**Fan Forum**

**Ticketing**

**Online Teams Meeting**

**1800 -1900 2 April 2024**

**In attendance from LFC**: Phil Dutton, Vice President, Ticketing; Yonit Sharabi, Supporter Liaison Officer; Amanda Jacks, Director

**Fans Forum:** Anna Burgess, Supporters Board, Fans Forum Chair, Sam Evans, Paul Jones, Nigel Taylor, Ste Traynor, Tony Fitz, Matt Selby, Ste Martin, Tom McGregor, Rae Morgan

**Apologies** Jack Wycherley

Yonit opened the meeting by welcoming all to the call and thanking them for their attendance.

**AWAY TICKET ALLOCATIONS**

The Forum raised concerns and questions about the fact when away tickets go on sale a lot are visibly missing and a request was made to readdress this to help understanding of tickets – often in ‘prime’ locations – are held back.

The Club explained that these seats are frequently for players friends and families but despite common perceptions very, very few went to sponsors and when they did these would be minimal in number and only the larger sponsors were contractually entitled to these tickets. Further, it’s not uncommon for sponsors to decline or return their allocation.

The Forum had various concerns about the allocations for players:

* The missing seats are generally allocated in areas where regular/younger match goers want to be. i.e. directly behind the goal, where supporters create atmosphere. The forum reminded the club of the PL initiative to seat aways fans close to the pitch.
* Away supporters travel the length and breadth of the country (and Europe), so questioned why the best seats would not be available to those that turn up week after week.
* When supporters cannot be seated in their preferred areas, there could be potential for conflict as a common culture of supporters not using their allocated seats but congregating together in friendship groups.
* An example was given for Villa away as to a good location for Players friends/families which would be less favorable areas for supporters who want to vocally support the team and create an atmosphere.
* That players should not be able to dictate where their families/friends sit and it was amazing that they were
* An example was given of a player’s relative leaving a stadium when the player was subbed leaving a good seat empty for over thirty minutes
* That players may not be covered by the rules and regulations that supporters when using their tickets
* That clubs need to remember the importance of fans (this view was more in the context of their pitch parade after the final game of the season when their families accompanied them meaning special moments between fans and players were spoiled)

**The Club committed to taking these concerns to relevant colleagues** but to manage expectations of the Forum suggested that there would be no changes in terms of where players family and friends would be located at away games. **The Club also committed to being more transparent and sharing the data on away allocations but advised that they would simultaneously share the data showing just how many away tickets, both domestically and for European fixtures were passed on.**  In response, regular away attendees said that regardless of whether or not they were using their own tickets the same people were always seen at away games. The forum again asked that the data be scrutinised to understand if people were always passing their tickets to the same person (due to prev ious restrictions as to who might qualify for away tickets).

In response to a question about what were the consequences for any players found to abuse their allocations, the Forum were told that this happened rarely but when it did, players were held to account.

On certain occasions the host club will ask us to put specific allocations in certain areas for crowd management/stewarding reasons which could justify the positioning of players friends and family who will use the same ticket format as supporters.

In response to a question from the Club about who should get best seats, the Forum felt that it should be on a first come first serve basis - those who were organised and quick enough to get online first when sales went live. The Forum did recognise that it wasn’t unreasonable for players friends/families to want to sit in a group but they still got the best seats which they felt wasn’t reasonable.

The fan forum asked about the new hospitality seats in the Anfield Road and if this had an impact on away allocations. The club confirmed that the number of tickets allocated to the hospitality group had not increased with the new stand being built.

The fan forum asked that the club publish which blocks would be available ahead of a sale so that supporters can arrange where to sit. The club agreed this could be done.

**European Aways**

The Forum requested that the club ask UEFA to inform clubs in European competitions to announce in advance how many away tickets would be made available. Doing so would assist fans in knowing, broadly, whether or not they could be entitled to a ticket thus enabling them to make early travel arrangements and bookings.

**The club committed to taking this away** but advised that it wasn’t always logistically possible for clubs to know in advance how may away tickets they’d release for sale but recognised it would be easier in the Champions League.

The Forum highlighted that with Atalanta the club announced that due to works at the stadium the away allocation would be 750. The club advised supporters not to travel without a ticket and also to provide travel details at the point of purchase, but if the sale is not guaranteed then supporters may end up out of pocket if they do not get a ticket.

**The club committed to looking at the system so supporters should only be asked to put travel details in once they had a ticket.**

To conclude this subject the Forum stressed that in terms of allocations transparency is key. There are never explanations from the Club and a lot of ill will is generated because supporters think tickets go to corporate sponsors.

