

BLUES TRUST

Chair's Annual Report 2022

Last year's report started with optimism that Blues were progressing following the resignation of Dong Ren and the appointment of a new manager with Blues at heart. However, as the season played out in an all too familiar manner it became clear that: Lee Bowyer was not the answer; the improving communication from the management team at Blues was short-lived; the ground was not being repaired; and the ownership continued to remain a mystery.

The unrest amongst fans brought protests and calls for new owners. It seems the pressure, financial difficulties and evidence regarding Mr King's involvement at St. Andrew's did make the owners uncomfortable enough to entertain offers for the club and ground.

Since the end of last season, we have heard from prospective new owners with varying amounts of believability. We are currently awaiting the EFL's response to the Richardson/Lopez deal that would, we understand, give them control of the club's affairs with a minority shareholding and a two and a half year period where stage payments will see the remaining shares transferred to them. Whilst not as ideal as a clean takeover, it seems this structure of deal is the only way the owners will sell.

Whilst the uncertainty off the pitch remains, the 2022/23 season has started well. How we do on the pitch is what elates us or depresses us. The recent togetherness and evident team spirit under Eustace lifts my heart and seems to be a recipe for performance and points. Congratulations to everyone involved on the playing and recruitment side of things for this most welcome positive change.

My glass is half full at the moment. I am hoping, despite the length of time it is taking, that the Richardson/Lopez bid for ownership of the club will be completed and the upturn in the team's performance and recruitment policy will continue as the off-field issues get sorted. This will not be a quick fix, but like many Blues fans I am happy to be patient through a period of rebuilding sustainably. So long, of course, that we can see progress and that fans are treated as important and valuable stakeholders in our club.

This year Blues Trust has been following through the work on the Fan Led Review of Football. We have seen the Report by Tracey Crouch MP published, and Blues Trust has been working with the Football Supporters Association and Shabana Mahmood, MP for Ladywood, to get the recommendations implemented. Blues Trust has met with the club management team to discuss implementing recommendations prior to

legislation. The discussions with the club were positive, although latterly these have stalled with the current owners unwilling to take any decisions about the future of the club as the bid for control plays out.

The Trust Board has met nine times over the past year. We have concentrated on publishing facts rather than rumour regarding the takeover saga and, internally, have been planning for a future with our club under new ownership. The Trust's role, by necessity over recent years, has been investigating and calling out poor stewardship by the owners. We are hopeful for happier times under new ownership and a situation where the Trust will be welcomed into a fan engagement structure that will influence how our club is run.

The Trust has recently updated its Vision and Mission Statement, reached out to other fan groups to help strengthen the voice of Blues supporters, begun discussions with #HerGameToo about joint working to call out sexism in football and started initiatives and projects that we feel will broaden the Trust's appeal to fans. The Trust wants to encourage existing and new members to take part in moving the Trust forward and being part of a meaningful engagement and collaboration with our club.

Blues Trust remains a low income, low spend organisation. The Trust's work is carried out by Board members and Associates on a voluntary basis, with contributions from members in the form of articles for publication and ideas put forward. Once again, a special mention to Mitchell Bray for his regular 'in off the post' articles throughout the year.

My sincere thanks to all who have given their services and their time to support Blues Trust over the last year. We could not exist without you.

KRO

Cliff Horrocks

Chair, Blues Trust