

Programme Notes v Carlisle

Welcome to the staff, players and directors of Carlisle United for today's game, it's just such a shame we cannot add supporters to that list. As has been well documented we now have the bizarre situation that we have EFL permission, subject to local authority sanction, to allow fans into hospitality in the lounges to watch the game on the screens, but they are not allowed outside.

Furthermore, they are not allowed to watch the game through the window in McMenemy's, you really couldn't make it up! On the back of this we will be able to open the Trust bar to a maximum of 30 people which we are happy to do if there is a demand for it. Quite understandably, many don't fancy it because the thought of the game taking place within yards of them but not being able to watch is too much to bear. Others like the idea of being able to watch with fellow supporters despite the strange situation. The good thing is it will give hours for our fantastic bar manageress, Sharon.

We continue to support the #letfansin campaign through the FSA and although Covid restrictions are getting more stringent again we remain convinced that football can very safely manage socially distanced fans. A massive amount of work has gone into these across the country and compared to other social situations still taking place this would surely be just as safe. As with a lot of things at the moment there are lots of contradictions, our friends and neighbours Cleethorpes Town, two miles away, are allowed 500 fans in to watch their games, that surely cannot be right.

As we write these notes, we still have no further news on any rescue package and the debate around football reform rumbles on. What is clearly happening is that those with certain agendas are trying to take advantage of clubs in crisis and dangle what looks like a nice juicy carrot but closer inspection shows it is riddled with holes. What was particularly concerning is it has emerged that there was the proposal from FA chairman Greg Clarke back in March which proposed the formation of Premiership 2, introduction of B teams into lower leagues and the combining of EFL leagues 1 & 2 with the National League. This, together with the proposal from EFL chairman Rick Parry which, among other things, recommended that two EFL clubs be relegated to the National League without discussing with the club's shows once again that those at the top of football governance have specific agendas that they are driving without consultation. What is desperately needed is a consensus approach that

involves all of the stakeholders, including fans. That is why we support the “sustain the game” campaign co-ordinated by the FSA. You can read more about this here, <https://thefsa.org.uk/our-work/sustainthegame/> but these are the key principles:

1. Protect our clubs – football clubs are community assets and an important expression of individual and local identity, they deserve legal protection and urgent support to secure their future;
2. Transparency – everyone has a right to know who owns their club, and how clubs and the authorities operate. Owners are custodians of clubs on behalf of all of us;
3. Financial controls – fans want rules with real teeth which are independently enforced, clubs and leagues can’t be left to regulate themselves.
4. Strengthen the pyramid – football as a whole is wealthy, but we need a smarter and fairer use of the money in the game to encourage sustainability.
5. Supporter engagement – fans are the lifeblood of the game, they need a voice in their clubs and on all issues that affect them and their communities.

The government, as part of their manifesto, pledged to support this but as yet we have yet to see any significant progress. The need for this has long been evident and Covid has just made it even more urgent. Fingers crossed for progress in the coming weeks.

Enjoy the game.