Dons Trust Board Meeting, Wednesday 13th August 2025, Plough Lane

In attendance	Apologies	Also in Attendance
Angus Fox (Chair)	Hannah Kitcher	George Jones (Secretary)
Graeme Price (Vice Chair)	David Rey	Reece Wheeler-Kelly (Assistant Secretary)
Martin Drake		Michele Little (Treasurer)
Alex Folkes		
Simon Hood		
James Longhurst		
Ian Robinson		
James Ledward		

1. **Introduction, Apologies, Protocols and Directors Interests**
   There was no change in directors' interests

2. **Approval of previous Minutes**
   The minutes for the full July meeting and the short notice July meeting were approved.

3. **Ratification of email decisions**
   The following email decisions since the last meeting were formally ratified. James Ledward left the meeting.
   Appointing James Ledward to fill a casual vacancy position focusing on the ED&I knowledge gap that was identified via board skills audit.

- Appointing David Rey to fill a casual vacancy position to focus on financial projects
- Approving the decision to make a financial payment to Dave Boyle for assistance in rewriting the constitution
- Approving the decision to pay Dave Boyle to take up the position of Secretariat mentor

James Ledward rejoined the meeting

4. **DTB Actions List and Club Board Action Monitoring**

The board received updates on the outstanding actions list including the Sky Survey and the incoming football regulator.

Michele, in her role as club vice chair, attends for the club a combined charities meeting to assist with club resource allocation. Michele agreed to ensure that all events are shared with Martin to load into the DTB events rota so that all DTB members are aware of forthcoming requirements.

A discussion took place on upcoming members' surveys. Topics included season tickets and the women's team funding.

It was agreed to send out the season ticket survey.

5. **Club Board Meeting Summary and Questions**

Discussion and review of the papers for the Club Board Meeting scheduled to take place the following day.

6. **Dons Trust Finance, Plough Lane Bonds, Debt and equity update**

The Treasurer introduced the year end finance report previously circulated and provided an update on the Plough Lane Bonds with a focus upon swaps for equity and donations. Membership revenue has grown from £70k to £160k.

7. **Fundraising**

Graeme suggested revisiting membership pricing for next season once the benefits package was further clarified and expanded. It was agreed that simplifying the membership offering whilst finding ways to improve the appeal to international members should be considered. It was agreed to survey the members including a specific one for international members.

A discussion took place on Junior Dons and its offering for the new season.

8. **B-Corp**

It was agreed to revisit in the new year given ongoing capacity issues. It will need to be driven by the DT when the time is right to proceed with it.

9. **Worldwide Wombles Weekend**

Alex introduced a paper previously circulated around planning for the Worldwide Wombles Weekend. The weekend will be based around the Northampton game in 2026. The club is supportive of the proposal. It was agreed there will be flexible ticketing for the weekend to ensure all international fans get the experience they want.

A discussion took place on how to encourage local fans to attend the event to ensure the best possible experience for both our international members and those more local. There will be a strong focus on cost control.

10. **Board comms processes**

The Secretary raised the need to agree on a process for signing off comms ahead of key events over the next few months. Angus added that a very intense period would be coming up, and it was important to take members with the board through that. Responses on Discord were picking up again. Overall, the SGM had gone well besides tech issues in the room. James-Lo mentioned that making the slides so late before the meeting was not ideal. This kind of material needed to be prepared much further ahead of time. The Treasurer highlighted the difficulty answering so many pre-submitted questions late on ready for the meeting. Angus, on behalf of the board thanked Michele for her efforts. The answers to these technical questions were overall well received, hopefully helping to address previous criticism that more complex topics are not explained well to members in plain English.

11. Women's Team

Due to a conflict for the secretary this item was minuted by the assistant secretary

James-Lo updated that Tammy had stepped in as interim Chair of the women's board. There was a discussion about the women's team's expressed need for the DTB as representatives of the owners to provide them with direction moving forward.

12. SGM & AGM Planning

The dates for the two meetings need to be Monday 17th November and Monday 15th December (the AGM).

James-Lo suggested forming a sub-group of board members to focus on and drive the preparation for the future campaign for 50.01%, including board and non-board members. The focus needs to be on capturing new members and those who didn't vote last time. James-Lo offered to chair the group. Alex suggested putting together a list of skills that would be needed based on experiences of last year to prompt others to think about the contribution they could make. Martin suggested announcing the formation of the group alongside who's chairing it as a first stage.

