England and Wales Football network review – summary & recommendations

Reminder of the purpose of this group

To make a recommendation to the SD Board on how SD UK's networks and governance under the Board are best organised and structured.

Consultation

The network group (NG) met on the 1st September to consider the results of the consultation. The consultation which primarily took place at two sessions at the Members Day on July 17th asked members to identify their priorities. Participant responses were categorised as follows:

- Supporters Trust in the Premier League
- Supporters Trust in the Championship
- Supporters Trust in EFL 1, EFL 2 or Non-League
- Supporter owned club with full time professionals
- Supporter owned clubs with semi-professional or amateurs players

Approximately 60 people attended the two sessions, with numbers from each of the categories above varying from between 6 and 15 people. Whilst a small number in comparison to the total number of board members in the SD membership, it still gave the NG a sense of what is important and whether there are similarities between these different sectors of the membership.

The top 10[1] rank of activities that were identified was as follows:

1. *Collaborating – working together within member networks and between the networks – knowledge transfer and domain expertise*
2. *Lobbying at a national level for changes to the game that benefit us all*
3. *Volunteer recruitment and governance support*
4. *Benchmarking figures for supporter owned clubs*
5. *Working together to promote people from the movement into positions of authority and influence in football governance structures e.g. league, county FA*
6. *Lobbying at a network level (e.g. league level, supporter owned clubs)*
7. *Helping supporter owned clubs and their relationship with supporters about what ownership means*
8. *Growing your network – increasing the number of members at your Trust/Club*
9. *Creating community value – how do trusts (and clubs) add value to their community*
10. *Increasing supporter influence in a structured way*

Differences between sectors of the membership

There were some areas of common interest across the different membership segments however it showed that individual networks had their own needs and priorities. In particular:

- None of the areas identified was considered a top 5 priority for all 5 networks

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[1] The full list is in appendix 1

- Only 1 area was identified by 4 of the networks as a top 5 priority
    - *"Collaborating – working together within member networks and between the networks – knowledge transfer and domain expertise"*
- Only 3 areas were identified by 3 of the networks as a top 5 priority
    - *"Lobbying at a national level for changes to the game that benefit us all"*
    - *"volunteer recruitment and governance support"*
    - *Working together to promote people from the movement into positions of authority and influence in football governance structures e.g. league, county FA"*

So what?

So it is clear that our members value collaboration both 'in networks' and 'between networks', so with the resources at our disposal how can SD best facilitate that to happen?

Collaboration in networks

The first thing is to define what the networks are. The NG has proposed four network groups who will ideally be supported by an SD staff member and a 'champion' from the England and Wales Council.

Network areas	Number of SD members
Premier League	13
English Football League	59
Non-league	64[2]
Supporter owned clubs	40

If there is sufficient demand from the members, each of the network groups will meet twice at least twice a year on topics relevant to SD's mission and expertise.

For the PL, EFL and Non-League network[3] we would expect a typical agenda to cover:

- Structured dialogue between supporters and their clubs - from the minimum EWG committed level all the way up to Memorandum of Understandings, shareholders agreements, board representation and ownership.
- Ideas/lobbying to improve football governance and regulation – e.g. changes to the owners and directors test, whole game proposals, FA governance
- Growing the number and performance of Supporters Trusts
- Showcasing successes and good practice from members

We will arrange the meetings well in advance to ensure they are sensibly coordinated with the FSF[4] and also time them ahead of meetings that are planned between SD and either the Premier League[5], English Football League[6], National League or Football Association[7] so that we can effectively

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[2] This number includes supporter owned clubs in the Non-league who may also want to attend a non-league meeting

[3] We would expect the supporter owned network to have more practical sessions to help clubs, to include workshops and peer to peer visits, as well as any lobbying, profile raising and joint projects. The Power to Change grant award will allow us to provide greater support to the club network with monthly activities focussing on different areas.

