



The Case for a Single New Organisation

Mission & Delivery

The new organisation will exist to represent, promote and advocate issues of concern and interest to its membership, specifically incorporating the mission of both the FSF and Supporters' Direct (SD) into the representative structure, constitution and operating arrangements for the new organisation. The new organisation will be committed to delivering the current activity, policy and priorities of both SD and FSF as an integral part of a single, national football supporters' organisation.

The current work of FSF and SD, where distinct, is in many ways nevertheless linked. Many of the day-to-day supporter issues which FSF deals with arise partly as a result of poor governance in the game and insufficient engagement with supporters from clubs and could have been avoided with a greater proportion of clubs having board level supporter representation or being community owned. Forming a new single organisation recognises that link and is designed to enable supporters to have a strong and cohesive voice to advocate for the broad range of supporter issues.

The delivery model will be network-focussed, with national democratic representation structures organised according to levels of the football pyramid and specialist protected networks for community-owned clubs and diversity issues. However, where there is a desire, there will continue to be opportunity to meet and collaborate with colleagues on a regional basis. The network structure will give supporters' groups a single point of contact to provide support from individuals with experience and knowledge at the relevant level of football. The network model will enable a single representative body to assist and encourage supporters to work together to achieve common aims.

The existing SD and FSF staff possess a broad range of capability and experience which if brought together will provide a strong, balanced and highly skilled workforce in the interests of football supporters across a wide range of issues. This will also ensure that from the start, the missions of both the FSF and SD can be protected, enhanced and developed in a new organisation with the relevant specialist knowledge and experience embedded in the professional staff team.

The existing locations of staff and offices would also mean that the new organisation would begin with a spread of staff, with both a London and Sunderland location. There would be no immediate intention to close either office.

It is essential that areas of current SD work such as governance, reform and supporter ownership retain priority and focus in a new single organisation. The leadership of both organisations have stated their determination that the mission of SD will be protected, not least because of its influence on the cause of other issues and concerns to supporters. The new organisation will maintain a policy position that supports and promotes community ownership of clubs and supporter shareholdings where possible. This, and other related governance and supporter engagement work will be ringfenced within the new organisation, with a specialist department dedicated to the pursuit of those objectives. This will further be enhanced with organisational KPIs designed to incorporate this as priority area of activity against which the organisation's professional leadership will be measured, to be developed

by the proposed interim board. The FSF National Council and SD Board members have been working closely on proposals for further reform to governance of the game, illustrating the existing recognition of the significance of these issues to supporters.

Representation of community-owned clubs will be ensured through a specific network and council, with consequent guaranteed membership of the board for supporter organisations of community owned clubs.

Leadership

Should both existing organisations resolve to merge to create a new organisation, an interim board made up of three members appointed from each of the current FSF and SD boards, with co-chairs from each organisation, will be formed to oversee the process of establishment and inauguration. At the point of inauguration of the new organisation, a new board will be formed with three members from the interim board for the purposes of continuity, with the remainder subject to election after the first Annual General Meeting; we trust the new membership to put in place a balanced and progressive board.

The interim board will also be required to appoint a Chief Executive Officer for the new organisation. We envisage that the interim board would wish to ring-fence applications to the two existing CEOs. In the event of both applying for the post, it would use an objective and transparent appointment process which may well include independent input on the appointing panel. The aim is that whoever is appointed, the other would be offered a senior post so as not to lose their experience and skillset.

A previous study has shown that the benefits of operating shared service back office across SD and the FSF would be minimal. However, it was also expected that a new organisation could provide some productivity savings. The additional time created will allow those staff to focus more on real delivery as opposed to administration tasks.

An organisation that supports all football fans is a powerful voice and as such ought to benefit from some commercial sponsorships. Secondly, with the cross-section of skills in place there would be an aim to push for more of the consultancy type work that SD already undertakes in other sports. Although the new organisation would be a representative body only for football, the potential to provide services in certain other sports is significant and will help strengthen the organisation in the long term.

