



WHUST

THE TRUST OF THE FANS

ANNUAL REPORT 2024





Explainer: community benefit society

The purpose of a community benefit society (CBS) is to serve the broader interests of the community – in contrast to co-operative societies, which serve the interests of members.

The *Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014* requires a community benefit society to be conducted for the benefit of the community. But the Act does not provide any further definition or description of what a community benefit society is, creating a reliance on the FCA's registration guidance.

PURPOSE

The FCA says: "The conduct of a community benefit society's business must be entirely for the benefit of the community."

There can be no alternative or secondary purposes, including any that may preferentially benefit the members.

A CBS must not just serve its own direct community – its members – but also the wider community. The society's purpose is to be the vehicle through which a healthy, balanced and constructive relationship

between West Ham United Football Club and its supporters and the communities it serves is encouraged and developed.

The business of the society is to be conducted for the benefit of the community served by the club and not for the profit of its members.

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Welcome: WHUST chair Terry Reynolds

Welcome to the second annual report of the West Ham United Supporters' Trust (WHUST). There has been a considerable increase in our membership this year, some of whom may not be familiar with all of the activities of the trust.

The trust grew from the previous West Ham United Independent Supporters Association. The origins of that, along with other fan groups, was widespread discontent among the fan base with the ownership and direction of the club. It's fair to say that many of those concerns remain.

We continue to engage positively with the club, along with other supporters' groups, to improve the experience of all fans, and you can read reports of the work of the trust in this report.

Much of this means working with other organisations and official bodies to represent the interest of West Ham fans in things as various as television broadcasting arrangements, matchday policing, foreign match organisation or stadium stewarding.

This relies on the efforts of volunteers working on behalf of their fellow supporters – and we're always looking for more fans to get involved. If you would like to, contact us at info@whust.org

The major change that has occurred over the past year, and will have a significant impact on fans' relations with their clubs, has been the move to establish an Independent Regulator for English Football (IREF).

One of our board members, Nick Drane, was involved with other Football Supporters' Association (FSA) colleagues in drafting suggestions for the bill that the government will introduce, with cross-party support, to establish this. This has been achieved against unremitting opposition from the Premier League. And, inevitably, a leading voice against the IREF has been our club's ownership.

The legislation will make it clear that clubs need to take genuine account of fans' views in things that matter, such as the club's heritage, its stadium, its badge. No surprise this wouldn't be welcome at West Ham.

But we need, and will continue to argue for, fans being genuinely consulted by the club – not as window dressing to comply with minimum standards.

Owners come and go – and I've experienced them all, from the Cearns family to the current iteration – but they are custodians of a club that really belongs to its fans. And we shall continue to make our voice heard about the things that matter to all West Ham fans, whether they are able to attend matches, only watch on TV or support from abroad.

I have been interim chair of the trust for a short while only, following the resignation of our previous chair, Sue Watson, and I wanted to conclude this by paying tribute to her efforts on behalf of the trust (and previously WHUISA). Sue devoted much time and energy to building the trust and we are grateful for all her contributions.





Fan engagement at West Ham

During the year, your trust has been working with others, in efforts led by the Football Supporters Associations (FSA), to support the government as it prepares for the introduction of an Independent Regulator for English Football (IREF).

The government has committed to introducing legislation setting out the basis for IREF operations. In fact, it has already appointed an interim chief operating officer, Martyn Henderson, formerly chief executive of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), to start setting up the new regulator.

We expect the draft legislation (the Bill) will be introduced to Parliament in early February and that it will set out the government's proposals for the scope and legal powers of the IREF. We expect the legislation to make it illegal to operate a football club without a licence approved and issued by the independent regulator.

It will say that men's professional clubs in England will need to meet specified conditions:

- Financial sustainability
- That the owners and directors are fit and proper persons to run a football club
- That there are meaningful arrangements in place to engage with the club's supporters and protect key items of club heritage.

West Ham is currently talking to fan groups about the formation of a Fan Advisory Board (FAB) to replace the existing Independent Supporters' Committee (ISC). This change is the result of a Premier League-designed requirement for clubs to be more engaging. The intent is welcome but seems oddly timed. It might have been better for the Premier League to have waited until there was clarity about what best reflects the IREF licensing conditions for fan engagement. We believe the FAB falls well short.

The next stage is for the government's proposed legislation to be considered in detail by Parliament.

While there is wide cross-party support for independent regulation, we do expect others will lobby for changes to aspects of the government's proposals as the draft is refined and finalised by MPs.

