



The Heart of the Game Conference - Weekend Summary

Metropole Hotel, Cork City November 10th/ 11th

Weekend Schedule

Saturday, November 10th

Opening Remarks & Fans' Survey results

Niamh O'Mahony, Project Manager

A Focus on Community

John Kennedy (CCFC) & Phil Frampton (FC Utd)

A Focus on Governance

Sean O'Connell (CCFC), Kris Stewart (AFC Wimbledon) and Lena Gustafson Wiberg (Swedish Project Partner, SLO)

International Case Study: *Riccardo Bertolin & MyRoma*

Panel Discussion: The improving quality of the League of Ireland

Chaired by Emmet Malone. Panel including Tommy Dunne (CCFC), Damien Richardson (LOI pundit), David Toms (School of History, UCC) and Alan Smith (Journalist).

Sunday, November 11th

A Focus on Fan Activism

Kevin Rye (Supporters Direct) Phil Frampton (FC United) & Kris Stewart (AFC Wimbledon)

Marketing the League of Ireland & the Match Night Experience

Tim Murphy (CCFC), Siobhan Meehan (PR Consultant), Stephen Ryan (Fota Wildlife Park) and John O'Brien (Sunday Independent).

Uefa's SLO Project

Stuart Dykes (Supporters Direct - SLO Consultant) and Lena Gustafson Wiberg (SLO Djurgardens, Swedish Project Partner)

Opening Remarks (Niamh O'Mahony)

Project Manager Niamh O'Mahony welcomed everyone to the Metropole Hotel and reiterated how important it was that the event itself was actually taken place. Some of the professions being represented included academics, chief executives, journalists, community activists, youth workers, accountants and trade unionists - demonstrating that supporters, be they running a club or an organisation, have a huge amount of skills and experience at their disposal.

She added her hope that everyone in attendance would leave in a day's time with a much greater sense of what was possible and confidence in the knowledge that as League of Ireland supporters we are not alone in wanting more for our clubs, our League and the game of football itself. Regrets were received from the Bit of Red trust, Shamrock Rovers and representatives of Derry City, Drogheda United and Finn Harps.

Niamh concluded by reading a message of support from President Michael D. Higgins into the record:

I would like to send my best wishes to all those involved in the Conference in Cork on 10 and 11 November 2012 - 'The Heart of the Game - Why Supporters are vital to football'. As a strong supporter of the League of Ireland over the year, I am very encouraged to see football supporters coming together like this for the first time to develop ways of addressing the long-term challenges facing football in Ireland.

I want to congratulate the hosts FORAS (the supporters' trust which owns and runs Cork City) for leading this important initiative as part of the 'Improving Football Governance through Supporting Involvement and Community Ownership' project, in partnership with Supporters Direct, and supported by funding from the European Commission.

I would like to wish all the participants well - supporters' groups, club representatives, the FAI, the League of Ireland, and representatives from overseas leagues. I trust that your discussions at the Conference will be fruitful and will help to achieve the common goal of strengthening the long-term sustainability of our domestic game."

Michael D Higgins, Uachtarán na hÉireann, President of Ireland

To conclude the opening session, Niamh presented the main highlights from the results of the Fans' Survey, which was conducted across Ireland and Europe between September 1st and October 15th. The same set of questions was asked in Sweden, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, France and Belgium - except for three questions prepared specifically for Ireland by the Irish working group.

Additional details and a link to the full Survey can be found here:

<http://www.corkcityfc.net/home/2012/11/10/survey-reveals-fans%E2%80%99-thoughts-on-the-state-of-irish-football/> but the main findings included:

- 89% of fans are unsatisfied with how football is run in Ireland
- 82% of fans feel their views are completely ignored at national level
- 64% of fans feel they have little or no involvement in decision making at their club
- 97% of fans would like to have a meaningful input into issues affecting the Airtricity League

Respondents choose to do the survey online or were presented with paper copies while at games in Cork, Dublin and Dundalk. There were 1,509 responses in Ireland, the highest return percentage of all partners in comparison to population.

About Survey Participants

Just over 34% of supporters who responded to the survey were Cork City fans followed by Shamrock Rovers (15.4%), Bohemians (7%), Sligo Rovers (6.5%) and Waterford United (4.8%). The first four of these clubs have strong and active trusts / members clubs, while groups of 24 and 17 supporters respectively identified themselves as Manchester United and Liverpool fans.

