

PAPER 6 – MUSEUM AT PLOUGH LANE

Resolution

Resolution X is presented by the board as follows:

“The Dons Trust Board is hereby authorised to enter into agreement with Wimbledon in Sporting History (WiSH) so that WiSH can proceed to install and operate a museum commemorating the club’s history within the new stadium.”

This resolution requires a simple majority of the votes cast in order to be passed. The board recommends that members vote in favour of the resolution.

Introduction

For the past two years, the Dons Trust and AFC Wimbledon have been discussing the opportunity to create a museum in the new stadium with an organisation called Wimbledon in Sporting History (“WiSH”). The Chair of WiSH, John Lynch, made a presentation to Trust members about the project at the April 2019 SGM.

Although we do not yet have a final agreement, we have reached the stage where we are ready to bring this project to members for approval. This paper describes WiSH, its proposed activities, the main elements of the proposed agreement with WiSH and how the arrangements respond to principles brought to the April 2019 SGM in a members’ resolution. A slide presentation prepared by WiSH is attached.

The Dons Trust board believes that the project presents a great opportunity to commemorate the history of our football club, reinvigorate the links between the club and community and generate additional visitors to the stadium. The board recommends that members vote in favour of the resolution authorising us to proceed with WiSH.

Displaying our history – recent consultation

With thanks to the 1,655 fans who took part in the recent heritage survey, The Dons Trust are pleased to announce that we will be displaying both AFC Wimbledon and Wimbledon FC heritage at Plough Lane. The excitement will be real as you will be able to visit the physical museum inside the stadium, which will be home to pictures and memorabilia from all eras. We are still working through final plans and will keep you updated.

We asked which three events should be celebrated the most around the stadium. It should come as no surprise that the 1988 FA Cup Final was the most popular, followed by our promotion to the football league in 2011. The third most popular event in our history was the formation of The Dons Trust and AFC Wimbledon and we will be proud to display images and documents from 2002.

Whilst the museum will be the focal point, our history will be on display around the stadium and we hope to offer tours as soon as practically possible.

A full list of results will be posted on the Dons Trust website shortly.

WiSH

WiSH is an organisation bringing together individuals with an interest in preserving the history and heritage of Wimbledon FC and AFC Wimbledon and presenting that in a physical and online museum and through other educational channels.

Once the project is confirmed, WiSH will incorporate as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (“CIO”). CIOs are a relatively new form of legal entity, that are registered with the Charity Commission and do not need to register with Companies House¹.

According to its draft constitution, the objects of WiSH are “to advance education for the public benefit & well being in the history of Wimbledon Football & other area sports by the establishment and maintenance of a museum and the collection, safeguarding and display of historical items, both tangible and intangible, related to the continuing history of Wimbledon Football Club from Old Centrals 1889 to AFC Wimbledon present day.”

The trustees of WiSH are long-standing supporters of the club. They are:

- John Lynch (a Vice-President of AFC Wimbledon);
- Michael Padmanathan;
- Matthew Haylock (an employee of AFC Wimbledon, who manages the club shop);
- Tim Hillyer (a Dons Trust Board member and also a representative of community-owned clubs on the Football Supporters’ Association’s National Council).

The trustees are supported by a number of other key individuals (see presentation) and volunteers, who between them bring profile and expertise.

A number of collectors of artefacts and memorabilia related to Wimbledon FC and AFC Wimbledon have pledged to donate their collections to WiSH, either upon confirmation of the museum proceeding or, in some cases, as a bequest upon their death. WiSH estimates that the total value of these collections is around £1.5 million. An overview of the items that will form the collection is annexed to this paper. A process has been established for documenting items donated or lent to WiSH, so that the provenance of items in the collection can be appropriately established.

Through the grants it receives and revenues it generates, WiSH intends to be financially self-sustaining, without relying on funding from the Trust or football club.

WiSH’s website can be viewed at <https://wimbledoninsportinghistory.com/>

The museum and other services

A room of 40m² has been set aside in the new stadium, adjacent to the club shop. WiSH proposes to establish a museum there, commemorating the history of Wimbledon FC and AFC Wimbledon. The items to be displayed will be drawn from the collection described above and will include further items that may be acquired by WiSH in future.

As well as the permanent display, there will be rotational exhibitions and heritage events. The intention is to engage AFC Wimbledon supporters, including via online surveys, to capture ideas and to choose what should be featured. Besides physical artefacts, the intention is to develop interactive digital displays and an online presence. This will be phased in over time. As a registered charity, WiSH will be able to apply to grant-making bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding for these projects.

Whilst the football club will be the key focus of the museum, there is scope to include other sports which have impacted on the Wimbledon area (including, for example, the heritage associated with the predecessor stadium), enabling the museum (and hence our stadium) to become a visitor attraction for the local area. There is also scope for exhibits to be displayed in other areas of the stadium besides the museum, celebrating the club’s history and the diversity of the club and its supporters.