[4] Note the topics in the proposed agenda are areas core to SD's mission that we have the experience, expertise and funding to deliver

[5] The PL have decided to set up a biannual meeting organised by the FSF which includes 20 supporter representatives from each of the clubs, at which SD will be present

[6] The EFL have committed to meet SD (alongside the FSF) twice a year in October and April

represent members with issues of importance to them, as well as know which members are best placed to bring to those meetings to talk to specific topics.

Collaboration between networks

There will be a number of opportunities to improve collaboration between the 4 proposed networks:

England and Wales Council

The network meetings will be attended by the relevant E&W Council champion to feedback activity to the E&W Council meeting and then if required up to SD Board level. In the short term a suitable 'network champion[8]' will be sought from the existing E&W Council members, if that can't be found then the NG suggest that someone is co-opted from that segment to perform the role.

In the medium/long term it may be that 4 council positions are reserved for these 4 areas of SD's membership with elections held for these posts.

Minutes from the E & W Council meetings including any updates from the 4 network areas will be published and shared through the monthly members email.

Online platform

The 2016 – 19 Fans Fund award contains scope for a new platform.

It will be served by 2 network managers (SD staff) and at least 10 'network experts[9]' who will be recruited to stimulate discussion on areas that they have experience or expertise in. Critically it will be designed to connect people interested in various areas of work that SD and the membership are involved with no matter which part of the 4 network areas they are from.

The platform will host case studies, webinars, video training blogs and best practice guidance. Whilst we will endeavour to cover a number of topics over time, the network review will help us to prioritise which areas are looked at first for example volunteer recruitment, increasing membership, increasing supporter influence in a structured way and creating community value all in the top 10.

We are currently accessing tenders for the platform, and hope to have it live early in 2017.

Other opportunities to collaborate

SD will aim to co-ordinate a minimum of 3 special interest groups a year which will suit cross network collaboration and will be typically set up to identify, explore and recommend improvements to football governance and regulation, as well as encourage more supporter ownership opportunities. We would expect at least one of these to produce a published report.

The platform will help these special interest groups develop, but will also allow other members and individuals to connect on topics important to them that SD may not have the resource to co-ordinate.

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[7] A MOU is being drawn up for SD to meet with FA executives a minimum of 2 times a year
[8] See appendix 3 for more details of the role of a 'network champion'
[9] See appendix 4 for more details of the role of the 'network expert'

The annual conference will continue to provide the opportunity for cross network collaboration, alongside training sessions.

Recommendation to the SD Board

The recommendation to the SD Board therefore is:

1. **The SD Board recommends the England and Wales Football Council to appoint a suitable 'champion' to represent the PL, EFL, Non-League and Supporter Owned Clubs. If this can't be achieved from the existing E&W Council membership then a suitable person is co-opted to perform this role.**
2. **That the E&W Council has a standard agenda item to report on these 4 areas.**
3. **That the E&W Council monitor the success of this structure and make a recommendation to the SD Board at the 2017 AGM as to whether they believe it would be sensible for these positions to be elected with votes cast from the relevant members of that network area.**
4. **That a similar consultation exercise is extended to members served by the Rugby League and Scottish Councils to establish their priorities and to ensure all members feel fairly represented. A network review group is set-up, which is supported by an appropriate member of staff.**

Appendix 1 - Full list of areas identified as part of the consultation, ranked in order of importance from people at the SD Members day

1. Collaborating – working together within member networks and between the networks – knowledge transfer and domain expertise
2. Lobbying at a national level for changes to the game that benefit us all
3. Volunteer recruitment and governance
4. Benchmarking figures for supporter owned clubs
5. Working together to promote people from the movement into positions of authority and influence in football governance structures e.g. league, county FA
6. Lobbying at a network level (e.g. league level, supporter owned clubs)
7. Helping supporter owned clubs and their relationship with supporters about what ownership means
8. Growing your network – increasing the number of members at your Trust/Club
9. Creating community value – how do trusts (and clubs) add value to their community
10. Increasing supporter influence in a structured way
11. Communicate and Consult often – from members to board and across the networks
12. Collaborating – bringing in skills/expertise from outside the member network
13. Growing the network – increasing the number of Trusts & supporter owned clubs
14. Fundraising
15. Collaborating – speaking with one voice
16. Involving exiles
17. Lobbying at a local level for your Trust/Club
18. Protection of sports grounds
19. Better use if technology – e.g. live streaming
20. Raise the profile of supporter owned clubs, good engagement between clubs and supporters and the benefits of the movement overall
21. Helping supporter owned clubs with their match day experience and engagement
22. Help supporter owned clubs with income generation and cost saving
23. Establishing formal control through shares or electing people onto club boards – supporter directors and owners
24. Helping clubs in crisis – prevention/intervention/solutions
25. Clarity on which orgs/individuals are doing/interested in similar things