40% of supporters that responded said they were part of a supporters organisation at their club, with 44% of those a member of a group that owns shares in their club. When asked if they were a member of a national supporters' organisation, 95% of fans said 'No'. Of those

Future Development

38.9% of respondents believe supporters ownership or involvement will improve the running of their club 'a lot' ('It will improve it a lot'), while 52.4% of respondents believe greater supporter involvement at national level would 'improve (the game) a lot'.

Supporters' Organisations

Focusing on how supporters view the trust movement in Ireland today, 42.4% of respondents said they would join a supporters' organisation that had the aim of getting/maintaining an ownership stake at their club. Of the 9.8% that said 'No', 35.6% said 'I'm not interested' when asked for further detail. Nearly 70% of respondents believe being involved in such a group will mean that 'the club board listen to fans more'.

Asked if they would join a national supporters' organisation in their country, 39.8% of fans said 'No' with 33.8% saying 'Yes'. For the fans that answered 'No', 37.1% of fans cited 'The Association/League will never listen' as the main reason. The 'association listening to fans more' and 'structured representation at national level' were cited as the biggest benefits of being part of such an organisation.

Focusing specifically on Ireland...

Asked if they'd like to see 'an organisation or assistance established that would allow League of Ireland supporters having meaningful input into issues affecting the Airtricity League', an overwhelming majority (97.4%) said 'Yes'.

Finance (48.9%) is seen as the biggest barrier to supporters' groups securing a shareholding in their club. This was followed by Other (43.8%), Little support from the wider football community (33.1%) and Lack of expertise (27.6%).

Asked for their main priority as a League of Ireland supporter, fans said Ensuring the long-term stability of your club (78%), Being able to watch your team's games each week (57%) and Other (45.2%).

Asked if they believed their club's priorities were the same, 68.9% of people said 'Yes'.

Niamh concluded by pointing out some of the existing resources available to clubs, while reminding attendees that the next step of the project would be the production of a handbook for Ireland in 2013:

- Online documentation at Supporters Direct (www.supporters-direct.org)
- ICOS (icos.ie/starting-a-co-op/intro/)
- Each other!

A Focus on Community

John Kennedy (CCFC) & Phil Frampton (FC Utd)

John Kennedy is part of the Board of Management at Cork City FC and has been a youth worker in Cork for over 30 years.

Among his points:

- A strong supporters club network was important to develop, with branches in various areas around the city/ county.
- Huge amount to be gained from hospital and school visits
- He said it was crucial for clubs to get involved in local events, promotions, charities and sponsorship opportunities. There will be good PR involved but, more significantly, the club will benefit from their actions in the longer term
- He cited the example of Cork City's visit in support of the Vita Cortex workers, which cost nothing but time and showed that the club was not only aware of what was going on in the city, but that it was also prepared to support the fight for workers' right. John spoke to some of the workers when they later visited Turner's Cross and said they were overwhelmed by both the club's and general public's support.
- John also cited the example of a food collection the club did for Cork Penny Dinners. One of Cork's oldest charities, the collection during a week of friendlies was very successful and was something the charity spoke about later at other events.
- It's important to get as involved as possible with the local business community
- "It generally costs mainly time and a very small financial outlay but the benefits are clear in the longer term".
- 'It is up to the club to break the walls down' and get involved with certain issues, people and organisations because it is right be involved in the community
- There are a huge amount of community groups and schemes that would benefit from a football club's involvement including youth clubs, junior clubs, family enclosure, elderly groups, minority groups.
- FAI/ local government can help with funding

- John also stressed the importance of being active around the death of fans within the community and the role the club can play in helping families deal with their loss. A small gesture such as lowering flags to half mast can be a really powerful gesture.
- John also spoke about the impact the club can have on younger people's lives. The small sided games played by local clubs on the pitch at half time has been an important development. John also spoke about former club captain Declan Daly and how he had helped out with kids possibly in trouble in years gone by. It's John's belief that the club has and can save lives.
- John is in charge of the club's Family Enclosure and says he conducts a study of what is happening with it each year. His findings show an increase in the number of grandads coming to games with their grandchildren.

