# A Community Football Club:

# The Future of Cambridge United FC

Cambridge Fans United is promoting a Community Trust to take over the ownership of Cambridge United Football Club. This will require the involvement of supporters, local businesses and authorities with the goal of running a secure, sustainable and ultimately successful football club.

**Why is Cambridge United special?**



Cambridge United have a special place in English football. Over the years, the club has been associated with heroic cup runs, great individual players and supreme collective effort to achieve results far beyond the expectations of a relatively small city club.

During 35 years in the Football League, Cambridge United consistently over-achieved, reaching the FA Cup Quarter Finals twice (1990 and 1991), the League Cup Quarter Final (1993) and getting within 2 wins of becoming founder members of the Premier League. The club also won 6 promotions and claimed numerous victories against well-known clubs such as Newcastle United, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Aston Villa and Chelsea, amongst others.

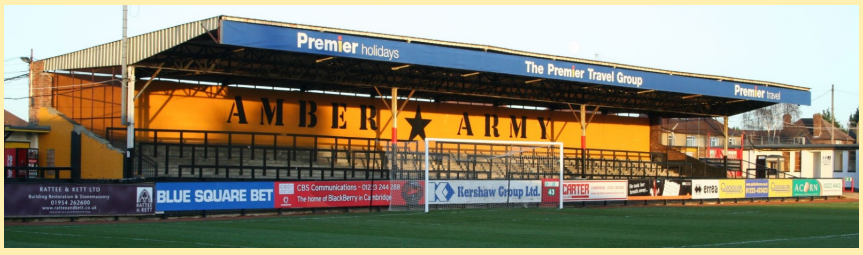


Cambridge United have a reputation for developing footballers. Household names such as David Moyes, Dave Kitson and Dion Dublin all played their first professional football at Cambridge United and United's youth academy has launched the careers of internationals like Andy Sinton (England), Keith Branagan (Ireland) and Jack Collison (Wales). United's youth development programme is the envy of much larger clubs, working with young footballers throughout the region and beyond to produce the stars of the future.




Despite relegation to the 5th tier of English football, Cambridge United continue to be one of the best supported clubs in their league, with deep roots in the local community. Over 20,000 people made the trip to London to see United in the play off final at Wembley in 2008 and again in 2009. What else can move so many local people?

Cambridge United has a special place in the hearts of the thousands of people who follow the club though good times and bad, and who want to see United thrive as a vibrant and successful football club.



**What is CFU?**

Cambridge Fans United (CFU) is a not-for-profit trust which seeks to ensure the long term future of Cambridge United Football Club and to represent the fans within the club and the wider community. Over the last 11 years CFU has raised thousands of pounds to support the football club and Cambridge United Youth Development, offered practical assistance to the club and organised countless community activities. For more about CFU, see **www.cambridgefansunited.org**

**Did you know?**

AFC Telford United, which is 100% owned by the Telford United Supporters' Trust has made a profit in 6 out of 6 years since reforming in 2004.



**What happens if we do nothing?**

The current board have made it clear that they cannot afford to carry on putting money into Cambridge United. If expenditure continues to exceed revenue, the club must be in danger of going into administration, which could mean Cambridge United being relegated two divisions. It is hard to see how the football club could survive if this happens.

**What is CFU's vision?**

Cambridge Fans United is promoting a Community Trust to take over the ownership of Cambridge United Football Club. This will require the involvement of supporters, local businesses and authorities with the goal of running a secure, sustainable and ultimately successful football club.

**What is a Community Club?**

A Community Football Club has two main elements.

Firstly, it is a sporting club and should always maintain the ambition and drive for success that any other club has. Its purpose is to improve and rise through the leagues in the same way as other teams. It should, however, do so in a responsible way and not put the overall club at risk of financial failure in the future. Supporters want to see success, but not at the risk of long term failure of the business. The Club must be aiming for break even every year. Success, but not at any cost.

Sustainability is a key principle of a Community Club – it doesn't spend beyond its means and is transparent in its operations. This can build a stronger sense of identity as its fans work collectively to support the club rather than relying on donations from a few wealthy individuals.

Rather than being something owned by a few shareholders, a Community Club has an inclusive ownership structure with membership affordable and open to anyone who has an interest in the Club or the Community. Members enjoy the same influence no matter what money or skills they might bring to the table.

A Community Club is unlike the vast majority of football clubs as it has community objectives written into the club's constitution, and whatever money it might make is reinvested back into either the Club or into Community projects.

Secondly, a football club can and should be a key component of any local community and not just confined to football supporters, something everyone can be proud of. Cambridge United already has strong roots in the community and now is the time to build on those foundations. It's time to put the club back into the hands of those that are most interested in its long term success; the fans of Cambridge United.

