



## Fan Advisory Board (FAB) Meeting Minutes – 16/10/2024

### Attendees:

#### Rangers FC:

- John Gilligan (JG)
- Natalie Nairn (NN)
- Greg Marshall (GM)

#### Fan Advisory Board (FAB):

- Stuart Langan (SL)
- Matt Boyd (MB)
- Kelly Johnstone (KJ)
- Gary Ralston (GR)
- Jamie Cook (JC)
- Craig Hannah (CH)
- Fahd Bari (FB)

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### 1. Opening Remarks

John Gilligan (JG) opened the meeting by welcoming the Fan Advisory Board (FAB) and encouraging an open forum. He emphasised his willingness to provide updates and answer questions from the board members.

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### 2. Executive Structure

Stuart Langan (SL) asked about the current interim executive structure of the club. JG stated that perception is a significant challenge for the club and recapped the situation surrounding the Copland renovations. He explained that while the intentions were good—focused on improving facilities for disabled supporters—the project’s scale and duration were underestimated, which led to delays and negativity at the start of the season. With the unexpected departure of Chairman John Bennett, conversations were held between JG and George Letham, and they were asked to step in on an interim basis.

SL queried if there was a conscious decision behind JG coming in as Interim Chairman as opposed to Interim CEO.

JG explained that the title was used to cover the role left vacant by the departing Chairman, though both he and George Letham are involved in leading the organisation on a day to day basis. He added that job titles were not a priority at this stage, but rather, ensuring smooth operations and working on appointing a new CEO is their focus. He stressed that while they are in interim roles, both have extensive business experience, and the club is functioning properly behind the scenes. Once the new CEO and Chairman are appointed, they will not immediately step away and will support the transition to the new incumbents.

SL asked if the appointments would be sequenced, with the Chairman appointed first.

JG confirmed that the Chairman would be appointed first, a professional non-executive position acting as a bridge between the Executive Board and the RIFC Board, overseeing the company. The Chairman will be based in Scotland. He noted that while the Chairman appointment was progressing quickly, the CEO role was more complex, though recruitment efforts were moving swiftly with the help of a recruitment agency. SL commented that the appointment of the CEO is arguably the most important appointment the club has faced in the past decade.

JG also touched upon Creag Robertson's resignation, wishing him well on his next endeavour. He clarified that Robertson would continue to work his notice and that the club is reviewing its overall structure.

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### **3. Fan Engagement Strategy and Plans**

SL discussed the progress of the Fan Advisory Board project. He noted that the FAB had started quickly but, over the past few months, due to the club being in transition, it had become more tactical and reactive. He added that recently the FAB had worked to build a public presence to engage with fans through platforms such as social media and podcasts, though the publication of minutes remains crucial in providing transparency and supporting fan engagement. Kelly Johnstone (KJ) said after the June meeting with the club Exec, the FAB were left disappointed and somewhat surprised that two days after we were told 'all was on track with Copland' the delays were announced with the resulting impacts on fans and the club. We need to rebuild the trust with the club and our credibility with fans.

Gary Ralston (GR) mentioned that the FAB had engaged in informal discussions regarding how and what the FAB should communicate moving forward, and how they could effectively use their voice on issues affecting both the fans and the club.

Greg Marshall (GM) shared his view that collaborating with the FAB provides the club with an opportunity to highlight important fan-related issues and to demonstrate what is being worked on internally.

JG reaffirmed the club's commitment to the Fan Advisory Board and encouraged a collaborative approach. JG commented that he is personally fully committed to ongoing engagement with fans, having met the RSA and other supporter groups recently. He emphasised that it is up to the FAB to identify the areas most important to them and to push for progress in these areas, with the club ready to support and facilitate.

SL agreed, noting that the FAB is keen to maintain ongoing collaboration with both GM and Natalie Nairn (NN). He also suggested that there should be broader fan engagement activities similar to the previous CEO Fans Forum, ahead of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to ensure greater fan representation before the shareholder meeting.

GM agreed to take forward the creation of a forum, where supporters could meet with senior figures at the club. He suggested that Rangers and the FAB collaborate to provide input on this process.

NN explained that in the absence of a CEO Fans Forum this summer, the club had focused on regionalised fan engagement activities, recently meeting with Northern Irish supporters and planning an event in the North East to coincide with the Aberdeen fixture to gather feedback from fans in that area.

GM suggested that the FAB could be involved in these regional engagement activities as well.

JG encouraged the FAB to continue thinking of ideas and working closely with the club, stressing that regular communication with supporters is crucial.

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#### **4. Copland Works**

The FAB asked what lessons the club had learned from the Copland Development Works carried out this summer.

JG acknowledged that significant lessons had been learned, noting that the scale of the project was immense. He suggested that in future, if works of this or a larger magnitude were to be undertaken, the club might need to plan for a period without use of the stadium.

SL asked whether having materials on-site earlier would have allowed the project to be completed on time.

JG expressed doubts that even with the materials in place, the project would have been finished within the intended timeline.