WHUST will be part of this democratic process, working with the FSA and other colleagues to lobby for the interests of fans to be at the heart of the new law, and for regulations that will enact the recommendations of the Fan Led Review of English Football. In the meantime, WHUST has set out what it believes represents meaningful fan engagement. We have stuck by this in discussion with other fan groups over the FAB.

WHUST AND SUPPORTER CONSULTATION

WHUST believes West Ham United would benefit hugely from full and transparent fan involvement. Meeting fans will do more than help the club understand and discuss fans' needs and find out what fans see as important for our club. It can also be a proactive force for good, with ideas and initiatives generated by fans helping the club to further improve.

The White Paper, *A sustainable future – reforming club football governance*, says the IREF must ensure proper consultation and it provides some key examples. Most recently, the Premier League has published its fan engagement standards. The Premier League Standard is just one contribution to the possible standard that IREF will set for fan engagement. It's not sensible to move ahead on the basis of the Premier League proposal.

West Ham has, so far, had an Official Supporters' Board and an Independent Supporters' Committee. It is now discussing the Premier League fan engagement standards.

WHUST sees all of these as small evolutionary steps towards achieving robust, meaningful fan consultation, which is an inevitability and will benefit the club and fans alike.



WHUST believes West Ham fans deserve more than small steps and asks that the club, instead of creating another short-term fan body that will be superseded, takes a big leap. Processes and standards should exceed those specified by the (shadow) IREF as required for the relevant element of the Licence to Operate.

The fanbase is not a single homogeneous group. WHUST is keen to continue work with others on a multi-level engagement plan with appropriate representations

at each level. Direct representation should be supplemented using information gathered through surveys, panels and other research tools, as well as input from fan group-specific meetings. Extra care should be taken to gather the views of those groups who might otherwise be marginalised. Here's what WHUST believes is essential for meaningful fan input:

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

The White Paper (section 8.10) says: "We expect most clubs will employ a 'shadow board', but this representative group should at least include a club's Supporters' Trust."



There could be places reserved for specific groups of fans, such as the LGBTQ community, women supporters, disabled supporters etc. West Ham already has these groups.

Individuals should, as a minimum, meet standards required to hold board level office.

If IREF applies any additional standards or requirements on clubs, then members of the shadow board should comply with those rules too.

PROCESS MEASURES

- As per White Paper, supporters' trusts are core to fan bodies.
- On-the-record meetings with the club take place on a regular basis with board involvement. Relevant key senior club personnel attend. Meetings should be recorded and the recordings stored for later scrutiny.
- Agendas shared ahead of all meetings with fanbase; agendas to be fan led.
- Minutes of all meetings shared within seven days of each meeting with the fanbase. Minutes will list attendees as well as detail actions and timescales and identify the person or groups responsible for each action. Where possible, measurements of success for each action should be listed. Minutes to be taken by fans and published. This will help with transparency. If there are disputes about the accuracy or emphasis of any section of the proposed minutes, that section of the meeting's recording should be published alongside the minutes to enable fans to make their own decisions.
- Where it is necessary to share confidential information, that confidentiality must be respected by all parties. Confidentiality extends to the entire WHUST board, not just to the individual attending the relevant meeting. The minutes should include a brief description of the nature of the confidential information shared and the reasons for its confidentiality. However, there must be care and consideration around the use of confidentiality. The reason why confidentiality is required must be proven. Transparency must not be compromised.
- Rationale for decisions and positions taken by supporters and clubs to be shared (transparency).
- Consultation to take place before decisions are made, particularly if relevant to fans.
- Supporter reps to be consulted about the strategic priorities of the club.
- Agreed timescales for responses each way must be clearly communicated.
- MOU, standing orders, codes of conduct, dispute resolution processes and other relevant documentation must be agreed by supporters and the club. Documents jointly reviewed at least once per season. Documents must be published.
- There must be a clear and simple process for enabling fans to have a veto over decisions concerning the core heritage items that the Fan Led Review said should be protected by a golden share.
- Fans to be part of the club's communication process, particularly when relevant to supporters. This can be through variety of methods ('dry run' testing and feedback, meeting discussions,



email responses, etc). Club to respond to supporter feedback and share relevant monitoring and measurement data (with necessary confidentiality respected).

- There must be frequent fan representative feedback, independent of league assessments, to measure fans' satisfaction with how engagement is working in practice. FSA may be able to help here. Involvement of club in assessment should focus on how to further develop/improve.
- Intellectual property – if created by a fan group, is the property of the fan group and not the club.
- A system for supporter feedback/sharing of concerns/thoughts/issues to be in place to fast-track issues that arise between meetings. Supporter reps to work to set up this process and monitor impact. For consultation to be impactful and meaningful – time needs to be given to this part of the process and genuine consideration of fan views made clear by club.

