

BU Newsletter

In this Newsletter...

*** Introductory Note * Important Update on BU Membership and Club Membership ***

*** Bees United Reps on the BFC Board * Lionel Road Update ***

Dear Fellow Trust Members,

In our Newsletter last year we talked about how rapidly Brentford Football Club was transforming. Well it's clear that rate of change continues! The Club is constantly pushing to become even more professional in all its operational aspects, we have seen some stunning football which has drawn more supporters to Griffin Park, with record numbers of season ticket holders. There is a buzz around the Club which is really appropriate for the Bees - bring on the new season!

Those dark days when we were rattling buckets to keep the Club alive seem an awful long time ago. Indeed many of our newer supporters may not even be aware of the work of Bees United. As the BU Board we are working at getting our message out to all supporters of what we do and why Bees United continues to be so important.

It is imperative that as a Trust we continue to reach-out to supporters in the work we do to meet the twin objectives of Bees United namely: To ensure Brentford FC has a sustainable long term future, and to ensure it continues to play its part within its local community. We remain incredibly grateful to Matthew Benham for his fantastic support, and continue to work in partnership with him to ensure we are able to meet our objectives on your behalf.

With the changes in the Club's financial position there is a natural feeling that everything is OK financially. Certainly we at Bees United, having worked hard with Matthew to agree a sustainable basis for funding the Club, have no immediate concerns over the Club's finances. However, as a Trust we cannot afford to be complacent about the future. We all know that things can change very quickly in football – we have seen other Clubs fall in to crisis just as we did pre-Matthew. Bees United could not have achieved everything we have without the financial support members old and new have given and continue to give us. Let us hope that we never experience again the days when we truly feared for the future existence of Brentford FC, but making sure that is the case requires ongoing volunteer effort, some hard work behind the scenes, and some cash! We ask that you continue to give that support so, if the need ever arises, we can all be ready to protect *our* Club.

You will see in this newsletter the different areas of the Club the Trust have involvement in, to help the Club not only survive but also to prosper. To allow us to continue to do this we need *your* and your fellow supporters' continued support.

Important Update on BU Membership & Club Membership Changes

The Board of BU have been discussing changes to the membership structure and payment options and are now in a position to update you all. There are a number of factors that have been considered. The Club and BU are in a much more healthy position than when BU was first launched (although BU remains a fundraising organisation – the stronger we are financially the more we are

BU Newsletter August 2015

able to deliver our objectives). Standing Order payments, whilst great at ensuring a recurring income for BU, are very difficult to administer (imagine the manual workload for our BU volunteers of trying to reconcile on a monthly basis the many hundreds of multiple payments, including from people with the same surname, changed addresses etc). The Club Ticketing website is now running at a scale in excess of anything that has previously been achieved, to support the high demand for tickets the Club are experiencing, and the priority ticketing process needed to be simplified.

Therefore we are pleased to announce the following changes, with immediate effect:

- Annual BU Membership fees drop to just £5 per year, for all membership categories.
- Annual BU Membership should now be purchased via the Club Ticketing website (under Memberships).
- Club Membership will no longer be offered as part of BU Membership. This was a free trial as we helped the Club establish their scheme, and it is now ready to stand on its own. Therefore if you want the Club benefits of ticketing priority etc, we would recommend you purchase a standalone Club Membership from the Club (also on the ticketing website under Memberships).
- BU will continue to raise money via your existing Standing Orders and other routes, and these monies will be treated as donations to BU (and therefore we will not track individuals). We hope you will continue to donate your current level of contributions, but if you decide to reduce your standing order as you pay for your membership via the Club Ticketing site, then we totally understand.
- Life Memberships (both existing and new) remain unaffected, and should be purchased directly from BU. Contact us via email or post.
- If you do not have access to the Internet you can send a cheque (made payable to Bees United) for £5 together with your name and address by post to BU.

This is obviously a big change to the way BU membership is administered, and it is possible that the fact members will now need to log on the BFC website to purchase membership will mean that our membership numbers suffer a one-off drop simply by virtue of this administration change. We nevertheless feel it is the right decision, the easiest to administer, and gives BU the most reliable basis to judge active support from year to year.