Potential Advantages of a Single Organisation

There could be a number of clear advantages arising from the creation of a single national supporters' organisation.

A united organisation might have great potential strength and influence, with the power of a single voice. It could eradicate the elements of confusion generated by the existence of two bodies sometimes perceived as being in competition with each other. It could allow for consistent and common messaging to fans, to football and governmental authorities, and to the broader media, and also enable much greater lobbying power.

A single organisation could also enable the pulling together of both financial and personnel resources, without competition for funding and removing concerns from funding bodies about unnecessary duplication of activity.

With a single set of networks and representative structures, there will be savings of activist time, with supporters' trusts in particular no longer being expected to attend two sets of meetings. The staff team could also benefit from the removal of duplication of back-office

tasks, allowing more time and attention to be devoted to front-line campaigning activity, policy development and services to members.

Working with the funders will be key; although funding commitments have been made, it will be essential to ensure all core areas of both SD and the FSF remain supported. The leadership of a new organisation would work to balance resource and prioritise work, taking into account the areas of important work that both the FSF and SD currently undertake.

A single organisation could also create the breadth of remit that allows us to become a “one-stop shop” for all supporter issues, and a staff team large enough both to guarantee maintaining focus on current core subject matter and to develop an even wider range of knowledge and skills. Pulling all the staff together into one team will facilitate a good geographical spread and lend an impetus of new-found dynamism to creativity and fresh thinking, building on the best of the methodologies of both current organisations.

Objectives and Mission Statement

The objectives of the organisation are:

- (a) To encourage, promote and develop support of association football and goodwill between football supporters at local, national and international levels.
- (b) To support and protect the interests of member supporters’ trusts, clubs, individuals and, wherever necessary, their dependents.
- (c) To promote good governance in sport and encourage clubs to be run in a sustainable manner
- (d) To promote the benefits of and encourage the creation of community-owned clubs, and supporter representation on club boards.
- (e) To work with supporters, governing bodies, the leagues and clubs to encourage, promote and embed meaningful supporter engagement at all levels.
- (f) To gain representation for football supporters on the executive and governing bodies of association football.
- (g) To provide an independent and democratic structure through which the views of supporters may be channelled and articulated.
- (h) To initiate and support campaigns on issues of concern to football supporters.
- (i) To carry out research into and disseminate information on football related issues.
- (j) To promote diversity and oppose all forms of discrimination in relation to football.
- (k) To work against the abuse of football by those who bring violent intent and actions to our football grounds.
- (l) To liaise with all interested parties to achieve these objectives.

The organisation will be non-partisan, non-profit making and non-party political. As a consequence, any person, group (including fanzines and websites) or democratically-run supporters’ organisation supporting football and the objectives of the organisation shall be eligible for membership at the appropriate tier.

The new organisation must agree a single set of objectives, constitution and mission, incorporating those of both SD and the FSF. that both presently stand for. The constitution will also require a threshold of a 70% vote of members to amend it.

Membership

Historically, SD's membership has been its member trusts, each of whom also have their own membership. The FSF has a mix of individual and organisation members. A new organisation will be structured democratically, encompassing the full range of current memberships.

The membership structure will allow for the participation of individuals, of democratically organised and formally structured supporters' trusts and groups, and of entities in between – groupings that are more than just individuals but who do not have a democratic structure or accountability, or who do not meet some of the other requirements of affiliate status.

We are therefore proposing three categories of membership:

- **Individual members** – as is currently the case within the FSF, anyone can become a member by accepting the conditions of membership and providing a name, email address and the name of the football club that they support. It is proposed that in order to exercise a vote at a meeting, individual members would also need to provide additional personal details, including their postal address.