FANS' AND CLUB'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Fans to independently appoint members to supporter involvement body and any subcommittees or working groups, not the club. Fans and the club may appoint different people to different workstreams so the burden of work is shared and expertise can be brought in. Any working groups or subcommittees on key issues, such as ticketing or match-day experience, to be established by the supporter involvement body.
- Membership of the supporter involvement body, any terms of office, lengths of service and restrictions on any of these to be set by supporters, independent of the club.
- Supporter involvement body to seek to represent the diverse nature of the fanbase.
- Fan representatives to commit to key standards of professionalism, confidentiality and a commitment to work together and to achieve consensus where possible.
- There must be an agreed code of conduct for all reps and a mechanism for monitoring compliance and dealing with any breaches of the code.
- There must be agreed routes for issue escalation and dispute resolution that are clearly communicated.

The final plan for developing fan engagement must be agreed by fans and club.



Focus on broadcasting

WHUST board member Mark Inskipp sits on the FSA Broadcasting Working Group that discusses concerns from supporters' groups. The aims of the group are to:

- Minimise the disruption caused by games moved for broadcast to match going fans
- Voice supporter sentiment to decision-makers at Sky Sports, TNT Sport and the Premier League
- Hold feet to the fire when anti-social selections made and deadlines missed.

Many of the frustrations are the same as previous years. The Premier League seem unwilling to find a solution. For the past 18 months we have been in discussion to try and ensure that supporters are considered for the next round of broadcasting rights tendering post the 2024–2025 season.

We are campaigning for better communicating of broadcast fixture arrangements. Timely communication and giving reasons for delays announcing fixture changes are essential. Supporters incur great expense to travel to fixtures and need as much notice as possible.

The FSA has consistently made representations to the Premier League regarding the lead times for confirming such fixtures. The FSA would like to see an agreed advanced notice period, currently granted as a courtesy to supporters, become a recognised condition of the fixture picks by broadcasters.

The FSA recognises that often the announcement of revised fixtures can be delayed by perhaps only one fixture that occurs in that period. There should be a commitment to releasing the remaining fixtures in time while communicating the issues with the outstanding fixtures.

Double and short-notice fixture changes is a headache. There is a recurring problem over the moving of fixtures for a second time, at short notice, from an already published fixture date. Supporters find it unacceptable that such a situation persists, the result is they are often unable to attend the rearranged fixtures and can be left significantly out-of-pocket.

If there are outside agencies to approach, such as Safety Advisory Groups, the police and Broadcasters, then the FSA is keen to enter into dialogue with them alongside the Premier League.

Over the past seven years, the FSA has raised whether a compensation scheme/ fund could be set up to recompense those supporters who experience financial loss as a result of short-notice fixture changes. The FSA would like to explore the possibility of a scheme that would see, as a minimum, supporters refunded the entire value of a ticket should a game have to be re-scheduled having already been scheduled into a dedicated slot. Further consideration should also be given to the transport losses incurred by supporters in this scenario.

Greater examination is needed to limit the number of fixture changes due to the impact of European competitions. More consideration must given to avoiding picking teams in certain broadcasting slots when there is an increased likelihood that game would have to move again due to one club's participation in Europe.

Club and supporter consultation on fixture schedules is inadequate. With the implementation of the Fan Engagement Standards, we wish to understand the scope for clubs to enable their local supporter input to proposed broadcasting schedule changes. This would offer direct feedback on the impact such changes have on supporters.

Sunday is no longer special. It was announced in the summer that the new broadcasting rights would increase the amount of Sunday broadcasted games, increasing from 200 to 270. Some of the increase was the proposal to broadcast all matches not played on a Saturday at 3pm.

This is typically those matches that are moved to a Sunday due to a club participating in one of the Europa competitions. This is something of particular interest to West Ham supporters given our involvement in the Europa League and Conference League over the past three seasons.



From a broadcaster's perspective, a package of all Sunday matches that would be scheduled over unique time slots is worth paying more for than matches shown concurrently. However this could mean matches being played at midday and 8pm if five matches were scheduled. This is unacceptable to match going supporters and we lobbied hard to ensure that Sunday matches would only be scheduled at 2:00pm and 4:30pm (unless adjusted due to policing requirements).

When the details of the final broadcasting packages were announced in November any matches moved to a Sunday not specifically selected for broadcast would all be shown at the same time.