What do you need to do now? It is really simple: Spend just £5 on a 'BU membership' via the Club ticketing website, (or if you prefer, send us a cheque).

If you have already paid a standing order across to BU and don't want to pay twice then please just contact us and we will take that in to account in this first year of the new system. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

BU Representatives on the BFC Board

In the recent national general election, all the major parties pledged their support to the principle of fans being represented on the boards of their local football clubs. At Brentford FC, we have had that

BU Newsletter August 2015

representation since Bees United first took ownership of the Club in 2006, and today we retain two seats on the board under the current ownership. This sort of involvement is the envy of supporters at most other clubs in the country.

Under the agreement with Matthew Benham Bees United is entitled to at least one seat on the Board, but we cannot take that entitlement for granted - we try to contribute as much to the administration of Club affairs as our time and expertise allows. The twin aims of BU are to strive for the long term sustainability of BFC and to ensure it plays its part within its local community, and our Directors are particularly focused on those within the overall remit of the board. In that context, Donald Kerr is on the board of our Community Sports Trust and on the executive of the local Chamber of Commerce. He is also a director of the Football League Trust, the governing body of all Sports Trusts and the Lionel Road board. Dave Merritt adds his financial expertise to all relevant discussions at board meetings. Both of them recognise the responsibility to reflect the views of the supporters to the Board on any of the important topics the BFC Board deals with.

Much of what occurs at board meetings is inevitably confidential. Also, while individual views on specific issues may sometimes differ, after discussion (as on any company board), the consensus view will always prevail. Our representatives update the BU Board on all but the most confidential issues on a monthly basis (or more urgently if required), and the BU Board votes each year on which of its members they want as BU's representatives on the BFC board.

Do you have something important that our representatives might consider raising at the Club Board? Email them at David.Merritt@BeesUnited.org.uk, or at Donald.Kerr@BeesUnited.org.uk.

Lionel Road Update

It is now almost 18 months since the Club were given planning consent for our new stadium at Lionel Road (LR). Over the intervening period the LR team have been extremely busy doing all the essential preparatory work prior to work beginning on site. This has involved getting confirmation of that consent from both the Mayor of London and the Secretary of State, securing a development partner, and negotiating the purchase of two parcels of land which adjoin Lionel Road. The only outstanding issue is the acquisition of one of those areas, now the subject of a compulsory purchase order (CPO). The Club are confident in the outcome of that process and still expect to be on-site in the next six months.

Bees United were involved at the very inception of the Lionel Road project, and Brian Burgess and Chris Gammon, formerly Chairman and Secretary to the BU board respectively, are the two people engaged in managing it now. Donald Kerr is our current BU Director serving on the Lionel Road board. The success of the Club over the past 12 months has only served to underline the importance of moving to a new stadium, with all the opportunities to increase off-field revenue that it will bring with it. This is revenue that can then be channelled on to the field to improve our chances of even more success. The key milestones over the next few months will be the submission by our partner, Willmott Dixon, of detailed planning proposals for the housing around the stadium, and the outcome of the CPO.

Are you interested in helping Bees United? BU is entirely run by volunteers, so if you are happy contributing a bit of time, either formally by joining the Board, or less formally in some way which interests you and is helpful to BU, then please contact admin@beesunited.org.uk !

Have you seen the news...?

Blackpool Supporters' Trust takeover bid ignored by Oystons – The long-running conflict continues.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/football/33623963>

Newport County Supporters Trust's bid to take over the club now managed by Terry Butcher.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/football/33528401>

Bournemouth promotion: Bucket collections to Premier League – an interesting comparison to BFC?

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/football/32315677>

Exeter City waive gate receipts to help Torquay United cash worries, returning the gesture made by Torquay when they had similar financial problems in 2003.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/football/33673094>

and last, but certainly not least, our very own...

TEAM BFC CST in the Prudential Ride London-Surrey 100 2015 – with a link to donate to the BFC CST cause!

<http://www.brentfordfcst.com/news-archive/ride-100-we-did-it!.aspx>