Dons Trust Board Meeting, Monday 16th March 2026, Plough Lane

In attendance	Apologies	Also in Attendance
Angus Fox (Chair)	David Rey	George Jones (Secretary)
Graeme Price (Vice Chair)		Reece Wheeler-Kelly (Assistant Secretary)
Chris Atkinson		Michele Little (Treasurer)
Martin Drake (Online)		Xavier Wiggins (Guest)
Alex Folkes (Online)		
Hannah Kitcher		
James Longhurst		
James Ledwardward		

1. Introduction, Apologies, Protocols and Directors Interests

The meeting began at 6.05. Angus welcome Xavier to the meeting. The Board thanked everyone involved in the recent Worldwide Womble Weekend.

2. Community Interest Company (CIC) proposal

Xavier Wiggins gave a presentation centred on being an what he termed a "impact first" football club utilising the CIC structure. He believes that a CIC can strengthen attract more funding and said his presentation wasn't aimed at making a decision but was about getting the board to look into the opportunity.

He said that outside football there is a growing pool of funding available for positive impact organisations. He further explained that he believed by adopting the CIC model we can begin to attract this sort of funding whist protecting fan ownership, invigorating the volunteer culture and building on our solid foundations as a brilliant community club with measurable impact working with stakeholders.

Being a brilliant learning environment links into the volunteering culture and could build on the work done by the club charities by helping volunteers grow and improve, this could be a measure to unlock additional funding without changing how we operate whilst strengthening the opportunities.

Xavier went onto explain how important it is to have a measurable impact and social benefit returns. He gave several examples of impact measurement and return on investment (ROI) which could be followed including one programme that cost £20k and had a ROI of £270k worth of impact which massively helped attract additional funding.

Last week Xavier spoke to people at Aston Villa and Wrexham, who now have employees who focus on social returns through their main club not their foundations and used them as an example of ways of looking at their funding explaining that Wrexham unlocked £17m worth of stadium funding because of this. This allowed them to strengthen the club and the community.

Grant Funding, impact investment, corporate partnerships, philanthropy and place-based partnerships are all potentially unlocked by following this structure.

Xavier explained that he felt that the best way to unlock this funding is by adapting a CIC model where a CIC is wholly owned by the Dons Trust. The football club would not have to change how it operates greatly. The community programmes would also not have to change greatly, but would receive additional support.

The CIC is the vehicle by which to attract the additional funding. He believes this could solve our funding shortfall as well as help with growth.

Xavier asked the board to create a working group to spend a couple of months investigating the CIC model before reporting back and making a decision. A lot of the work the group would have to do is speaking with potential funders about if and how they would be interested in future partnerships.

Xavier has written a draft terms of reference (TOR) for such a working group. He added that he would like people with time and experience to join the working group especially people with skills in impact, Women's and Girl's football, facilities, funding, impact-first vehicles and storytelling as areas of expertise as needed.

The board agreed that while it is very exciting opportunity it is vital to get stakeholder buy in as soon as possible. Graeme explained the next steps are to agree a TOR and form a working group.

It was agreed to publicly share the TOR which will also flush out good questions which we have not considered.

It was agreed that the board will read the TOR and decide a board rep to lead the working group.

A discussion took place on how to communicate the changes. It was agreed James Longhurst will circulate his note for review. Xavier will also share the draft TOR for the working group.

Xavier left the meeting at 6.55.

It was agreed that the charities all need representation on the working group but it has to be led by a strong board member.

It is agreed James Ledward will lead the initial phase. The board will review the working group TOR and then look to establish the working group.

3. Approval of minutes

Minutes are approved subject to further redactions.

4. DTB Actions List and club board action monitoring

The board reviewed its outstanding actions list.

5. Ratification of email decisions

None

6. Club board meeting summary and questions

Graeme asked for anyone who has any questions ahead of the club board meeting later in the week to message him. Graeme added that all bandwidth the club board is focused on investment talks.

7. RA update

The board discussed the strategy for email reminders and matchday presence for the remainder of the campaign leading up to the meeting on Monday 23rd March. Email reminders would be sent on matchdays and with increasing frequency towards the proxy submission deadline. Leafletting would continue around the ground, particularly on Saturday as the deadline day. Extra volunteers would be sought to help with this. Alex suggested pairing up any extra volunteers with a board member for leafleting to answer questions. A script will be provided for a stadium announcement as well as for live audio commentary of the match. George will speak to the club about getting a countdown put on the scoreboard. JJ's comment from the meet the manager event has been clipped and will also be shared on socials.