Appendix 2 - The top 5 for each category identified by participants at the member's day

Premier League

1. Collaborating – working together within member networks and between the networks – knowledge transfer and domain expertise
2. Lobbying at a national level for changes to the game that benefit us all
2. Increasing supporter influence in a structured way
4. Volunteer recruitment and governance support
4. Lobbying at a network level (e.g. league level, supporter owned clubs)
4. Growing the network – increasing the number of Trusts & supporter owned clubs
4. Fundraising

Championship

1. Collaborating – working together within member networks and between the networks – knowledge transfer and domain expertise
2. Growing your network – increasing the number of members at your Trust/Club
3. Volunteer recruitment and governance support
4. Protection of sports grounds
5. Lobbying at a national level for changes to the game that benefit us all
5. Working together to promote people from the movement into positions of authority and influence in football governance structures e.g. league, county FA

EFL1/EFL2/Non-league Supporters Trusts

1. Creating community value – how do trusts (and clubs) add value to their community
2. Growing your network – increasing the number of members at your Trust/Club
2. Fundraising
3. Collaborating – working together within member networks and between the networks – knowledge transfer and domain expertise
4. Increasing supporter influence in a structured way
4. Collaborating – bringing in skills/expertise from outside the member network
4. Lobbying at a local level for your Trust/Club
4. Raise the profile of supporter owned clubs, good engagement between clubs and supporters and the benefits of the movement overall
4. Helping clubs in crisis – prevention/intervention/solutions

Supporter owned clubs (professional level)

1. Lobbying at a national level for changes to the game that benefit us all
2. Benchmarking figures for supporter owned clubs
3. Communicate and Consult often – from members to board and across the networks
4. Working together to promote people from the movement into positions of authority and influence in football governance structures e.g. league, county FA
4. Lobbying at a network level (e.g. league level, supporter owned clubs)

Supporter owned clubs (semi-pro/amateur)

1. Volunteer recruitment and governance support
2. Collaborating – working together within member networks and between the networks – knowledge transfer and domain expertise
3. Benchmarking figures for supporter owned clubs
3. Working together to promote people from the movement into positions of authority and influence in football governance structures e.g. league, county FA
4. Helping supporter owned clubs and their relationship with supporters about what ownership means

Appendix 3 – network champions

A 'network champion' will represent SD members in one of 4 segments of the membership (PL, EFL, Non-league, and Supporter owned clubs)

Ideally that would be achieved by an individual committing to the following:

- Attending England and Wales Football Council meetings to update and discuss issues effecting members in their membership segment
- Attending 2 relevant SD co-ordinated network meetings for members a year
- Attending meetings alongside SD with the relevant external body (e.g. EFL for EFL Trusts) as appropriate
- Contactable and willing to stimulate discussion through the online platform

Appendix 4 – network experts

A 'network expert' will have a particular skill and/or experience on an important area of SD's work that members of Supporters Direct would benefit from having access to.

A network expert would be available to help in the following ways

- Online platform
  Contactable through a dedicated forum on their topic of expertise receiving an alert when a user posts a question or starts a discussion.
  Willing to stimulate discussion around their specialist subject.
- Best practice guidance
  Available to help staff review or draft new best practice guidance in their area of expertise
- Online training/workshops
  Available to help with workshops and star in online training videos (as appropriate)