If we're successful in Dublin then we won't be playing on a Thursday and perhaps we will get more Saturday 3pm matches.

West Ham currently sit at the bottom of the table for home matches played at 3pm on Saturday this season. The number of Premier League Saturday 3pm home matches played or scheduled until 29 February 2024 are:

Burnley	7	Brighton & Hove	4
Man United	7	Crystal Palace	4
Fulham	6	Luton Town	4
Man City	6	Notts Forest	4
Newcastle	6	Sheffield	4
Brentford	5	Spurs	4
Everton	5	Aston Villa	3
Wolves	5	Liverpool	3
Arsenal	4	Chelsea	2
Bournemouth	4	West Ham	2



Equality and diversity among fans

WHUST has been concerned that members of local communities feel that they are not welcome or it would be unsafe for them to attend the London Stadium. As a result, in discussion with the then FSA rep (and ex-West Ham player) Anwar Uddin, we developed a proposal aimed at engaging members of communities of South Asian heritage in the local area. We then contacted the club in August 2022 to seek support and eventually were offered a meeting with Jake Heath (Supporters' Liaison Officer) in October 2022.

The proposal was to meet with members of the community to listen to their concerns and try to pull together a group that would develop an action plan to address and allay those concerns and promote supporting West Ham to members of those local communities.

The response to our proposal was that it didn't align with the club's ethos and values and needed more work and suggesting a further meeting. No meeting took place, despite our suggesting dates. We postponed the intended event from the 2022-23 season to the 2023-24 season and again contacted Jake Heath in December

2023. His response was to ask for times to meet the following week. We gave times. He did not respond and no meeting took place.

Once again, he reiterated that our proposal was not aligned with the club's ethos and values, but did not specify how.

In addition, we had subsequently developed our proposal into a bid to the Premier League Fans Fund for a grant to support the work. All bids have to be submitted by clubs. Jake declined to submit our bid.

In the past year the club has received the Premier League Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Standard award for its work in this area. Although the Premier League report has not been shared with fan groups, we believe the one area of criticism was the club's engagement with fans. This was an opportunity to improve that and is another example of the club refusing to engage with its fans.

Nevertheless, with the cooperation of other fan groups and national groups such as Show Racism the Red Card and Kick it Out, we still plan to proceed.

Stadium safety

Stadium safety, the long queues to get on the island and the even longer queues to leave have long been a concern. But Newham Council does not want to listen.

Newham operates the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) for London Stadium. Every council with a football club has a SAG. Most have fans represented on it. Newham refuses despite repeated requests. Instead, Newham says it has arranged with the club that fans tell the SAG chair their concerns in a pre-meeting and the chair raises those issues at the SAG.

But the SAG chair has been unable to arrange meetings, or the club pulls the plug at the last minute.

In effect, WHUST has been deprived of any input. The minutes then report there were no issues raised by fans – in reality we've been denied a seat at the table. Newham Council fudged direct

questions from WHUST on a range of questions. We even challenged: "Is it true that the chair of Newham SAG is not a football fan and has shown no interest in football? If so, is someone with no interest in football the best choice to chair the SAG?"

Newham answered: "The focus of the SAG meeting is safety at the stadium and covers a wide range of issues related to all the events held there. This is not only football but concerts, athletics and the Major League Baseball match this summer. It is also important to state that the chair's expertise lies in safety rather than the events."

The interim chief operating officer of the proposed new regulator for English football is the former CEO of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority. WHUST wrote to him on his first day at work raising the issue of ensuring SAGs such as Newham's guarantee a seat for the supporters' trust. Fingers crossed.

Women at matches

Over the past year we have met with the club and Football Supporters Europe to try to improve the matchday experience for women and girls attending games. This included security searches both here and abroad, and stewarding and reporting systems at London Stadium and at away games.

We invited the Designated Football Officer, PC Sheldon, to a meeting for fans to learn about the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy and how it would impact in a positive way on the match day experience.

Further to that, PC Sheldon joined WHUST board member Rachel McFetridge for an interview about his role with West Ham United.

WHUST met with the club and proposed a number of strategies to promote International Women's Day. Unfortunately, the proposals were scrapped at the last minute for another initiative that coincided with that date.

We met Charlotte from Her Game Too to discuss ways to tackle sexism and online bullying faced by women who are football enthusiasts. We continue to support their aims of wanting women and girls to feel safe and confident discussing football online without the fear of being subjected to sexist abuse.