- **Affiliate members** – these will be a supporters' group who fulfil a number of key criteria of basic sound governance and democratic principles. These requirements would be:

- The organisation must have a written constitution
- Their membership must be open to all supporters of the relevant football club at an affordable fee, if any
- The operation of the organisation must be independent of the football club (unless that organisation is a Trust that is the direct owner of its football club)
- The organisation must have a democratic structure and decision-making process, based on one member, one vote
- The majority of the organisation's governing committee must be elected by the membership, either at a general meeting or by postal or online ballot
- The organisation must publish either audited or certified annual accounts or at least ones approved by its membership at an AGM
- The organisation must keep track of its membership, holding basic details of each current member
- The organisation must adopt a diversity policy (a template can be supplied)

All trusts in full, current membership of Supporters' Direct will already meet these criteria. There would not be a limit imposed as to the number of affiliates at each club provided all the above criteria are met.

- **Associate members** – this is the tier of membership for all those entities in between individual membership and affiliate membership; in other words, any supporters' group or collective based on more than one individual, but which does not fulfil all the criteria listed

above for an affiliate. This could therefore be democratically-structured groups which are restrictive in the membership they appeal to, like regional or geographically based supporters' clubs; organisations that are not independent of the football club, like some clubs' fans' forums; traditional fanzines, or newer collective entities like fan websites, Facebook groups, podcasts, Twitter feeds, etc.

Membership fees

It is proposed that membership for individuals and for associates remains, as it currently is within the FSF, free of charge. Our proposal is that membership for affiliated organisations could be subject to an annual fee, to be set and regularly reviewed by the organisation's National Council (see below for details of this body).

Decision-making and Structures

Ultimate decision-making and determination of policy within the organisation will of course reside with the General Meeting, at which all members of every tier of membership will be able to exercise their votes. It is proposed that the **General Meeting** be held every year, in other words an Annual General Meeting.

Between sessions of the general meeting, there is a need for another body to deal with policy issues and the general direction of the organisation. It is proposed to establish a **National Council** of the organisation to meet between AGMs, with representation from all tiers of the membership and throughout the football pyramid. It is envisaged that this body would meet at least three times between AGMs.

The primary vehicle for activity and the involvement of affiliates between AGMs will be through 'networks' based mainly around the various tiers of the football pyramid. The networks would be expected to meet three or four times a year, as well as being in contact virtually. Meetings can also be attended by individual and associate members (partly welcome from clubs where we have no fully-fledged affiliate), but only affiliate organisations would be able to vote. This could act as an incentive towards the establishment of a democratic supporters' organisation or trust where none yet exists. We would propose the following networks of affiliates:

- Premier League
- Championship
- League One and Two (combined)
- National Game

In addition, to ensure that no focus is lost on the current SD core issue of supporter/community ownership, we would propose an additional network of Supporter/Community-owned clubs, based on those clubs where Supporters Trusts own at least 50% of a club's shares, albeit the network would be able to invite other Trusts involvement for special cases, e.g. a Trust who owns 49% of shares in its club.

The sixth and final network that we would propose would be the Fans for Diversity network, consisting of individuals and groups who have been active and received funding as part of the Fans for Diversity programme run in partnership with Kick It Out. This we consider necessary not only to assist and encourage the development of this network, but also as a step towards diversifying the membership and representative bodies of the organisation.

There could be either a demand or a need for further networks to be established in future. We would propose that the National Council be authorised to establish a new network, subject to the subsequent ratification by the General Meeting.

Each of these networks would then have the right to elect an equal number of representatives from among their membership to represent that network on the organisation's National Council. Those representatives would be elected by the network meeting at or just before the AGM, for a two-year term. If during that two-year term the club of an elected member is relegated or promoted out of the league or leagues represented, that elected member would have to forfeit their place on the National Council, with a replacement being elected by the network.

As well as the networks of affiliates appointing National Council members, it will also be necessary for individual members and associate members to seek and achieve representation on the National Council. It is therefore proposed that at the General Meeting the individual members and associate members, from among their own numbers respectively, also elect members to the National Council.

The composition of the National Council would therefore consist of:

- EPL network reps 3
- EFL Championship network reps 3
- EFL Leagues One and Two network reps 3
- National game network reps 3
- Community-owned clubs network reps 3
- Fans for Diversity network reps 3
- Associate reps (elected at AGM) 3
- Individual members' reps (elected at AGM)6

The National Council will also need a Chair and Vice-Chair: these will be additional posts directly elected by the entire membership at the AGM.