There was broad agreement that having board members up for re-election on the group in the background was fine so long as they were not involved in any public-facing comms during the election period. If anyone didn't re-stand or lost their seat, they could remain on the working group regardless.

13. RA Planning

Discussed as previous agenda item

14. Election Planning

Alex, Martin, Simon and James Ledward left the meeting for this item.

The Secretary informed the board that nominations would open on Monday 18th August, with voting opening on 14th September and closing on the 5th October. As per ESG recommendations this allows more time for the OADT regulatory requirements to be completed before the AGM. The rules on eligibility to stand have been enhanced as per the ESG recommendations including previous conduct online bringing candidate eligibility into line with the Volunteers Code of Conduct. There remains an independent scrutineer for any appeals process.

James Lo suggested having an online meeting on Discord to discuss the elections for anyone interested in being a candidate.

Alex, Martin, Simon and James Ledward rejoined the meeting.

15. Board Working Groups and KPIs

- **Communications**

Alex raised the issue of life membership and club benefits with the DT having 120 life members of whom 91 don't have season tickets.

Alex then asked if the club could come up with a scheme to opt-in to paying an annual fee to obtain club benefits. Graeme also stated that we should ask the members if they want to make their life membership a donation.

It was agreed that Michele, in her role as Club Vice Chair, will work with the membership secretary to work through the list and work with the club to find a solution for the 91 to enable them to access club benefits each year.

- **Constitution**

  The constitution working group had gone through the current constitution line-by-line to review what should stay and what should change using the draft Football Supporters Association (FSA) model rules as a template. The draft FSA rules had been recently rejected by the FCA on some minor points, but the FSA were confident they would be approved following some minor amendments. Dave Boyle has been appointed to take up work on the constitution to help with the final stages. Once the new constitution draft is finished, the next step is for the DT board to check and approve the draft before being given to members for approval at the SGM or AGM. Once approved, it will take 6-8 weeks for FCA approval after which the new constitution will officially be in place. The new constitution is being written in plain English, with a much shorter main document that has supporting documents and side policies making it easier to change in future.

Following Sean's resignation, the group requires a new board member to provide DTB representation. It was agreed James-Le would take this role due to his previous experience with constitutional work.

The public target for presentation to the membership remains the AGM, which was repeated at the August SGM. The Secretary was still confident this could be met.

- **Culture and Mission and Oversight**

No meeting since last meeting.

- **Youth Engagement**

The group met on Monday 4th August with 10 attendees. This second meeting saw a higher engagement level with increased contribution to the discussions. The group are keen to get involved, helping however they can. James-Lo expressed the value having this group brings for both now and the future of the trust.

Simon asked if the group was going to be advertised more widely. A launch event for the last week of August was still being planned as agreed at the July board meeting, but if this falls through then the group will get advertised in the normal manner.

16. Working Groups Proposal

Considering the recent disbandment of the fundraising group, due to this becoming a standing item on both board agendas, there was a discussion of the remaining working groups. Working group and board overlap was examined. Angus proposed that the oversight group could be disbanded, as this is discussed by the board at every meeting. Formal ratification is required at a future board.

It was agreed that the remaining working groups were still useful, allowing thinking time outside of board meetings to bring more concise points to the board.

James-Lo suggested groups dedicated to specific projects, such as the group focused on 50.01% agreed earlier. Alex stated that not all topics currently covered by working groups should be discussed fully in board meetings instead and raised that it might mean needing to bring other people who currently add valuable insight in working groups to board meetings. Each chair of the working groups needs to ensure that their report is concise, covering all key aspects.

18. Risk Register

No alteration to the existing risk register.

19. DT Strategy Meeting Review

The Asst Secretary presented the report on the DT Strategy meeting that occurred on Discord, explaining the nature of some of the technical failures encountered. The issues were on Discord's side which is very much an anomaly in the data set. The recommendation was to have another meeting on Discord with no formal point beyond additional stress testing of the platform.

A test meeting was agreed with invites to the board and the testing group to make sure it works.

It was agreed to ask a couple of Discord questions in an upcoming survey.

20. AOB

The Board was reminded to review and complete the events Rota as regularly as possible.