¹ In fact, WiSH have also registered a limited company with Companies House, in case they need to take on any substantial contractual commitments or liabilities in advance of the CIO being fully established.

The museum, which will be staffed by volunteers, will be open on matchdays (10am – 2pm) and non-matchdays (10am – 4pm). Admission charges will be decided by the Club, in consultation with the Dons Trust Board. The intention is to make the museum accessible and affordable rather than a significant generator of revenues.

Besides operating the museum, WiSH volunteers will assist with stadium tours and educational visits. These services will all be subject to the approval of the club. In addition, there are opportunities to develop a range of WiSH-related merchandise for sale in the club shop.

Agreement with WiSH

The arrangements with WiSH will be documented in a legal agreement. Some of the key terms of the agreement, which have been set out in a Heads of Terms, are as follows.

- Term – a five year agreement, renewable annually, with quarterly operational reviews.
- Use of museum space – a peppercorn rental, with utilities (electricity, heating, wifi) provided by AFC Wimbledon at nil cost to WiSH.
- Installation of museum – designed, funded and implemented by WiSH. The design will be approved by the club.
- All exhibits in the museum to have been catalogued on WiSH's inventory, and the ownership of any items that are on loan to be acknowledged.
- The museum to be operated by WiSH volunteers (see above re: opening hours).
- Merchandise, stadium tours and other services to be approved by the club. A revenue sharing arrangement will apply.
- Admission charges to the museum to be set by the club. A revenue sharing arrangement will apply.
- Insurance – responsibility for insurance currently being investigated.
- Intellectual property. WiSH to licence the club to use specified archive materials free of charge. Club to licence WiSH to use the club badge.
- WiSH to prepare quarterly accounts and to make these available to the club. WiSH to present to the Dons Trust Board annually.
- Code of conduct and other policies (health & safety, complaints procedure, etc) to be developed in conjunction with, and approved by, the club and Trust.
- A disputes resolution mechanism will be included in the agreement, so as to provide for a route for resolving any disagreements. In the event that a material breach of the agreement cannot be resolved through these mechanisms, the agreement can be terminated.

Besides the legal agreement, the interests of the Dons Trust and AFC Wimbledon (and their respective members and fans) will be protected through the governance arrangements, with the Dons Trust and AFC Wimbledon each having the right to nominate one of WiSH's four trustees.

Principles raised in members' resolution discussed in April 2019

Members may recall that a members' resolution regarding commemorating our history at the new stadium was submitted ahead of the April 2019 SGM. Although formally withdrawn, the resolution was discussed at the meeting. The resolution and minutes of the meeting are available at <https://thedonstrust.org/general-meetings/>.

Although not bound by them, the Dons Trust board has taken on board the instructions proposed in the members' resolution in its negotiations with WiSH, as described below.

- ***To provide a full update to all members on negotiations with WiSH and the measures it has set out in order to ensure the new body is subordinate to the democratic control of the Trust.***

This was presented to members in the board's response to the April 2019 SGM resolution and is updated in this paper.

- ***To start from the presumption that the museum and associated activities should be under the direct control of either the Trust or Foundation (which would allow access to the benefits of charitable status).***

Whilst recognising the intent behind this presumption, it is not considered the best approach for the museum project for the following reasons:

- The Dons Trust does not have the capacity to take on such a project in its own right. Renewal of AFC Wimbledon's strategy and governance are major projects for the year ahead and will occupy the Trust board's attention. It is not for the Dons Trust to dictate the activities of the AFC Wimbledon Foundation (as an independent organisation) but the Foundation already has a full agenda, including absorbing the Dons Local Action Group.
- WiSH do not wish to be subsumed within the Trust or Foundation. Given the monetary value of their artefacts, WiSH intends to remain independent so as to avoid being financially exposed to the fortunes of the Trust or Foundation. Whilst we could potentially seek an alternative museum partner who is willing to be a direct part of the Trust or Foundation, the Dons Trust board considers that WiSH's collection of artefacts, and the knowledge accumulated by its trustees, make WiSH the right party to work with. There are other ways of protecting the interests of the Dons Trust, AFC Wimbledon and their respective members and fans besides direct control.
- WiSH will have charitable status (unlike the Dons Trust) and believe that their independent status will make it easier for them to access grant funding.

- ***To ensure that any membership scheme or otherwise set up for the museum reflects the values and ethos of the Dons Trust specifically that any membership or "share" fee should be a flat amount which is deemed accessible to all members.***

Under WiSH's draft constitution, only the Trustees are formal members. Non-voting membership can be conferred on other people. It is intended that, if such membership schemes are taken forward, then they will be purely for fundraising purposes. Membership will not be a requirement for using the museum facilities.