The National Council would also have the authority to co-opt additional members and/or representatives from other organisations to take part in its proceedings.

The strategic direction of the organisation, its financial and employment affairs – and in cases of urgency between National Council meetings, decisions on policy – will be the province of an **Executive Committee** or **Board**, which will need to be a smaller, tighter body able to meet more frequently.

We propose that the Executive Committee / Board be elected primarily by the National Council from among its own membership.

The EC/Board would comprise nine members elected by and from the National Council (on staggered three-year terms, with three elected each year).

In the first year of the new organisation's existence, three board members would be elected for a three-year term, three for a two-year term and the three from the interim board for a one-year term, to begin the process of the board being elected three a year for three-year terms.

In addition, there would be ex-officio places on the EC/Board for the organisation's Chair and Vice-Chair.

The EC/Board would also have the power to co-opt further members, should they consider it necessary for reasons of diversity or required skills.

Voting

There are various forums in which votes can take place.

For network meetings, including the election of National Council members, each affiliate would have one vote. Associate and individual members would not have a vote at these meetings.

At the General Meeting, when electing individual members' representatives to National Council, each individual member would have one vote. Similarly, when electing associate members' representatives to National Council, each associate member would have one vote.

At National Council meetings, each Council member would have one vote, with the chair having an additional casting vote if required.

At EC/Board meetings, each board member would have one vote, with the chair having an additional casting vote if required.

At General Meetings, voting will be weighted as follows:

- Individual members – one vote
- Associate members – one vote
- Affiliate members – five votes

For the constitution of the new organisation to be changed a 70% majority of votes cast will be required.

Interim Board

Should the memberships of both current organisations vote to form a new single organisation, the aim will be for the new organisation to be operative by January 1st 2019, with an aim of having an inaugural general meeting in November of 2018. Following the votes at respective AGMs and until the first AGM of the new organisation, an interim board will be created to assist and guide the two CEOs in working towards that goal. The boards of SD and the FSF will each select three of its Directors to sit on this interim board and it is expected that both Chairmen will be one of the three. The interim board will operate with Co-chairs, those being the current Chairs of both the FSF and SD.

To ensure an element of continuity, the interim board will appoint three of its members to take up the three one-year board posts of the new organisation once it moves from a shell to actually being operational. The rest of the interim board will be entitled to stand through the normal representative elections.

Incorporation

The decision regarding the type of entity that is incorporated will be decided by the interim board. The board will utilise the initial report already commissioned by the FSF, but recognising that this advice was not jointly sought, and nor did it advise on some significant relevant aspects relating to incorporation of a new organisation, and highlights areas where

the consultant was not qualified to provide advice, further supplementary specific expert advice will be sought prior to a final decision being made by the interim board. The interim board will therefore commission financial, tax and legal advice, experience from current mutual organisations and examine whether there are potential relevant future funding streams where particular forms of incorporation are prescribed and, alongside the existing initial advice, make a decision on the type of entity which is the most appropriate form for the new organisation to take in the long term.

Other Sports

Both organisations – SD to a much greater extent than FSF – have previously been involved in providing advice and support to groups from other sports. We are keen to continue to develop that role as a consultancy, sharing relevant expertise with groups outside of football.

However, we must consider that we are establishing a single representative football fans' organisation, and therefore other sports will not have representation within its structures, or any voting rights on football policy. We would be happy to consider the establishment of and service for networks for other sports and ensure that their wishes and needs as customers of our consultancy services are articulated and met, but that can be done via the networks and representative staff rather than via the football supporter structures. We believe supporting other sports in this fashion will be beneficial in the long term, although support to organisations from other sports would be limited to that which they can afford to "purchase", and no 'football money' would be used to support work in any other sport.

It is recognised that Trusts and possibly supporter groups of other sports where work is being funded will need to be affiliated to an umbrella organisation. To support this a "Friends of" scheme could be set up to allow these organisations to align to an umbrella and ensure their networks are effectively supported.