SL enquired about the Broomloan works and whether they were still planned for next summer.

JG confirmed that any future works would be carefully considered, and next season must begin at Ibrox.

GM added that the club is currently working on a plan to address the impact on supporters whose views have been affected by the Copland works. He noted that some of these impacts were unexpected, and the club is evaluating options to improve the experience for those affected.

The FAB advised the club to resolve these issues for affected supporters as swiftly as possible.

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#### **5. Ticketing Operations**

SL raised concerns about ticketing operations for European matches, particularly the early issuance of FCFB tickets to CCCS members just prior to the Lyon match, which caused predictable confusion. He also mentioned the issue of smartcards not being activated for European fixtures and the confusion caused by the Lyon email coming from an unfamiliar email address. SL emphasised the significant impact these issues have on supporters.

MB commented that while the new system has improved the online experience, there are still numerous teething issues that need to be addressed.

JG explained that the early release of FCFB tickets was a result of an attempt to allow fans more time to pay for their packages. However, acknowledged that this caused some confusion, and the club is now working to ensure that similar issues do not arise in the future.

GM confirmed that the ticketing team has taken steps to prevent a recurrence of this issue.

JG asked NN to take forward the points raised with the Ticketing team. The FAB expressed their willingness to support the club in improving ticketing operations.

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#### **6. European Away Games Concerns – Olympiacos, Nice, and Manchester United**

GM provided an update on the upcoming European away fixtures. He explained that the club had been in contact with UEFA and Football Supporters Europe (FSE) regarding the Olympiacos match, where local Greek authorities have mandated coach transport for travelling supporters, at a significant cost. GM noted that the club had raised concerns with UEFA, as such mandatory travel goes against the principle of UEFA's price caps for travelling supporters. Unfortunately, this issue is not specifically regulated by UEFA.

SL urged the club to do everything possible to ensure that excessive and unfair costs are not passed onto travelling fans.

GM also highlighted concerns surrounding the Nice fixture. He noted that FSE had warned the club that Nice is one of the most challenging locations for away supporters, with a potential city ban in place to prevent large gatherings. The club is working with authorities to ensure that the fan experience is prioritised.

MB raised concerns about the possibility of mandatory organised travel for the Manchester fixture, as many supporters had already booked their own travel.

GM acknowledged the importance of the fan experience and committed to working with the Safety and Security team to open discussions with Greater Manchester Police and address these concerns in advance.

The FAB strongly advocated for the club to prioritise fan experience in these away fixtures.

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## **7. Communication Strategy**

SL raised concerns regarding the club's communication strategy. He cited the Copland works as an example, noting that fans received most updates from social media rather than official club channels. SL also felt that the club had not sufficiently promoted the world-class disabled facilities in the Copland Stand or defended its position strongly enough on the Old Firm ticketing decision, where the club had done nothing wrong.

GR agreed but acknowledged the pressure the club's communications team is under, suggesting that the issue lies with the overall approach rather than individual team members.

JG agreed that the uncertainty during the summer had been frustrating for both the club and supporters. He reiterated his commitment to improving communication with fans.

MB suggested that the club's statements often feel too cautious and that in cases where fans are united, the club should adopt a stronger position. CH also raised the perception that the club appears to be hesitant in telling the full story and communications could be more geared towards getting the club's own narrative out there.

JG concluded by reaffirming his commitment to transparency and open communication.

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## **8. AGM Plans**

JG confirmed that the AGM will take place in early December at a venue other than Edmiston House, based on feedback from last season. He added that the club's accounts would be released soon.

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## **9. Any Other Business (AOB)**

NN advised that the club have commenced work on the next MyGers points update and advised that the Dynamo Kyiv games poses significant challenges for points application as the tickets were purchased via a third party website and despite numerous requests, Rangers have not received the purchase data.

NN discussed a proposal that has been developed internally to help work around this for feedback.

The FAB raised concerns about kick-off times for both the men's and women's fixtures. Several examples were given – St Johnstone, Hearts and Dundee – and the problems these kick-off times caused for fans, especially with the Subway being unavailable after 6:00pm on a Sunday. It was also raised that the kick-off times for the women's team need to be addressed, with many being scheduled at the same time as the men's team, and others with unreasonable kick-off times.

GM acknowledged the transport issues around the St Johnstone match, explaining that while the club lobbied Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), they were unable to provide additional services due to the Great Scottish Run and a shortage of train drivers. However, First Bus doubled the number of buses available, which was appreciated. GR agreed, particularly regarding women's fixtures.

GM suggested that a meeting between the FAB and Donald Gilles, Managing Director of Women's and Girls' Football at Rangers, would be a positive step. He committed to arranging this meeting.

Fahd Bari (FB) advised that he will be relocating to Abu Dhabi early in 2025 but has agreed that he will continue as a member of the FAB. SL commented that he was delighted FB had agreed to stay on given the excellent perspective he brings, and in addition it will be an added positive that we will have an overseas fan on the FAB going forward.

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*The meeting concluded.*