Police presence

WHUST liaises with the police through a variety of different initiatives. Each football club has a Dedicated Football Officer (DFO) and WHUST is in regular contact with West Ham's DFO PC Andy Sheldon. We invited Andy to speak to our women's group, Intrepid Irons, on violence against women and girls. We also carried out an interview with him, which we published online.

But policing goes beyond our local coppers and WHUST has been active within the Met Police's Independent Advisory Group (IAG) on policing football.

IAGs are a product of the Macpherson Report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, published in 1999. It recommended several legislative changes, including a process to create a partnership with all sections of the community, encouraging the active involvement of people from diverse groups.

The first IAG was established by the Met Police in 1998 in anticipation of the publication of the Macpherson Report the following year. More than 20 years on, IAGs are a recognised part of how the Met Police engages with communities to improve the police service for London. Apart from football, there are IAGs for people with disabilities, gun crime (Trident Advisory Group), race and LGBTQ+.

THE LAMBETH WALK

The Met's football IAG is based in Lambeth and covers the whole of Greater London. The Met is responsible for policing any football match within its jurisdiction, irrespective of competition or league. The IAG allows supporter representatives from every football club in the 32 London boroughs to offer independent advice, to help the police provide a better service in their communities.

These meetings provide ongoing constructive dialogue between the Met Police, British Transport Police and football fans. The IAG provides opportunities for questions to be answered, for strategies to be developed, discussed, explained and agreed and to develop common understandings around policing issues.

The IAG is designed to be a forum where supporter representatives can together act as a 'critical friend' to the police. We can offer advice and review police policy, procedure and practices relating to football. The IAG is not party political and draws on a wide range of volunteers with a variety of perspectives.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Officers from different parts of the police attend different meetings to outline their areas of expertise. For example, the terrorism officer was unable to attend a meeting in the autumn due to a heightened risk of terrorist activity. He was able to attend in January.

While much of his presentation is public information and published online, meeting attendees are subject to the Official Secrets Act and agree not to share details until approved minutes are circulated.



The IAG is led by members of independent supporters' associations and trusts and provides a structured opportunity to build a working partnership with the Metropolitan and British Transport Police. Two members of the board of WHUST are registered with the IAG to ensure West Ham fans are always represented. Topics covered at IAG meetings include:

- Categorisation of fixtures according to risk level
- Use of body-worn equipment and facial recognition technology
- Legislative changes affecting the policing of football
- Division of responsibilities between stewards and police
- Drugs at grounds
- Violence against women and girls
- Racism/anti-semitism/homophobia

OUR STRONG VIEWS

WHUST believes in the "anytime, anyplace, anywhere" principle of policing and law enforcement. The law of the land should apply equally to everyone, everywhere, whenever. The same standards of evidence should be required for convictions and the same sentences handed down whether the offence takes place at football, cricket or Royal Ascot.

WHUST does not support the use of football banning orders, for example. These require a lower level of evidence and are easier for the police to secure than convictions for mainstream offences. WHUST opposes special laws or tougher sentences for football fans – it is victimisation.

WHUST might have strong views on certain policing issues, but the IAG is not a place for grandstanding – it is for calm, sensible communication. We always seek the best available compromise that causes the least impact on fans. We make a small, and often unseen, difference.



Ticketing confusion

The number one priority for West Ham should be to improve its ticketing communication. It has become a standing joke, and the past year has seen some of the worst examples.

On 1 December 2023, the club sent out an email giving the date of the Freiburg match as a November date. But that wasn't the first time this season they'd got it wrong. On 3 October the club sent an email saying Notts Forest tickets were available but gave the date and kick-off time of the Everton game.

The club also sends emails urging people to buy tickets when they have already bought them. On 10 October, it sent a warning to season ticket holders who had already bought the three-match European package: "You will have 48 hours to purchase your own seat before the window closes on Thursday 12 October at 9am."

Season ticket holders who had joined the home cup scheme received a text message after 6pm on Monday 11 December 2023, warning: "Your priority Home Cup Scheme window for our upcoming FA Cup third round fixture against Bristol City on Sunday 7 January will open tomorrow at 10am. Secure your seat here."

But as members of the European Cup scheme had been told in October to buy

their tickets and this had turned out to be inaccurate, most assumed the latest missive must be wrong too. WHUST sought clarity. We wrote at 8am on 12 December asking for an answer before the alleged 10am window opened.

Ticketing boss Nicola Keye replied before 9am: "You do need to purchase your ticket for this game. It is due to Bristol City taking their full allocation of 9k tickets, resulting in several thousand supporters needing to relocate for the game."

