



# Report on Viagogo and Secondary Ticket Agencies

by Ross Mooring, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2013

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## Background

Following on from the Chelsea Supporters Trust first members' survey in April and August's AGM where the motion to campaign against Viagogo and other secondary ticket agencies overwhelmingly passed, the Trust, through a variety of means, has been gathering information on secondary ticket agencies and has been talking to our members, fellow Chelsea supporters and other Trusts, listening to their views and ideas and looking into potential solutions.

Here is a brief summary of what the Trust has found to this point:

## Survey results and AGM vote

68.1% of CST members who had used Viagogo to sell or purchase Chelsea tickets classified themselves as dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the service and at August's AGM, 89.8% of voters voted for the Trust to campaign against Viagogo, rising to 93.3% when excluding abstentions.

From the survey, both sellers and buyers believe the fees that Viagogo charge to be excessive. There was also displeasure that the club used a service that profited from the sale of scarce Europa League final tickets at inflated prices. 85.4% of all respondents backed the use of a non-profit exchange.

## Viagogo and Chelsea FC

When a season ticket holder lists their seat with Viagogo for a match that person is charged as much as 18% of the game price for their seat in fees, while Viagogo charges as much as 33% on top of the listed value of the ticket to buyers. As an example, for a normal ticket costing a non-member £60, a season ticket holder will receive less than £50 and Viagogo sells it for roughly £80. This means that before tax, between the two transactions as much as 50% of the official price of the ticket goes to Viagogo. This does not compare at all well with Arsenal's own ticket exchange (see below for further details).

## Premier League Benchmarking Survey

Of the 18 Premier League clubs the Trust is gathering information on through the ticketing benchmarking survey, five clubs use Viagogo, three use StubHub, nine do not have a secondary ticket agency and Arsenal use their own ticket exchange. Of the clubs who have contracts with Viagogo and StubHub, six don't set a limit on the prices supporters can charge for their listings, leading the market to set prices. This of course goes completely against the ethos of football's "face value" culture.

This makes a mockery of Chelsea season ticket holders selling their seats on Viagogo significantly below the fee paid by buyers, who themselves are forced to pay well in excess of the club's already high prices, money that goes into the hands of Viagogo for merely handling relatively simple transactions.

I think we can all agree neither the unlimited pricing model nor high third party charges in the secondary ticket market is good for football supporters.

## **Spurs and StubHub**

At the beginning of this season Tottenham replaced their own secondary ticket service with a company called StubHub who, once games have sold out, allow season ticket holders to legally list their seats at whatever price they like. In spite of concerns represented by the Tottenham Hotspur Supporters Trust to Tottenham and StubHub, season ticket holders are listing their seats at vastly inflated prices - some seats for this season's games with Chelsea and Manchester United were listed at over £1,000. Tottenham Hotspur Supporters Trust has surveyed their members and found that 77% thought the primary purpose of a secondary ticket exchange should be to sell tickets at face value while 92% would like the club to consult supporters before entering into this type of arrangement, and the Chelsea Supporters Trust wholeheartedly agrees. Furthermore, several of the major Spurs supporting websites, fanzines and blogs have started an online petition against StubHub and to date it has received over 2,500 signatures.

## **Arsenal Ticket Exchange**

The Arsenal Ticket Exchange is the best and only example of a system approaching an "ethical" secondary ticket market in the Premier League that, once a game has sold out, allows season ticket holders to sell their seats at a cost of 10% of the game price of their ticket, which given the cost of attending Arsenal can be as much as £12 in some cases. Members can then purchase these seats at their normal sale price. Between the listing and sale of tickets, this works out at roughly 20% of the total charges Chelsea supporters face when buying and selling a single ticket on Viagogo.

The system also allows season ticket holders to sell their seats to any member they nominate at a cost of just 4%, meaning that season ticket holders can sell to friends, family or people they might be sharing a season ticket with, removing the hassle of selling or exchanging tickets in person.

## **Where to from here?**

Having noted the frankly ludicrous fees that football supporters are being charged in the "official" secondary ticket market across the Premier League and also that Chelsea supporters have been issued club bans for selling on tickets at face value (and, as a side issue, for the conduct of persons in their seats while ticket touts openly go about their business on the street before games), it is the Trust's position that a solution to this must be found.

Preferably, this would be in the form of an ethical ticket exchange for Chelsea supporters along similar lines to that run by Arsenal, but also potentially in the form of a Premier League wide exchange, for the benefit of all supporters of top flight football teams.

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