

Fan Consultation Group Minutes 16th August

Present

Mo Razzaq	AVST
Neil James	AVST
Gary Kilburn	Lions Clubs
Jonathan Fear	Vital Villa
Mike Steed	avillafan.com
Dave Woodhall	Heroes and Villans
Scott Jones	Villa Talk
Steve Gough	AVISC
David Michael	MOMS

Dr Tony Xia, Keith Wyness, Nicky Keye, Tommy Jordan and Lee Preece all representing Aston Villa Football Club.

1. With conflicting reports during the takeover, and without in any way expecting to breach any individual's privacy, what sort of funding is there now for Aston Villa?

It was confirmed by Keith Wyness that adequate funding is in place and there are several different plans depending on where the club finds itself over the coming season/s.

It was a requirement by the League that funds are available to sustain the club for a minimum of two years. Meeting this requirement was achieved with ease. Any suggestions to the contrary or regarding lack of funds during the takeover were simply rumours created by a rival bidder for the club.

It was also confirmed that we are working within the Financial Fair Play stipulations and expanding the club's interests internationally will help this.

2. Clarification of the board structure

Keith Wyness confirmed that the board structure is now as it will remain, with Tracy Gu the final change to the board.

Mr Samuelson is not involved with either Aston Villa Football Club or Recon Sports as his role was related to the acquisition of the Club.

Tracy Gu is the Head of HR and will set about restructuring the club in that department.

3. The club own 12 acres of land close by and the new owners have expressed an interest in development of a 'theme park' football world. Can you elaborate on this?

Keith Wyness stated that the football theme park idea was a bit of a fallacy: any plans for development are connected more with Mr Xia's interest in 'Smart Cities', which will be concerned with the regeneration of the surrounding Aston area as a whole. It won't be particularly football-related.

Mr Xia is openly looking at redevelopment of the land for residential/commercial/retail opportunities and wishes to invest in the local community/economy. Mr Xia has surveyed the land himself and has already had a meeting with Birmingham City Council, although no firm plans are in place at this time.

4. Can we have a commitment from the club to pioneer safe standing in England and can a transitional section for flags and banners (aka singing section) be accommodated, like those that have been successful at other clubs?

Keith Wyness stated that this is something that the club would be happy to do and something he has previously actively supported.

Mr Wyness stated that he intends to discuss the issue further with the Football League. He informed the group that a delegation of Premier League and Football League clubs will be visiting Celtic Park soon to see safe standing in action.

Mr Wyness also stated he was in favour of flags and helping to improve atmosphere. It was something he was involved in during his time as CEO at Aberdeen. It will be up to supporters to propose ideas and initiatives for the club to consider.

5. Are there plans to address the ticketing portal being a mess and phone lines being constantly engaged?

The ticketing portal and website are under review and options are being looked into. The telephone lines are a problem due to the cuts made by the previous board in preparation for relegation from the Premier League.

Tony Xia hopes that the new IT manager at the club would solve a lot of the previous issues as he updates the club's systems.

Nicola Keye asked that anyone unable to purchase tickets via the website contact her so she can look into and resolve the problem(s).

6. What is the club doing in terms of avoiding the negative publicity of the previous ownership that resulted from poor communication?

Keith Wyness and all present accepted that this is now much improved (thanks in no small part to the new owner's social media presence).

The continuation and development of the Fan Consultation Group is also key to this, as is an improved relationship with the local press.

7. Is a re-brand on the agenda and, if so, especially badge wise, will those who understand the issues the best – the fans – be consulted?

It was confirmed that the club would involve the fans in the redesigning of the crest if it happens. However, it was also confirmed that this is not a pressing issue or a major concern right now as the focus is very much on getting back to the Premier League as soon as possible.

8. Update on shelved North Stand disable seating plan/new plans. What needs to happen first before the North Stand is redeveloped?

Mr Xia stated that any redevelopment of North Stand will be more linked to his overall plans for the area, as mentioned above, and that any redevelopment wouldn't be about just the stand. Other commercial opportunities may come into play for its redevelopment.

