

MARINERS TRUST

CONNECTING CLUB & COMMUNITY

Programme Notes. GTFC v Lincoln City – 18th August 2018

Written by Dave Roberts

As you may know the Mariners Trust are full members of Supporters Direct (SD) and also affiliate members of FSF (FSF). Although the two organisations work very closely together there is a distinct difference between their roles and objectives.

The FSF is the democratic organisation representing the rights of fans and arguing the views of football supporters in England and Wales. The FSF have led on campaigns such as safe standing, twenty is plenty, fans for diversity and watching football is not a crime.

SD are much more good governance of clubs to enable supporter involvement whether that be through full ownership, supporter director(s) or simply fan engagement. There are 185 Trusts in the UK and within the league structure there are four that are fan owned Wimbledon, Newport, Exeter City and Wycombe Wanderers whilst there are around 45 with the non-league structure which includes the likes of Wrexham, Darlington and FC United. There are around 10 clubs in the league that have supporter director involvement of which of course we are one, but many of the Trusts also exist because they have no involvement in the decision making at all and little fan engagement. Good examples of these are Blackpool, Coventry, Leeds and Hull and as you know the issues the fans of these clubs have had with their owners in recent years have been horrendous. It may not always seem this way to some, but SD's view is that our level of fan engagement is one of the best outside of those clubs that are fan owned, god forbid we ever have to go through some of the issues the likes of Blackpool have been through.

Although the two organisations are autonomous there are area of overlap especially when trying to influence official bodies such as the EFL and the FA as well of course the government. Discussions have been taking place for a while about whether there would be benefits from merging the two organisations to create a modern, effective and powerful single voice for football fans nationwide. As a result, each organisation have put motions to their members about merging and have one single operating board. After long debate this motion was carried, but by no means unanimously, and although we voted for it was very much on the understanding that the two distinct identities and objectives are retained albeit under one single umbrella.

As reported in previous programme notes we have been working very closely with SD recently to review and fine tune our working arrangements with the club and this has included a very open and constructive dialogue with club. We will be in a position to expand further shortly but the agenda has been very much based on the survey conducted earlier in the year and so please be assured we are listening to supporter views and taking them forward.

Finally, we are really disappointed to have been told that the club has had an official FA warning due to homophobic chanting. This is in addition to an imminent hearing regarding the Port Vale match. As we know the vast majority of our fans are absolutely fantastic and second none in league but unfortunately, we have some who are ruining our reputation and as far as we are concerned any form of homophobic chanting, physical or verbal violence or general anti-social behaviour has no place at Blundell Park and we do not want anyone behaving in this way to attend.

Enjoy the game and let's be loud and proud for the lads. UTM

