

Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018

Fellow supporters,

These are exciting and encouraging times for the FSF. I think we are in a better place than at any time since I became involved in the national supporters' movement more than two decades ago. We are taken more seriously by the football authorities, clubs and Government as a key player in the national debates than we used to be. We have a very strong staff team and are in a better financial position than we have ever been. We have had some notable achievements in various areas which you can read about in the Annual Review, although of course there is a huge amount still to be done.

As you may be aware, over the course of the last year there have been detailed discussions about the possibility of the FSF and Supporters' Direct (SD) coming together to form a new, single, united national supporters' organisation. Together with this letter you will find a document setting out what such an organisation might look like. The document was drawn up and agreed by the Chairs and CEOs of the two organisations and has been endorsed by your National Council.

The Board of SD has decided not to recommend that proposal to the SD Annual Conference. SD members will vote on the document at the Annual Conference, which is due to be held on the morning of 28th July 2018. The FSF Annual Conference is being held in the afternoon of the same day.

It would be quite inappropriate for me to attempt to influence that decision by SD, which is, of course, a separate, autonomous organisation. The future of SD is solely a matter for those Trusts in membership of SD, and we will respect whatever decision they take. We would not, in any event, wish to form a new organisation with an unenthusiastic partner. Shotgun marriages rarely succeed!

Your National Council has also resolved that, even if SD do not wish to come on board, we will propose to you, our members, the same vision outlined in the document, and the same, or very similar, structure, at a special Conference in November.

Why change? Our existing constitution has remained almost unaltered since its adoption in 2002, following the merger between the Football Supporters Association (FSA) and the National Federation of Football Supporters' Clubs (Nat Fed) to form the FSF, when in truth it was a bit of a scissors and paste job. It needs modernising to take account of today's circumstances.

For those many members who weren't around at the beginning of the century, and those of you who were but have forgotten, I have attached an appendix giving a brief history of the national supporters' movement.

The large majority of our elected National Council are elected as individual members. In between Conferences, they don't have a reference point to report back to and take guidance. The majority of decisions in football, apart from those taken by the FA, where we now have representation, are taken at league level, but our governance structures don't reflect this, even though our new "structured dialogue" arrangements do in that we have groups set up by league. Our National Council should now reflect this reality and establish an accountability framework to match it.

Whilst refocusing the main Council in this way, we must of course retain strong representation for our individual members who may not be involved in fans' organisations at club level.

We should also recognise the need to create representation for other significant groups who, whilst in membership of the FSF, are not explicitly represented at the moment such as those with a diversity focus and supporter trust owned clubs.

Uniquely among supporters' organisations, we represent all supporters, be they members of affiliated Trusts or Clubs or individual members or both, and we cover the full gamut of issues of concern to supporters. All our members, of whatever category, are affected by the nature and structures of football governance at both national and club level. It is the deficiencies in those structures, and often the lack of proper fan involvement and representation in them, which often lead to the "matchday" problems of prices, lack of standing areas, matches moved for TV, poor stewarding and so on. That is why any distinction between "governance" and "matchday issues" is a false one and we must tackle them all.

Our constitution and ways of working should be modernised to reflect these realities and make us fully fit for purpose (we are already pretty fit but can get even better!). It's an exciting future, and I hope you will come along for the ride.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm Clarke".

Malcolm Clarke,

Chair - The FSF