The problem is, if you reply to these ticketing emails you get two automated messages from supporter services and a day later they send an actual reply stating: "As your query is regarding Ticketing, please email the Ticket Office." Supporter Services make no effort to pass on your query internally.

WHUST has repeatedly offered to be crash test dummies for ticketing emails coming from the club. And we've explained that ticketing emails should come from a ticketing email address so replies go to the ticketing department. Even if they can't do that, Supporter Services should pass on ticketing queries to the ticketing department.

We first offered this as a free bit of help back in August 2022. We believe we can help the

It was that man again last night as Tomáš Souček secured our progression to the knockout stages of the UEFA Europa League with a 1-0 win against FK TSC Bačka Topola.

In a game of very few opportunities for either side, a great cross in the last minute from substitute Maxwell Cornet found Souček in the box to volley in from close range.

Now, it all comes down to our final group match against SC Freiburg on Thursday 14 November to determine who tops the group, and who skips the last 32. Tickets are available now for a huge European night under the lights from £35 for adults and from just £15 for juniors.

We are also back in Premier League action this Sunday as Crystal Palace make the trip to London Stadium. You can still join us as Season Ticket Holders are currently relisting their tickets on Ticket Exchange leaving some of the best seats available to you.

Come on you Irons.

[BUY TICKETS](#)

club communicate better. But it seems they would rather come across as incompetent than accept help from fans.

We have raised a number of concerns with the club. The reduction in the number of season tickets and price rises suggest the club wants to move away from the mass season ticket model it needs to implement to bring wary fans to the unwanted stadium. The club now wants to fill the big games with tourists paying full face value.

The trouble with this is, like so many London venues, tourists want to turn up, take a selfie and leave at half-time and tick it off their bucket list. The club wants to make money from ticketing, not use ticketing to let real fans fill the stadium.

WHUST's ticketing manifesto, set out below and overleaf, is well worth a read.

WHUST TICKETING MANIFESTO

West Ham United should offer the following:

A membership package

Football offers season tickets. Other sports offer memberships.

The memberships come with:

- Priority access to tickets
- Members areas with higher quality, discounted food and drink
- Guest tickets to bring non-members into members areas for certain fixtures
- Member events – lunches, dinners, meet the players/coach/CEO events (ticketed to manage numbers)
- Member-exclusive clothing and accessories
- Member forums/interest groups

West Ham should offer a full membership service, with members receiving the best benefits. It cannot continue that a football fan

from abroad, in London and wanting to attend any game but who ends up at the London Stadium for a single match (or just the first half) pays the same for a pie and pint as a genuine West Ham fan who attends home and away matches. Members deserve better.

The NFC (near-field communication) ticket could be linked to getting a discounted price at bars. Or we have a membership card with credit added. The club could add funds to each member's NFC /card. Members could also top up their account from their own bank account and use that to get the discounted prices. Could the current "club cash" be used?

It might be worth considering adding packages to membership – such as 'pie and a pint' member or 'real ale' member – and

continued overleaf ►



WHUST TICKETING MANIFESTO

only they are allowed to certain kiosks and must use their membership card/NFC to secure their discount. But members must get cheaper deals than non-members and tourists. And this must be in fiat currency (GBP£), not a cryptocurrency.

There should also be members' merchandise or merchandise that showed you'd been a member for X number of years or had attended every match in a tournament or in a season.

Those who signed up the first year after the move could get a 'founding member' pin badge. If the club offered merchandise only available to those who the club could confirm had attended or had held a season ticket for X number of years, these would sell. The club would get goodwill from the members – and goodwill opens members' pockets.

Technology should be used to its full advantage. Spending power, or access to priority vendors/queues/areas, could be added to an individual's NFC ticket. The NFC software from Fortress can do all of this. Delaware say that their POS systems can easily integrate to handle it. The club must use the technology available to provide members with better deals or faster queues.

Welcome pack

It is rude that the club does not send new season ticket purchasers any form of welcome pack or even a welcome email. This is a must. A welcome pack should include a mix of goodies and practical information, explaining:

- How the NFC ticket works
- How to transfer an individual match to another person if you cannot attend
- How the exchange works
- How the points system works
- How to purchase tickets not covered by the season ticket
- How to subscribe to the fixtures calendar
- The club's app
- The membership benefits and discounts that apply
- Membership exclusive merchandise
- A yearbook with facts and stats including a page on each of the previous season's results, player profiles etc
- A pen, keyring, maybe a card holder or wallet, all in a presentation box

Certainty of communication

If the club sends out an email saying tickets will be issued seven days before the match, then the club must ensure that happens. Similarly, instructions or replies to queries sent to fans must be checked before being sent and be correct. Few fans trust club communication currently because too much of it turns out to be inaccurate. That must change.

