



FCG Agenda

Tuesday 20th February 2018

Fan representatives

Anne-Marie Fern	Heroes & Villains
Mo Razzaq	Aston Villa Supporters Trust
Gary Kilburn	Lions Clubs
David Michael	My Old Man Said
Scott Jones	Villa Talk
Steve Gough	Aston Villa Independent Supporters Clubs
Daniel Rolinson	Villa View
Jonathan Fear	Vital Villa

Club representatives

Keith Wyness	Chief Executive Officer
Luke Organ	Chief Commercial Officer
Tommy Jordan	Head of Media & Communications
Lee Preece	SLO

Apologies

John Gillett	Lions Clubs
Michael Steede	Avillafan.com
Peter Warrilow	Aston Villa Supporters Trust

*** A request to pass on our positive thanks to Guy and his staff for the excellent work they are doing building the Aston Villa Foundation.**

1. Are there any updates on 5G, wi-fi and phone signals at Villa Park? And is there any progress on the problems we've reported before on the tannoy system?

5G - We are waiting on final notification from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport regarding the success of our bid. There were more bids submitted than initially anticipated from many large multinational companies and telco's. It will be a challenge but we are hopeful for positive news soon.

Mobile Connectivity - In terms of mobile phone signal and capacity, Ian Dimmock - Operations Director, engaged with EE to perform match day technical surveys to collect real time data on how well the EE network performs in and around Villa Park. From the initial results, we can clearly see a significant number for failed connections on both voice and data which suggests over capacity. There will be a significant capital investment required from the mobile operators to increase capacity at Villa Park. Ian to progress.

Wi-Fi - we are currently trialing free public Wi-Fi in all our hospitality areas to assess the stability of our newly installed Cisco Meraki solution. If after successful testing, there may be an option to enable Wi-Fi on some of our concourses for free fan access. The Technology team have installed new fibre circuits and are currently in the final stages of testing ready for deployment. It is unlikely that we will look to progress Wi-Fi at seats in the stands. High density Wi-Fi is very expensive and at this stage does not justify the outlay required. Ian to progress and update.

Tannoy system - The Tannoy system requires significant investment. Whilst we have no immediate plans, we recognise the significant part the PA contributes to our matchdays and will look to address this at our earliest opportunity.

2. The pitch has deteriorated badly. The one thing we are used to as Villa fans is a beautiful pitch, it was always what was on the pitch that was the problem. What is the reason for this deterioration and what are the plans to address this?

The recent & continuous wet weather has had a significant impact on the playing surface, which is clearly visible. In an attempt to mitigate these conditions, we purchased additional pitch lighting rigs in 2017 which has helped to some degree. The Operations Team are currently working on plans for a complete pitch replacement project including, under-soil heating, irrigation and drainage systems. These plans need to be finalised and submitted for financial consideration.

3. The paving stones. Could these be re-introduced and would it be possible for the faded ones to be restored?

Firstly, it is not possible for us to restore any faded Pavers. When the letters fade, it is because the stone is being worn away from foot traffic and weather. Once the lettering has faded, there is nothing we can do. Clearly, we are not in a position to replace the stones, and it is unfortunate that the type of product introduced years ago has led to disappointment for many. In any future build, we will give consideration to a different solution. If we can find one, we will give those whose messages are lost the opportunity to replace their wording at minimal cost.

4. With the various disabled supporter issues - what difference does promotion and not getting promoted have on promised plans for measures to assist disabled fans next season? Are there any updates on current actions?

Irrespective of achieving promotion, we are looking to introduce the first of the several projects needed to achieve compliance with the Accessible Stadia Guide. Further details will be announced in due course, including consultation with AVDSA & AVIDS. We also hope to have news on a Sensory room and a Changing Places facility.

5. What are the plans - and what is the progress - on the Holte Pub being re-opened? How does the club envisage it could work following the problems attracting customers last time it was open on non match days? And can there be better pre-publicity for when the Holte Suite is closed on matchdays?

We are currently looking at how to turn the Holte Pub into a functioning venue in the format of a gastro pub. The discussions are inter-linked with a number of commercial areas/contracts that we need to review and so it will take time to effect if anything is agreed. The club would not be responsible for the operation of the venue rather a 'partner' in any venture and would work hand in hand with the nominated partner to ensure we are providing maximum footfall and noise for the venue.

In regards to the Holte Suite – simply, yes. There has been an instance this season where a booked conference has clashed with a game and we didn't communicate well enough. We will endeavor to ensure the venue is always open for football and if that is unavoidable our communications should be strong.

6. What is the current situation with the Lions and Legends and The Former Players Association? With Ken McNaught doing such a good job of the L&L are there any plans to once again make just one association for our former players and heroes? And are there any potential fundraising tie-ins with the Foundation?