The Club again said that they would publish this information but stressed again that they would also start publishing data about how tickets are used by supporters. For example that on occasion as many as 65% of tickets are not used by those who had brought them, this needs challenging.

The Forum suggested that those who miss games because of life challenges should not be penalised. Likewise there is always nuance in the suggestion that fans don’t always attend on their ticket and there are lots of genuine reasons for this.

The Club responded by saying that they always consider personal circumstances but what is a legitimate reason for missing a game or using a ticket not in their name – that debate has yet to be had? Similarly, what checks and balances should there be? What would a safety net look like? Again, a wider discussion is required within this group and other forums.

**SUPPORTER/CLUB COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**

The Forum expressed concern around the difficulties of being able to contact club staff who can help with ticketing issues on both a match day and on ticket sale days. There are concerns that the online chat function doesn’t always work or response times are so slow it may mean that supporters lose out on being able to purchase tickets as by the time their queries are responded to, tickets have been removed from online baskets.

It was also reported that the live chat function on ticket sales day doesn’t show if your web browser is Safari but it does on Chrome.

The Forum felt having a dedicated phone number would be advantageous and that nobody wants to stand in a queue for the ticket office on matchday as it’s easier to resolve online or on the phone.

The point was also made that being able to quickly and easily contact club staff would negate issues around turnstiles where the expectation is that stewards can always help but that this isn’t always necessarily the case.

**The Club were not able to directly assist but would refer concerns to the Fan Experience team.**

**Contingency Plans in the Event of External IT Failure**

Having read in the media that there had been an issue with Apple Wallets crashing the Forum asked what contingencies the club had in the event of such failures.

The Club responded that they were not aware of this incident and while they could not specifically confirm what contingencies the club had in the event of Apple Wallets crashing they could reassure the Forum that other plans were in place in the event of various possible IT failures.

**The Club will ask if there are specific contingencies for issues with Apple wallets.**

**Digital Tickets**

The Forum raised concerns that some supporters had experienced concerning issues with digital tickets at away games. The Club are fully aware of these and are carrying out thorough investigations to find the cause of the problems.

The Forum reported that most supporters are accepting that digital ticketing is here to stay but while supporters experience issues they will continue to report those and that until games are problem free there will be negativity and a lack of trust.

For its part the Club accepted that there have been problems and that some clubs need to get better in managing digital ticketing.

**Digital Ticketing at the Carabao Cup Final**

The Forum asked about the issues at Wembley, specifically why our allocation was digital tickets while Chelsea FC had received paper tickets. Brief answers were given and the Forum were directed to a Spirit of Shankly news article which outlined how they had worked with the club to address all concerns fans had raised during and after the Carabao Cup Final. See [here for more details.](https://spiritofshankly.com/carabao-cup-final-follow-up/)

**TICKET PRICE INCREASES**

The Forum asked when the season ticket renewals were going to be sent out and if there were any planned changes around cost and if this would be discussed with the forum. The Club advised that this was not the purpose of the Forum and that they dealt with the Supporters Board in this context but that any questions/issues/concerns could be referred to the Supporters Board via their rep on the Forum, Anna Burgess.

The fan forum made it clear that they would be opposed to any form of increase should this be under consideration.

**FANS FORUM REVIEW**

Anna advised the Forum that the Club are currently working on an ongoing review of how the Fans Forums operated and it has been agreed that we will continue in a similar vein for the foreseeable future.

The Club clarified that the purpose of the forum was to discuss non strategic issues as we have done this evening. Anything strategic needs to be managed through the Supporters Board for which Anna acts as a conduit.

**AOB**

Concerns have been raised about the ticket collection venue for next week’s away fixture v Atalanta with the Forum advising that they had yet to have a conversation\*. It was stressed that the concerns raised by fans were genuine and the Forum confirmed that they had been advised on how to deal with those concerns and will pass the message on.

**Next Ticketing Fans Forum Meeting**

Is due to be held on 14th May

\*These concerns, focussing on supporter safety, were raised by Spirit of Shankly with the Club. The club responded outlining measures taken to, as far as is reasonably possible, ensure the safety of not only travelling supporters collecting their tickets but club staff who work at the collection point. The Club were able to advise that MUFC used the same venue two years ago with no issue whatsoever and that police, both local and our own, were present at the venue for the duration of the collection period. Since the Fans Forum a pre match briefing meeting has been scheduled.

Any supporter who has any worries about any aspect of European away travel is welcome to contact slo@liverpoolfc.com for reassurance