The club must also have a clearly stated policy detailing what will happen when things go wrong – to include escalation and resolution. How does the club tell either everyone, or specific

groups or identified individuals, that their ticket has gone wrong and how that will be resolved?

And what happens on the day if the NFC ticketing system goes down or there are power cuts. The club should share details of the contingency plans with WHUST and publish the basic details to reassure fans.

Accessibility of communication

The club must communicate with fans in as many different ways and in different formats as required by supporters. People learn in different ways and each one of us prefers different communication methods, including video, graphics, words and audio. And not everyone is using the same technology or on the same social media channels. The club must communicate through as many channels and technologies as required.

The club must meet the needs of those who are visually impaired, have learning difficulties or other specific requirements. But it should also make communications available in languages other than English, particularly those widely spoken within the local community.

Privacy of communication

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has investigated West Ham several times in recent seasons for data breaches. We need to be sure that fans' personal information is safe and West Ham's procedures are under better control.

Timing of communication

No major changes to ticketing, whether that's new technology, changed rules or different procedures, should be announced without prior consultation with WHUST and a thorough testing in advance.

The club must have an adequately resourced and robust 'what if' back-up plan ready for when things go wrong. Ticket office staff must be available for at least five hours after ticketing information is sent out and all the next day. This means that if ticketing information is sent out on Friday at 5pm, the ticket office contact centre team needs to be available Friday night until 10pm and all day Saturday.

Omnichannel communication

The club should move towards a truly omnichannel ticketing communication so fans can ask questions via social media or SMS and follow up by email or phone call without having to start from the beginning each time.

That means the club needs a system in place to identify fans when they use each communication channel and pick up their query where they left off.

continued overleaf ►



WHUST TICKETING MANIFESTO

Simpler away ticket allocations

The points system for tickets not covered by season tickets is not clear to many fans. Some away ticketing issues, such as the points allocation for an individual match, are not shown within the ticketing purchasing website ([eticketing.co.uk](https://www.westham.co.uk/eticketing)). The club regularly makes match tickets available to allcomers too late for them to be taken up.

The club's system incorrectly archived priority points from last season. This is not the first time this happened.

Tickets are allocated to so many different groups – away season ticket holders, bondholders, Club London, ballot, players/club and general season ticket holders – under different priorities and the numbers available in each category are rarely clear.

We need a more transparent system. The target should be for the club's entire ticketing allocation to be used up, with fans given the chance to purchase tickets in time to arrange travel/accommodation for the matches.

The replacement allocation system must also remove the incentive to book tickets with no intention of attending just to get more points and priority for the big games.

Members need to have a clearer understanding of how to build points to get tickets and what chance they have of getting tickets for each match. There should be a clear, dynamic, visual graphic of the points required, the dates/times that changes were made and the predicted dates/times when the number of points required might be lowered.

It should be possible to buy tickets from that page – it should be within or linked to the ticketing purchasing website. The club should send notifications when away tickets are on sale.

Smart ticket exchange

Season ticket holders wishing to buy additional seats should be able to select a seat and message that ticket-holder direct to see if they would transfer their seat for a specific game. The current system shows only unallocated seats or those on the club's exchange, yet other seats are often empty come match day.

We need incentives to encourage ticket holders to pass on their tickets if they are not going to be able to attend. Too many seats at 'sold-out' games remain empty when other supporters would have come had they the chance.

Fair refunds policy

West Ham should produce and publish a fair refunds policy. We have had games changed for so many reasons recently – Covid, death of the Queen, broadcasting, police, European competitions – and there have been major engineering works and strikes that have prevented travelling fans from getting to matches. There

could be a whole host of other reasons, from terrorism to adverse weather such as flooding.

When a fan buys a ticket for a match but, subsequently, external factors, through no fault of their own, make attendance impossible, the club should refund the ticket. The club has the ability to sell that ticket on to someone who can attend or to supply that ticket to the local community to increase local participation in the club.

Targets and standards

The club should publish targets for response times and resolutions to ticketing issues. It should monitor these and privately share the detailed data with WHUST and discuss the causes and possible solutions when pinch points or bottlenecks arise. Performance against the main agreed standards should be published to the entire fanbase quarterly with an explanation if performance was poor.

