



## Chelsea Supporters Trust – 09 February 2016

### **Ticket Pricing - Statement of the Chelsea Supporters Trust**

The issue of Premier League (PL) ticket pricing has, rightly, hit the headlines in recent days. Television money is not being used to cap or reduce ticket prices, as many supporters hoped, but to further fill the wallets of players and agents. For certain clubs to increase prices of tickets at this time shows an arrogant disregard for their supporters that is breath-taking to behold.

There are supporter-related issues which affect Chelsea supporters specifically, and the Chelsea Supporters Trust will continue to campaign on those. The future of Chelsea Pitch Owners, the proposed move to an as-yet-unspecified temporary stadium and the proposed redevelopment of Stamford Bridge are all enormously important issues to Chelsea supporters that we shall seek to influence club thinking on.

There are also wider issues where Chelsea are one of a number of clubs involved and pan-club campaigning is clearly more effective. Ticket pricing is obviously one of these. Discussion at the Chelsea Fans Forum is never going to be remotely as effective as a cohesive and motivated campaign involving supporters from a host of PL clubs.

The CST board wrote a letter to the club two weeks ago asking, among other things, for the following:-

- A freeze on all ticket prices in all categories for the three years of the new TV contract
- New money to be set aside to allocate every club a one million pound per season Away Supporter's Initiative fund, an end to away match categorisation and a cap on away ticket prices
- Price reductions for 18-21 year-old fans – the future generation of supporters

A similar letter was sent by a number of other PL trusts to their clubs. As a result of that letter, representatives from the CST board were invited to a discussion with senior Chelsea executives. The points made in the letter were reiterated to the club executives as part of a wider discussion on ticketing and related issues. This meeting took place the day before last week's widely-publicised Premier League shareholders meeting where ticket pricing was discussed. The Chelsea announcement on season and match ticket prices is usually made in late February or early March and it will be very interesting to see what stance Chelsea take.

To their credit, Chelsea have frozen Stamford Bridge ticket prices for most of the past decade, albeit from a very high base, and spend more than double the allocated £200,000 on the Away Supporter's Initiative. The extra money coming into the game, though, gives them more flex to be imaginative with regard to pricing initiatives, as it

does every PL club. Pricing strategy at the temporary home, wherever that is, will be both a challenge and an opportunity for Chelsea. It will be a challenge to ensure crowd optimisation and an opportunity to nurture young supporters.

The publicity generated by 10-12,000 supporters leaving Anfield on 77 minutes last Saturday shows that supporter-driven protest can work and praise is due to the organisers for making this happen. Liverpool are now clearly on the back foot after their ill-advised pricing strategy announcement. To his great credit Jamie Carragher has publicly spoken out against exploitative ticket pricing and Jurgen Klopp has asked that the issue be resolved. If influential figures within the game are actively saying enough is enough and the exploitation of supporter loyalty has gone too far, then the tide is clearly turning. The challenge is to effectively utilise this changing mood to try and effect a sustained reduction in prices for all Premier League matches.

The torrent of television money coming into the game should not be allowed to disappear into the pockets of players and agents, what Alan Sugar once called 'the prune juice effect'. Why should the loyalty and commitment of the lifeblood of the game, match-going supporters, be continually abused? It seems clear that more and more supporters, across all PL clubs, increasingly feel this way. The trick now is to build on and utilise that dissatisfaction to make a difference.

Supporter Trusts are organised, have effective media relationships, ongoing member dialogue and talk to each other. The sports media in general seem less patronising and more supportive of legitimate supporter concerns than at any time in the past and this clearly helps getting messages across to supporters and the wider public.

It is clear that there is a wide desire to build on the publicity generated in recent days and the CST will be active participants in forthcoming discussions as to the most effective way to nationally campaign on PL ticket pricing in the weeks, months and years ahead, building on existing initiatives. It is too early to say what form future campaigning will take, but we will aim to keep CST members and the wider Chelsea supporter base fully informed and engaged.

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If you have comments or questions on any of the above information, or any other CST activity, please let us know: [enquiries@chelseasupporterstrust.com](mailto:enquiries@chelseasupporterstrust.com)



## ***'Making Your Voice Heard'***

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