Phil Frampton is a community activist and shareholder at FC United of Manchester.

- Phil initially spoke about his own background. He grew up in a children's home and football taught him how to read. When he was finished reading the football pages, he would read the rest of the paper and this allowed should the educational role football can have.
- FCUM came about from disenfranchised Man Utd supporters and Phil compared it to a divorce. Whoever takes the decision to leave has a vision; it is those left behind that are hurt and angry.
- FCUM's principle vision has been a commitment to work in the community because a healthy football club needs a healthy football community and a healthy football community needs a healthy community.
- Phil highlighted some of the problems faced by football in the UK: racism, exploitation (Hearts), prejudice, discrimination. These are all prevalent in grounds across Britain resulting in ethnic minorities being afraid to attend. However, football can be used to help solve many of these community issues.
- Phil insisted that football has been created for billionaires and that it's time supporters took it back. He highlighted the importance of creating partners throughout the community, adding that 20% of turnover at FCUM goes to community projects and initiatives that include: 'People United Day' (cohesion rather than division so this instead of 'Kick It Out'), 'Youth United', which celebrates people's achievements and not just

those that are football related, 'Senior United Day' (over 50s go free), 'A woman's place is at the match' (where women go free), and 'Big Coat Day', which sees supporters bring jackets to the ground for charity and six tonnes of coats have been collected to date. Other partners should/can include: local/ national government, bureaucracy, business, other football clubs, groups and associations, supporters and other sports

- Kids from local foster homes/ care homes can attend for free and the club also works with group like Barnardos. Studies in the UK have shown that by setting up a youth team in a deprived area, crime - according to the police - decreased by 67% in that area.
- Phil said clubs need to look for opportunities to get funding for community projects from local, national and European government. Community initiatives can also create work for players.
- It's up to fans to decide what football is - they can change the landscape by implementing their own vision and their own manifesto. Phil cited the example of several writing campaigns where club supporters to have helped to put pressure on to complete projects and improve the community.
- All these activities have built trust between the club and its community. It has generated massive goodwill towards the club and local authorities are now willing partners. He concluded that the motivation for community involvement is important - it's not about generated good PR, it's about your club doing it because it's the right thing to do.

Additional comments:

Sean Dunleavy (GUST)

- Though GUST would not be returning to the Airtricity League in 2013, Sean said GUST had a clear vision for the club they wished to create and were not going anywhere. For the trust, it's about more than having a first-team in the playing field.
- Sean said he felt fans had not been listened to and they were actively now putting their energies into their U19's side - which even has a programme - as well as their presence in Galway - where they have a stand in the centre of town every Saturday

Gerry Sexton (Gypsies Trust)

- Gerry said that Bohemians has been a members-run club for the past 120 years but the last ten years have been very difficult.
- The trust was set up to act as a counter balance to the Board at the time and to try and change the direction the club was headed. This has been successfully accomplished over the past 12 months though there was still plenty of work to be done
- The 'new' Board had become much more active in the community - becoming more involved in a local festival and even opening up its facilities to other supporters and community groups i.e. getting people back into Dalymount Park. They believe community relations have increased 100% over the last year
- Prison visits, hospital visits and schools visits were now a priority

Simon Blackmore (Dundalk Community Trust)

- Simon said the trust's main goal was to increase fan involvement and its position within the club
- Community involvement was seen as a really integral part of this

Elaine Colfer, (Wexford Youths Supporters Club)

- Community involvement is particularly important at Wexford Youths
- Huge effort in recent years to raise the profile of the club and increase attendances with particular emphasis on trying to improve the club's relationship with the Schoolboy + District league as well as through coaching and academy as well as free ticket schemes
- The club has started to promote itself in outlying towns
- U12s, once accompanied, can get in for free

General Comments

- Each club needs to respond to the needs of its own local community. Finn Harps were mentioned here for their activities around promoting Safe Driving in a county with a

significant number of road deaths. Main sponsor of FCUM wants to know its money is being used for community projects