Obviously, there must be more success on the field first and an increase in attendances. In terms of development of Villa Park in the future, if the club enjoys success, the scope of redevelopment increases. Mr Xia didn't want to put a limit on future Villa Park capacities, adding that there was potential for even 60,000 or 80,000.

With regards to disabled facilities, in 2015, all Premier League Clubs agreed to make their stadiums compliant with the Accessible Stadia Guide by August 2017. The club is planning to be compliant with this requirement.

9. Will you be prepared to consider initiating a youth forum to involve younger supporters? Are there any plans to increase youth support?

Yes, although this would need to be planned in the right way. The format used for the Fans' Consultation Group may not work in this case but the club would be very willing to be part of this initiative.

10. Could there be an SLO or Supporter issues Twitter address like a lot of other clubs have?

Keith Wyness stated that this will be happening. No time frame was given but it is seen as a positive step in helping address supporters' issues.

11. Is the club moving away from player contract release clauses?

It was confirmed that no more release clauses are in place as one had recently expired and was no longer valid.

Most players have had relegation clauses, which will affect them in one way or another, but no more relegation release clauses apply to any AVFC players.

12. Is there any progress on the recruitment of a technical director?

Yes. Keith Wyness confirmed that the club has filled the position, as has been reported in the press. Once the new postholder's (Steve Round) contract is up (August 31st), he/she will begin work at the club. The new technical director has a wealth of experience, is very well respected within the footballing community and the appointment is seen as a coup for the club.

The role of the technical director will be to help install a Villa style of football and develop it, be responsible for the data management, recruitment, fitness and to create a Villa "engine" that functions at the heart of the club. Going forward, Aston Villa won't be so

dependent on whichever manager is in place. Instead, there will be a continuous through-line in terms of the football culture and operations at the club similar to what has been achieved at clubs like Leicester City, Southampton and Swansea City in recent years.

Without question, Roberto Di Matteo will have the final say on all signings.

13. Are the new board members aware of the previous relationship with Acorns and will this continue?

Keith Wyness stated that a meeting with Acorns had taken place and both parties had come to the conclusion that the partnership had become stale over the years and did not have the same initial impact as it once did.

To this end, both parties are considering the best way to move forward to revitalise the relationship.

14. Are the board members aware of the Villa Midlands Food (VMF) initiative abruptly stopped by Tom Fox, giving underprivileged local youngsters training from which many have excelled? Would this be something they might consider re-starting?

Keith Wyness was not aware of this but would be interested in looking further into this matter and the scheme's merits. He would be happy to have a briefing on this matter once the transfer window closes.

15. National Living Wage – all contracted staff?

Keith Wyness advised those in attendance that the club is compliant with the National Living Wage for all staff aged 25 and older.

A review is currently under way for staff aged 18 to 24. It is currently not a condition for providers.

AOB

Away ticket prices

The club was asked that in the light of Sheffield Wednesday charging a very high price for visiting Aston Villa fans that we do not respond in kind and ensure our ticketing pricing for visiting fans is fair.

Nicola Keye advised those present that our ticket pricing has now been set and the club will ensure a fair pricing policy for visiting fans.

Stewards

It has been brought to the club's attention that the agency supplying the contract stewards has been advertising on Facebook, suggesting that no experience is necessary to work at Villa Park. In light of some of the incidents that took place last season, this is an obvious concern.

Considering the heightened emotions at football matches, it's a little different from stewarding a music concert or most public events. It has been recommended that such stewards receive at least an 'Aston Villa' induction to help them understand the environment they will be working in.

Trinity Road Stand

With the closure of the upper tier of the Trinity Road Stand clarification was sought on what the plans were for re-opening this section.

Following relegation it was expected that attendances would reduce significantly and in order to manage costs the upper tier was closed. However, the club are continually reviewing the situation. Re-opening of the upper tier has not been ruled out this season.