- ***In the event that there is a proposal to deliver the project outside of bullet point two to provide members of the Dons Trust with an opportunity to vote on any proposals to outsource the museum or history and related activities to a third party.***

The Dons Trust Board is presenting Resolution [X] for to members to vote upon.

- ***To ensure that any such organisation is democratic, inclusive and has a clear set of rules and procedures including written agreements where items are being loaned, whether by individuals or the Trust or the Club, to re-affirm the ownership of this.***

There will be four Trustees, of which one will be a nominee of the Dons Trust Board, thereby providing a democratically accountable link to our membership.

WiSH is a new organisation and does not yet have a full set of policies. However, through its nominee, the Trust will work with WiSH to ensure that diversity and inclusion are fully embedded in how WiSH works and in the services it provides.

WiSH has a constitutional document. This will need to be updated to reflect the right of the Dons Trust Board and AFC Wimbledon to nominate one Trustee each.

WiSH has established procedures for documenting artefacts that are donated or lent to it. Only artefacts whose provenance is appropriately documented will be permitted to be part of the collection presented in the museum.

- ***To ensure that the Trust has the controlling interest in any 3rd party set up***
As noted above, the Trust will not have a controlling interest in WiSH. There will be four Trustees, including one appointed by the Dons Trust (currently Tim Hillyer) and one appointed by AFC Wimbledon (currently Mat Haylock). Between them, the Trust and club nominees account for 50% of the WiSH trustee board.

Whilst the Dons Trust does not have a controlling interest, it will be able to protect the interests of the Trust, AFC Wimbledon and their respective members and fans through the agreement that will be in place between the Trust, AFC Wimbledon and WiSH. Breach of the agreement by WiSH permits the other parties to terminate the arrangement.

- ***To collate a full inventory of any item loaned by the Club or Trust***
WiSH has established procedures for documenting all artefacts donated or lent to it. This includes providing a receipt to all donors and lenders of artefacts. The Dons Trust and AFC Wimbledon will ensure that all items loaned by them to WiSH are appropriately documented.
- ***To ensure that any profits from the use of trade marks or historic items are the property of the Dons Trust or used only with their full consent to further the project.***
WiSH is a charitable organisation and is not permitted to distribute profits to its trustees or members. Any profits generated from its activities will be ploughed back into enhancing the museum and/or the services provided by WiSH.

Conclusion

The boards of the Dons Trust and AFC Wimbledon believe that it would be desirable for there to be a museum within the new stadium. This would create a home for displaying the extraordinary history of our football club, enhance the experience of AFC Wimbledon fans and attract visitors to the stadium.

We believe that, thanks to the artefacts assembled by the founders of WiSH, and their extensive knowledge of the history of the club, it makes sense to work on the museum project in collaboration with WiSH rather than try to undertake this project ourselves or with other partners.

We have reached broad agreement on terms and conditions on which we would work with WiSH. This will be documented in a contract, and our interests will be further protected by virtue of the Dons Trust and AFC Wimbledon each being able to nominate a trustee to the board of WiSH.

The Dons Trust board therefore wishes, subject to contract, to enter into agreement with WiSH to run a museum in the new stadium and recommends that members vote in favour of authorising the board to do so.

ANNEX: ITEMS OFFERED TO WISH BY INDIVIDUAL COLLECTORS

Trophies from 1890s on both original & replica.

Medals from 1890s on Leagues, FAAC, LSC, SSC, LCC, LIC, SL, SLC, IL, AIT

Programmes from 1919 to present day (99% complete history)

Match posters originals from 60s on replicas from 30s on to present day

Players shirts - hundreds from 1963 on to present day

Replicas the same

Match Balls from 1930s on to present day

Plough lane - turnstile, signs, seats and various other items

Press cuttings from 1890s on to present day

99 % complete history of players and results

100% record of every competitive match played 1889 on

Photos - thousands from 1889 on to present day

Badges, all those produced by WFC & AFC including rare one off commissions.

Video & master tapes. The complete history of AFC Wimbledon matches and associated events from 2002/2017 copyright owned by WiSH

Bus signs & others from specific events 1970s onwards (inc FA Cup 88)

Plans, proposals, development & ownership paperwork relating to Plough Lane initial 1900s development right through to 1991.

1980 -86 All yearly club plaques issued to players for the individual promotions

Medals 1980-86 Players League promotion medals

Historical publications relating to WFC (most under copyright ownership)

WFC Rules & Handbooks from early 1900s on

WFC Fixture lists from 1923 on

Foreign tour detailed itineraries from 1923 on

Thousands of other item 1900s on relating to heritage & history of club.

On Common Ground Book & Film 100% copyright via partnership with TVF

International shirts played by WFC & AFC players