- Community work is about allocating time and resources to telling your own story - which provides the emotional connection
- You need to recognise, promote and demonstrate your own achievements
- Community involvement can help secure sponsorship as it gives clubs a massive feel good factor
- Image building for clubs has never been more important after years of neglect
- Seek community incentives as there are possibilities for joint funding and direct work within a community
- Get other sports involvement - how do you deal with other codes, host a joint initiative, fundraiser, event etc
- You need to call on political influence to uncover and be awarded anything from the various funding schemes. Document community involvement and show your research/ previous history/ facts/ studies)
- It was pointed out that a letter from a primary school teaching speaking about the importance of a football club as a community entity was enough to convince a judge to set a precedence and not shut the club down in 2008.
- Mini-marathon organised by FCUM each year - half of funds go to the club, half to charity

A focus on Governance

Sean O’Conaill (former FORAS board member, UCC lecturer), Kris Stewart (founding AFC Wimbledon chairman) and Lena Gustafson Wiberg (Swedish Project partners).

- Sean gave a brief background on how FORAS was actually set up while Brian Lennox was in place as chairman - a period of considerable sustainability for the club
- The concern at the time was: what happens if/ when Brian moves on?
- Sean recalled the Arkaga takeover and talk of a 25,000-seater stadium. Their policies included a striker on a clean sheet bonus - demonstrating that the people in charge had no idea how to run a football club - and not involved supporters in any dialogue.
- The club entered examinership in 2008, was subsequently saved and handed over to a local businessman by the name of Tom Coughlan.
- Cork City FORAS Co-op was given a Licence to compete in the 2010 First Division. The trust had the right structures in place at the right time, and that’s what maintained senior football in the city. Their reputation was built on accountability and a transparent, elected Board of management.
- The trust was based on UK models like that of AFC Wimbledon and FCUM
- Sean spoke about the importance of having the right expertise available, including accounting, legal. (Kevin Rye of Supporters Direct ventured that you create your own luck)
- Sean said that the FAI’s Licensing system was actually very solid in comparison to other European Leagues and that the association had been of great help and assistance when needed
- The line now being repeated is that ‘If you need to set up a trust, it’s already too late’.

- One of the main reasons the trust has been a success is its internal governance. It can wield more political and economic influence and by knowing your laws, you can use them to protect your club. He advising knowing the rulebook inside out.

Kris Stewart (AFC Wimbledon)

- Spoke about how AFC Wimbledon came about. Club owned a big piece of land which Sam Hammam bought before eventually selling to Safeway. Before doing that he charged the club rent to play at the venue
- He planned to relocate the club to Dublin, Hull and Cardiff amongst other destinations before eventually selling the club to a Norwegian businessmen who had owned Molde.
- An independent supporters club was subsequently set up and they rejected the suggestion that the club should move 70 miles away and play in Milton Keynes. Though the Football league rejected the move, they didn't go through correct procedures and a three-person committee later voted 2-1 in favour of allowing the 'Franchise' to be formed. The decision was never publicly announced.
- In response, a portion of Wimbledon fans formed a new club which started from nothing. Needed players, equipment - £80,000 in first few weeks alone. An application to join the Ryman league was rejected.
- 2500 away fans turned up to their first game of the season in the Combined Counties league and following five promotions in nine years, the club is now in League Two and facing a possible Cup tie against MK Dons.

Lena Gustafson Wiberg

- 'Football murderers' was the third largest word to describe the Swedish FA in their recent survey as part of the EC Project, showing that Swedish football has its own problems
- Swedish Supporters' Union was set up 5 years ago and had representatives from every club. The Union has a common ethos regarding policing, standing etc

- 50+1 rule ensures that every club in the league has to be owned by at least 51% by its members but this is now under threat.
- Lena also spoke about some of the problems facing supporters in Sweden. Last season games were played on six different days at six different KO times. TV companies pay a lot for the rights but it makes it easier for supporters to stay at home rather than going to games.
- Hammarby increased their supporters membership from 2000 to 8000 in the space of two years by creating an official template and allowing number branches to develop around the country. This made it easy and cheap to expand.
- Lena spoke of the importance of transparency and said that if you don't have community relations in Sweden, you don't have sponsors. Such activity allows you avail of grants, schemes and sponsorship.
- Happiness, Dignity and Respect are the three fundamental principles at Djurdens. DHL have set up an internship program for kids that is linked into local clubs.
- Volunteerism is strong in Sweden and this helps build strong clubs.