There was a discussion about people having issues with receiving their proxy form over email. A ballot box has been available for anyone affected to write a paper proxy on matchdays, and this option will be made clear again for upcoming matches. George added that there will need to be a broader review after the vote to tidy up the management of email lists.

8. SGM planning

George explained that the meeting will have an informal setup on stage but no guests or warmups. It will be livestreamed on the club app and website where people won't be able to vote but will have a better viewing experience, and on Zoom where people will be able to vote but with a lower viewing experience. The deadline to register for Zoom will be Monday 23rd at 2pm. George wanted to make sure that the deadline for proxy submission and Zoom registration didn't get confused.

Angus said it would be good to have some slides but that they shouldn't diverge from the FAQs to ensure consistency. James Longhurst agreed the meeting should start with some slides to give some highlights of the information already provided and frame the conversations. The board discussed content for the slides.

Alex asked when the meeting recording would be made available, and George said that it should stay up on the club site immediately after the meeting unless there are any issues. Otherwise, it should be possible to have it available within 48 hours.

The board agreed to announce definitive numbers on turnout and the voting outcomes the day after the meeting, to give time for the secretariat to reconcile proxy submissions with meeting attendance and finalise the numbers.

9. Dons Trust Finance – Debt and Equity Update

Michele updated the Board on the results of the survey which indicated up to £3m could be raised through a new PLB scheme. This would allow us to repay up to £1.6m and consider paying off all the 6/7% bonds to reduce interest as well as fund some small capital projects. It was agreed the Bond will go live in May,

10. Women's Team

George said that after the 5-0 loss to Gwalia the chances of avoiding relegation were very slim.

George left the room at 20:28

A discussion on finances was minuted separately by Reece due to a conflict.

George entered the room at around 21:00

11. London Living Wage (LLW)

Angus reviewed the David's paper on the impact of LLW. Angus added that in his view he believed the DT should retain the existing commitments to LLW without forcing the club to get third parties to pay it. Graeme explained that at the moment the club request all third parties are at least moving towards LLW.

A discussion took place on the impact of dropping the existing commitment. Alex strongly communicated that he is favour of paying everyone the LLW.

It was agreed to instruct the club “all employees must be paid the LLW and all contractors must move towards paying the LLW”. It was agreed that Angus would communicate that to James Woodroof. It is agreed to finalise the exact wording of the statement over email.

12. Men’s Season Tickets 2026-2027

Angus explained that the club staff had raised concerns with the new policy of no new concession pricing in the premium West Stand seats. Concerns were raised regarding disabled fans and those who are becoming concessions for different reasons.

A lengthy discussion took place including the fact the board were not informed about the removal of the seat move window due to its impracticality.

It was agreed to retain the new policy. It was agreed Angus would communicate this decision to James Woodroof.

13. Election Report

James Ledward updated the board on the progress of the review. Matt Breach had been sent a draft as Chair of the ESG and was supportive of it. James Ledward will speak to Ed on Friday to try and close out the review. Ed wanted to thank people that took part in interviews and say the report is with the board. The board committed to publishing the full report, but it is important to consider the recommendations. George suggested also giving the FSA sight of the recommendations for their views.

The board was supportive of all recommendations.

James Ledward suggested publishing the full report alongside a summary version with key highlights and the recommendations in April.

The board thanked Ed for his extensive efforts in conducting the review.

14. EDI

James Ledward informed the board the club passed the ED&I audit with a bronze. It is agreed to now push to achieve silver in the next cycle. The board thank Mandy and everyone who worked on it and support their ongoing work.

15. Board Working Groups

i. Communications

No meeting. No updates not already discussed. It is agreed to undertake a review the working groups after the conclusion of the RA process with the aim of more project specific working groups. A discussion took place on having more formal board roles such as comms.

ii. Youth Engagement and Advisory Board

No Update

16. Board Vacancies update

To be reviewed after the RAs.

17. AOB

i. DT Rota

George reminded all board members to fill in the rota as there was still a number of gaps.

ii. Two Factor Authentication

George asked board members to let them know if they needed support installing 2FA on their DT emails.

iii. April Meeting Date

George reminded the board that the date of the April meeting had moved to Monday 13th due to the Men's first team fixture vs Stockport being re-arranged to Wednesday.

The meeting closed at 9:55