom said earlier we made about £8k at a Papa John's Trophy game. How much do we make at a typical league game such as Burton?

a. Tom: the total matchday revenues would be in the region of £70-75K.

40. What has been the feedback for the street food outlets behind the South Stand, and are we making any money from them?

a. Joe: we make a profit but not as much as from the concessions.

41. As matchday sales are above budget, can we pay off some of the debt before April?

a. Jane: we do have to ensure that we breakeven on the overall budget.

42. Now that people's personal savings have increased, is there a view on the appetite of fans to participate in another Bond.

a. Jane: the Plough Lane Bond is still open.

Jane thanked everyone for their contributions.

## 5. Any Other Business

**Elections:** nominations were now open. Any of the Board members who were remaining for another year or members of the Election Steering Group would be pleased to talk with potential candidates should they want to know more about being a member and about the elections procedure.

**Museum:** WiSH had done a great job of setting up the museum, and they are doing a fundraiser to put a timeline on the West Stand.

**Tonight's voting results:** these will be posted on the website.

**Thanks:** 9yrspodcast were thanked for enabling the event.

Signed on behalf of the DT Board

.....

Chair of the DTB