Gerry Sexton (Gypsies Trust)

People now working together in one direction at the club. Poor governance, poor attendance at AGMs and GMs and laziness amongst members allowed a few strong individuals dominate proceedings for too long, which took the club down an incorrect path.

Fans have gradually ensured that this changed and much better governance structures were now in place. A vision of where the club wants to go has now been re-established and back up plans for the future are in place.

Paul Byrne (SSDG) Shelbourne

The aims and objectives of the SSDG were explained. The group now has a place on the Board of management and is actively involved in running and fundraising for the club on a daily basis.

Elaine Colfer, Wexford Youths Supporters Club

WYFC are a young club but fan involvement is extremely high. Delegation of work and passing on of roles is an issue, however. They seek increased buy in from players in comparison to other clubs and locals are becoming fans.

David Toms, Waterford Utd fan

David has no official involvement in the club and there is no trust at present. He believes the club is a conservative organisation and a supporters trust would be an important next step. The club has very strong links in the city and county and he believes the current Board do not engage enough with supporters as they have fears about losing power/ control

Additional points

- A strong element of volunteerism is vital
- Trust and gaining the correct reputation is an issue
- A good model is needed to put the right structures in place. This will nullify destructive individuals. Also, if one person walks away and structure collapses, then it's not much of a structure in the first place.

Evening Session: An open panel about the LOI's role, it improving quality and the National Squad.

Emmet Malone (Irish Times), Alan Smith (freelance journalist), Damien Richardson (LOI pundit), David Toms (School of History, UCC) and Tommy Dunne (CCFC manager).

First: Riccardo Bertolin (MyRoma Supporters Trust)

- Currently only 13 -14 supporters trusts in Italy, and MyRoma is the only trust in Serie A.
- Italian supporters need a voice because of the problems of wealthy owners in Italian football and because they are being pushed out.
- Riccardo gave the example that supporters groups need to give seven days notice to the club and the police if they wish to have a banner in the stadium. The banner must also be approved by authorities. He also cited the example of how difficult it is to buy tickets for a game on match day.
- Slowly, MyRoma are hoping to convince their club's supporters that they have a role to play and can make a difference. This is at a club which has its own radio station and newspaper.
- The trust's account is fully transparent and can be accessed by members

Tommy spoke about the recent history of the league and how full-time, paid set ups eventually over stretched clubs and led to the likes of Shelbourne, Cork City and Drogheda having financial problems. While the wages had increased through, investment in infrastructure, training facilities, academies etc simply hadn't happened.

Currently nine ex-LOI players in the national squad (friendly v Greece), reflecting the improved quality of the league. Summer soccer and improved coaching standards have contribute to this.

Damien said that as a result of wage cuts in recent times, younger players were being given more of an opportunity. However, it also resulted in inconsistency. Both he and Tommy felt that while the Under 19s league was a good development for Irish football, players needed to start playing at a better level earlier. Tommy insisted that an Under 17s league was essential.

In recent years, 16 players have left City to travel to the UK yet LOI clubs have difficulty attracting any player under the age of 16 because school boys hold all the

power and influence at that age. It's the schoolboys that have a history of producing underage talent and parents want to give their kids the best chance they can.

John O'Sullivan said that he was at the Kennedy Cup during the summer and knew of at least 40 scouts from the UK there. Not one representative from a LOI club was in attendance.

Alan Smith spoke about players in Cork whose parents were made all sorts of promises about the son's future - only to have him end up playing in Scotland.

David Toms also gave a detailed insight into the beginning of the National team, which initially was a League representative side.