WHUST's proposals for targets are:

1. The most urgent enquiries need to be resolved within a two-hour target, with a four-hour maximum. That means a minimum of 85% of urgent enquiries should be resolved within two hours and the remaining 15% within four hours.
2. A minimum 85% of standard enquiries need to be resolved within a 24-hour target and the remaining 15% within 48 hours maximum.
3. All general enquiries should be resolved within five working days.
4. Where there is a complaint, the duty ticketing manager (person on duty must be identified at all times) should deal with it first and, if escalated, the ticketing director/deputy should deal with it. The entire complaints procedure should take 24 hours.

Urgent enquiries are those involving a home game within the next five days or an away game within the next two weeks. During the season ticket renewal window, all season ticket queries are urgent.

Standard enquiries are non-urgent queries concerning general NFC/phone/technology issues, season ticket and claret membership enquires, ticketing transfer/exchange queries.

General enquiries are public enquiries to the club for information on ticketing.



Football Supporters Europe

Given our involvement in European football for the last three seasons, we meet regularly with Football Supporters Europe (FSE) to discuss issues that impact supporters across the whole of Europe and also for individual briefing sessions before some of our Europa matches. We are sometimes joined by someone from the club/LS185 and the police match commander before any high-risk UEFA match.

We had meetings before the semi-final matches against Alkmaar and before the Anderlecht and Gent matches in previous rounds, details of which are on our website.

We also liaised with FSE about the lack of coaches to return supporters to the city centre after our match against FCSB in Bucharest.

Our recent meeting was to discuss our matches against Olympiakos, after which we were able to publish the reasons and details for the mandatory coaches to and from the ground.

EUROPA CONFERENCE FINAL, PRAGUE
FSE facilitated a joint session with supporter organisations from the four semi-finalists in the 2023 Europa Conference – Alkmaar/ West Ham and Basel/Fiorentina – to outline supporter arrangements for the two clubs reaching the final.

FSE went through a review of the UEFA presentation previously given to the four clubs, outlining ticketing arrangements, location of fan parks, travel logistics and security and entry to the stadium.

Should we qualify for the 2024 final, UEFA recognises we will have the largest following of supporters and will allocate us the largest fan park – Letná Park – for our supporters. Due to travel logistics from the fan parks,



this will mean West Ham supporters will be in the home end of the ground, rather than being allocated to the notional home and away clubs in the draw.

INCIDENT AT ALKMAAR

After our match at Alkmaar, some of their supporters attacked an area for friends and family of West Ham players. WHUST requested the FSE obtain from UEFA a copy of the full decision of UEFA's control, ethics and disciplinary body regarding what happened during the match and particularly after the final whistle. The UEFA match delegate's report said: "Despite a good sense of cooperation leading to the match, the way a major issue at the end of the match was handled was inadequate."

Despite AZ Alkmaar requesting police support, there was a delay in response by the police due to police deployment and knowledge of the ground.

It was acknowledged a lack of security allowed AZ Alkmaar supporters to reach West Ham fans. This included not preventing the movement of ultras towards the main stand.

In response to the UEFA investigations, Alkmaar stated: "AZ Alkmaar acknowledged that it placed a dozen stewards at the segregation gate to prevent the supporters from forcing this gate, but due to incredibly large group and explosion of violence, our (AZ) stewards only could act to a certain level before their own safety was in danger."

AZ Alkmaar said the riot squad was not ready to act directly because of faults in their preparation and directions. The report of findings said: "There were no police or

security personnel to prevent the upcoming attack and situation from escalating, or to protect adequately and immediately WHUFC Cat 1 supporters."

This isn't good enough – it left West Ham supporters at high risk. WHUST will ask further questions:

- What went wrong with safety planning?
- What went wrong with the police response?
- Why were AZ Alkmaar supporters able to migrate in such large numbers with no response?
- Was the category of the game, medium risk, correct? What was the basis for this?

The full report is published [on our website](#).

FOOTBALL FANS CONGRESS 2023

The European Football Fans Congress 2023 was held in Manchester and WHUST was involved in submitting a motion on arrangements for fans at UEFA European finals, which was adopted at the annual general meeting.

The motion – proposed by WHUST, Arsenal Supporters Trust and Manchester City Football Club Supporters Club (1949) – said:

- The ticket allocations provided in 2023 still resulted in many supporters of the clubs involved being unable to attend the games, with particular problems following the staging of the Europa Conference final at a very small venue in Prague.
- The FSE should be given a say in the selection process for the host stadia.
- Finals should be staged in large stadia with good public transport links.
- There should be a policy decision that at least 66% of the stadium capacity is made available to supporters of the two competing teams.