We formed the Aston Villa Former Players Club (AVFPC) this season. Ken McNaught has been engaged as the AVFPC Liaison & Fundraising Officer. Ken reports to a FPC committee (Steve Stride, Shaun Teale, Darius Vassell & Des Bremner). Ken is in the process of growing the number of former players involved in the club and raising the necessary funds through an events calendar to ensure the AVFPC is able to operate independently, and generate a Benevolent Fund for our former players that need it.

7. How would the recent proposed investment in Danish side Lyngby Boldklub impact Aston Villa and what is the current situation?

Discussions are ongoing and at a commercially sensitive time. If it works it would be a feeder club and also where we can give our young talent greater experience. Lyngby is recognised as having an excellent Academy system.

8. What are the plans for the next pre-season and how are we going to avoid another disaster like last summer. Plus when can fans expect an announcement (back to Steve Gough's points before the last pre-season, fans need time to arrange time off, travel, accommodation etc).

Talks are underway with the football management team as to what they want from a football perspective. It depends a lot on what league we are in. Football needs will come first, always.

9. Our former shop on New Street still has old posters and bits in the store. Could these not be removed as it looks like the shop has gone bust and doesn't reflect well on the club. Would it not be possible to replace the old posters with a sign advertising the Villa Village Store?

In short, we have been in constant discussions to re-assign the lease and have been working to secure the lease contracting in December and then January. We have subsequently held off branding the shop as the cost for a well-executed window design is currently £3k and so we have not progressed with this due to the impending change.

We'll have the team clean up the façade of the shop asap.

10. If/when promoted, some fans have expressed concern how we then cope in the PL. What plans are in place to, as Xia suggested, 'hit the ground running'?

We are doing a lot of work on potential solutions for both leagues and recruitment etc. We will not give our hand away to potential opponents.

11. Although we have noted the comments by Keith in his recent interviews, is there an official update we can have to communicate to our various members on the FFP situation, especially if we don't gain promotion?

We have no issue with FFP this year. Next year it will be a challenge. The whole FFP situation is under review at the EFL on Thursday and we need to see if there will be any change in the rules.

12. Media channels. We get a lot of questions about the poor official site and have brought it up before at FCG meetings, especially navigation. Are there any planned improvements? There have also been technical problems with AVTV, are these being corrected? A fair few comments we get are on the quality of the commentary as well. They appear too busy talking about tweets to set the scene and talk about the match. Maybe a wider consultation (or a FCG specifically on these media issues) would help? With Dan and Ian Taylor doing well with pre-match, maybe they could slot in for match commentary?

A. Yes. We have been looking at the navigation and are aware of the issues. Unfortunately, this is not something our existing developers will be able to pick up and will be a task for our new developers to remedy over the off season. To confirm, we have terminated the contract with our existing provider due to poor performance in supporting our internal team ambitions. The new provider should provide progress in this and many other areas across our fan channels.

B. There have been a few issues with the navigation to the Live Match Centre and this is something we have raised with our existing developers to fix. Unfortunately, if one of our partners go down or have trouble with their network it can affect the stream and there is very little we can do about it. Rest assured we have put processes in place to flag up any risks and respond as quickly as possible.

- C. The AVTV commentator is a professional freelance commentator who also works across other outlets (unlike the previous person in this role). We've engaged him on a season-long contract but we are increasingly looking at getting a co-commentator in with him to help provide relief in the less action-packed games. Also, we very much see the value in having support and an alternative perspective to events on the pitch. We are planning to engage other contributors through the end of season and keep an active mix of second comms in use next year. As with the studio show, people who are relevant to our audience & willing to participate for not a great deal of money, are quite hard to find.
- D. As above, we're looking to introduce a roster of talent to the studio show who may also be willing & able to do co-commentary, the likes of Hitzlsperger, Daley, Vassell, Hendrie, celebrity fans etc are all in contact. This could be an opportunity to interlink into the former players club.

13. Are there any plans to give the ladies football team more prominence on the official site?

There are plans afoot to better integrate the Ladies team into our roster of matchday and non-matchday coverage on social channels etc with their own themes of content and presentation. However, the WSL website is something the league provide and this is a strong destination for the Ladies content which we aim to better support through next season with dedicated media resource in our Foundation team.

As the Ladies move to Boldmere we will also be trying to encourage fanzone activities etc on a matchday to try to boost our general coverage of the games.

14. Are there any updates on HS2/Bodymoor issues?

We have now acquired additional land at BMH that would not be affected by HS2 and we are still fighting with the HS2 executive on correct remuneration. We will update as things get resolved but it is a complex situation with many moving parts.

15. Other items for discussion:

A request from AVDSA, the Aston Villa Disabled Supporters Association to be represented on the FCG was agreed by all.