Fan Activism

Phil Frampton (FCUM), Kris Stewart (AFC Wimbledon) and Kevin Rye (Supporters Direct)

Phil Frampton (FCUM)

- FC United of Manchester has over 500 active volunteers - 300 directly and 200 in supporters groups. Match day activities include merchandise, catering, radio/TV, bar, stewards. There's a 100 hours a week broadcast about the club alone on radio - which is the equivalent of a BBC regional station and does not include FCUM TV. This involves 41 presenters. The club also has three websites to maintain and a number of Social media platforms.
- The club has a Senior, Women's, Junior and Disabled teams. It hosts events like Golf Days, Women at the match and a minithon, which splits proceeds between the club and charities.
- Phil spoke about a paper he wrote for the Football Governance unit (not Supporters Direct UK) called 'New Players, New Tactics' which was a study of a trust in operation at Northampton Town FC. Key points including having one member on the board and a focus on 'building the troops' rather than minor battles and fire fighting at the club.
- The club has a link with Manchester City College and Football Governance Research Institute and it's important to build up these types of allies.
- FCUM's membership fees are €12, up from £8. Also gets donations and had a community share flotation, which has raised £1.2 million. It's an inclusive rather than exclusive fee. He advised that a two-tier membership systems should be avoided.
- The club currently has two full-time staff, two part-time staff and between 10 and 15 students/ unemployed volunteers.

Kevin Rye then hosts a more open-forum type discussion.

KR asked why people volunteer - does it depend on who's asking, what institution it is for, what volunteer work is expected/ will be done, what's the expected outlay.

KS - the work that volunteers carry out increases the resources for their football club

Sean Dunleavy - GUST spend six hours promoting the trust and the work it does every weekend in Galway city centre where two volunteers take time to main the trust stand. Terryland had been renamed Eammon Deasy Park in memory of the man who gave so much time for Galway soccer and trust still has their match days due to their U19 team

The trust's work will redefine what Galway football is (KS)

People are "present at the making of their own history" (David Toms)

You volunteer because you want to give something back (PF)

When you mention a cause and an enemy, it's important to understand who your real enemy is - is it person x or is it your own prejudice and beliefs that stand in your way (Damien Richardson). The one united force is the team

It should be more about causes and campaigns than the blood and thunder of war and enemies. Activism also shouldn't be an obsession (Kevin - SD)

Volunteers have never been more active at Bohemians. Wage bill has been reduced by a third and will be reduced again in 2013. You must budget for what is actually there and budget for the minimum amount of income (last in league, no cup game etc). Board turnover is also important.

There's a feeling at Shelbourne between those who were there in the days after the financial collapse and those that weren't.

Where that situation exists, you must keep day to day ideals separate from the long-term views (PF)

Wexford Youths run completely on volunteer activism (Elaine). Laying out what each volunteer does is important and a volunteer co-ordinator is an important role to have

Football is also a business and not everyone understands this. Until they do, you have issues (Tim CCFC)

Is there an appetite and need for a more structured national organisation to allow both formal and informal discussions between clubs, supporters and outside partners?

Need to create an atmosphere that makes it easy for fan activism to take place.

KS actively seeking out possible candidates to run for election to the Board at AFC Wimbledon. It's inclusive and about encouragement.

The Match Night Experience and Marketing the League

Timmy Murphy (CCFC), Siobhan Meehan (PR consultant, MA of LOI), John O'Brien (Sunday Independent), Stephen Ryan (Fota Wildlife Park)

Tim Murphy

- Support is easy to find when times are going well, not such much when the team is struggling. You have your hardcore support and your floating fans in Ireland and it's important to appeal to both. Floaters are captured by creating a feel good factor around the club
- Friendliness, courtesy and involvement will lead to significant improvements over time. An issue is that there isn't the same level of volunteerism associated with football as there is with the GAA for example.

- Important to recognise the different sections of support: red blooded football fan, family enclosure, elderly and disabled fans, sponsor and corporate as well as away support.
- An organised match night experience is crucial. Important to lean on tradition by promoting your history and getting kids involved where possible.
- There are collective opportunities that need to be sought out by clubs

Siobhan Meehan, PR consultant

- The traditional Club Promotions Officer role was extremely valuable to clubs and only Sligo have one now that the FAI-funded element of salary is gone. CPO should be a role independent of CEO/ office staff.
- School visits are vital, especially as they set players up as role models to a much wider community. Getting kids interested early is vital to long-term success.
- The Match Night experience must be better for the price paid - specifics include toilet facilities, coffee/tea available, food, atmosphere, seating, safety, music, entertainment)
- Perhaps a personalised ticket for kids?