**What a Community Club isn't:**

This isn't about fans picking the team: that's the job of the manager. It's about providing the overall direction of the club to deliver long-term success. Cambridge Fans United (CFU) believes that the club's direction should be set by the fans and community. Who else is more interested in the long term success of the club? Whilst fans can have great affection for certain players, managers, even board members, they all eventually move on. However, for the supporters it's a lifetime's commitment – we stand on the terraces and sit in the stands and should be central to the future of the football club.

**Why is it better?**

We think a Community Football Club is better for Cambridge United for a number of reasons:-

**Money goes in rather than out** – all profits are reinvested back into the club and community, unlike a private or public company.

**Bigger crowds** – other fans owned clubs have seen their attendances rise as supporters feel part of the club.

**A better brand** – a Community Club is more attractive to sponsors and other potential partners

**Better partnerships** – with the local authority, community groups and local businesses. Having a club that is owned by the community opens up opportunities and fosters better relations that are harder to come by under private ownership.

**A better stadium** – we feel that a Community Football Club could be central the proposed Community Sports Village and could add value to Grosvenor's vision for the project, to the benefit of Cambridge United, the fans and the wider community.

**A unified fan base** – mistrust and lack of accountability can be overcome by a more transparent club and a Board drawn from the fans and the community. This means that we work together for success and deal effectively with any issues.

**A proven way of successfully running a football club** – other football clubs have taken this approach and been successful in converting to a community trust, for example AFC Wimbledon, Exeter City, Newport County, AFC Telford United and Stirling Albion to name but a few.

**Happier supporters** – fans who have a voice and a genuine say in how the club is run are happier. Just ask supporters of fan-owned Exeter City who were found to be the most satisfied fans in a recent Football League survey – despite being involved in a relegation battle at the time!

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**Did you know?**

Chester's gates have gone up by 95% since they became a fans-owned club – despite competing in a much lower league.

**Examples of Community Clubs:**

Swansea City (partly community-owned and 4th in Championship, 29th Jan 2011)

Exeter City (2 successive promotions in recent years)

AFC Wimbledon (Top of BSP, 29th Jan 2011)

AFC Telford United (5$^{th}$ in BSP North, 29th Jan 2011)

**What does CFU know about running a football club?**

It is easy to get caught up with the hype that surrounds football, but it is a business and needs to be run efficiently and effectively, achieving a minimum of a break-even, season after season. CFU wants to open up the club to the possibility of utilising skills, knowledge and experience from others in the community, to make the club more attractive to sponsors and build trusting partnerships.

CFU is also working with, and seeking advice from Supporters Direct, an organisation that helps supporters get involved in the running of their clubs. They have built up a wealth of knowledge and experience over the past 11 years through being involved and working with other many football clubs which have already created a supporters owned Community Trust Club or are actively moving in this direction.

More information about Supporters direct and their involvement with supporters running their football clubs can be found at **www.supporters-direct.coop.**

**What have we done so far and what will we be doing over the coming weeks?**

- Seeking the commitment of partners to provide financial backing and / or relevant skills, knowledge and experience to help run the club in the future.
- Preparing a project plan for potential acquisition and a future business plan for the club.
- Preparing to undertake comprehensive "due diligence" of CUFC, examining in detail the present activities and finances of the club so we know exactly what we are taking on.
- Drafting a model legal and organisational structure to run the business in the future both at Governing Trust and Operational level.
- Designing a membership scheme to enable and support fans in becoming owners of their club.
- Building a new lottery scheme to provide regular monthly income for the Community Trust.

We welcome your comments and views. Please contact us by post, email or phone:

Cambridge Fans United, PO Box 447, Cambridge, CB23 8ZX

**cfuinbox@btinternet.com**

07957 344 005

Or visit us on matchdays at the CFU caravan at the Abbey's Newmarket Road entrance

**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE – THANK YOU**

Do you support CUFC being run as a community /trust club? **Yes / No**

Can we include you in any future communications / mailings about how CUFC could be purchased and run on a community trust basis? **Yes / No**

IF YES, PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

Name ……

Email ……

Preferred Phone Number ……

Address ……

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……Postcode……

Would you be prepared to pledge to contribute a regular amount each month / year, no matter how small or large? **Yes / No**

Would you consider making a pledge over a 3 / 5 year period? **Yes / No**

Would you be prepared to make a one-off contribution? **Yes / No**

Are you a member of CFU? **Yes / No**

Would you like to become a member of CFU? **Yes / No**

If you are prepared to make a pledge or contribution, or to join CFU we will make contact with you in the next few weeks with further details.