Stephen Ryan, Fota Wildlife Park

- Customer is always right and the facilities at LOI grounds just aren't good enough in general. Fota Wildlife Park has been considerable investment into a new entrance, playground, shop, toilets and signage. Members up 20% since and Park now has over 5000 family members
- It was really important for the Park to be a 'safe environment' and a 'place for kids' in feedback that was received from parents
- This was built on by creating new events i.e. balloon makers, confectionary partners.
- In LA, Deportivo Chivas focus on the Latino Market exclusively (while they have less money, it's currently being ignored by many) and their marketing manager had a motto of selling entertainment first to kids and then the football.
- Food quality needs to be better and the prices need to come down for what you get

- The target market for kids is mothers, not fathers. Feedback was poor when promotion of free CCFC tickets to kids took place because of issues around cursing, safety and control.
- League should be focusing on things like the 'Stars of the Future'. Marketing works on creating a wow factor and capturing people's imaginations.
- Stephen also mentioned his time at CCFC when he was the CPO. Had John O'Flynn with flashy car and well-known girlfriend and it was much easier to sell the club with promotion like that

John O'Brien, Sunday Independent

- Newspapers are profit focused so if something doesn't generate considerable interest and a profit, the media loses interest.
- Can clubs generate good news or interesting stories to get papers' attention? Present characters and emotional connections - not a 'you should be covering us' attitude
- Has the club the proper set up to provide information to reporters at games and can deadlines be met by the end of the game? Can updated stats and league figures be provided?
- Stale news isn't interesting and the stream of content has to be consistent. Know which papers to target and find out what journalists need. (Tim, CCFC)
- Time events like press conferences, launches etc to suit your best media connections. Photographs also play a huge role and have an influence on how much 'space' a match might be given.

General points:

- Rugby has shown how to build fanbases
- Connections with other members of the footballing community are really important
- Make your club brand 'sexy' - the Greyhound board has done this particularly well and merchandise has a significant role to play

Discussion on Supporter Liaison Officer role

Stuart Dykes (SD/Schalke/Consultant to UEFA), Lena Wiberg (Djurgarden SLO, SFSU)

- Stuart starts off by speaking of his own background - he's a Schalke fan. They are a members club with 112,000 supporters and generally have about 2500 at their AGMs.
- He's the SLO consultant for UEFA. He's also heavily involved in fan security discussions in UEFA at the moment as well as the EC project.
- After three years of lobbying, Uefa included the SLO position in Rule 35 of the Uefa Rulebook. It's a two line rule and the proposal is vague to allow for differing implementations by clubs and to reduce resistance from clubs. The role itself came about as part of the Financial Fair Play rules

- What is the SLO role about:
 - It's a tool for improving fan-club-association relations
 - Should be a visible focal point for stakeholders and a conduit to fans and other stakeholders (Caters, Police, supporters, security etc)
 - Should provide communication and dialogue between groups - structured point of contact for the club
 - The role has variously been described as a mediator, translator, to cool down aggressive situations, etc
 - To convey why decisions are made and by who
 - Increase Transparency
 - Explain ideas & changes better
 - Involve Supporters in decisions
 - SLO should be from support base, and should be separate from the BOM/other club role
 - Reduction of work for the board – queries should go through SLO
 - Co-operation between clubs

Lena Gustafson Wiberg

- In practical terms: Match logistics, present at as many games as possible, safety of supporters, not possible to talk about everything that's going on with the club as trust with fans is an essential part of the role, prevention of bigger issues, closely related to a youth worker role, can step in to show fans that proper procedures are being followed and to prevent retribution, community work, commercial ideas, merchandise.
- Resources are an issue at smaller clubs

General points:

- The role is being slowly implemented.
- In Austria fines are ring fenced away from association funds and can only be used in infrastructure project or safety initiatives.
- FCUM only put an SLO in place now but also have a Board member who is solely responsible for transparency.
- There is a feeling on entitlement to information when a club is part of a supporters trust and there was a query how to balance this. It was commented that FORAS members are understanding when it comes to issues like confidentiality and private contracts.
- Shadowing another SLO is a great idea and should be encouraged.

Closing Remarks

Everyone who attended, contribute and spoke during the workshops was thanked. Niamh said that dialogue would be maintained over the coming months - especially in regard to the establishment of a network of groups.

For more information, contact ecproject@corkcityfc.net

