Aston Villa Football Club

Fan Engagement Report 2023 / 2024

This document outlines the principal areas of Fan Engagement undertaken by the club with our fans across season 2023 / 2024 and how we implemented the commitments made in our 2023 / 2024 Fan Engagement Plan.

On our website www.avfc.co.uk we host our Fan Engagement section:

Link Fan Engagement

At the start of the 2023 / 2024 season, the club published our first Fan Engagement Plan (FEP)

Link AVFC FEP 2023 / 2024

The plan showed the following areas:

Key Roles and Responsibilities

Fan Advisory Board (FAB)

Heritage Assets

Working Groups

Wider Consultation

This report also includes other elements of our Fan Engagement:

Fans Fund Project

Fans Charter

Official Complaints Process

Club Contact Information

Fan Engagement Plan 2024 / 2025

Key Roles & Responsibilities

Overall responsibility (Nominated Board Level Official) for the compliance with the Fan Engagement Standard now sits with Ben Hatton, Chief Operating Officer. Ben is supported by Chris Hornbuckle, Vice President of Business Development and Fan Engagement.

Our Fan Advisory Board process is supported by Tommy Jordan, Communications Director.

Gavin Forbes, Senior Marketing Manager coordinated fan surveys.

Lee Preece, Supporter Liaison Manager has day-to-day responsibility for the FES.

James Lowbridge, Senior Programmes Manager (Community Relations) led our work on the Premier League Fans Fund Project.

Chris Heck, President of Business Operations delivered two key videos to fans (free to view) on our Villa TV platform. These gave key updates on club matters, many of which had been raised and discussed with our FAB.

Link Chris Heck Interview December 2023

Link Chris Heck Interview May 2024

Fan Advisory Board

The FAB is our primary vehicle for Fan Engagement. The Fan Representatives on our FAB were already engaged with the club via our long-established Fans Consultation Group. Members of the FAB were outlined in our FEP 2023 / 2024.

Across 2023 / 2024 we met nine times, a combination of formal & informal meetings.

The agenda for formal meetings are set by the FAB representatives and these took place on16th September (Villa Park) & continued 28th September (Teams) and at Villa Park 20th December, 28th February & 22nd May. Meeting notes, showing the key issues raised by fan representatives across the season can be found at the link below:

Link FAB meeting notes

Informal meetings took place:

23rd October, 22nd November, 31st January & 24th April.

No notes are published for informal meetings. These meetings create a more relaxed environment for consultation, and the topics discussed on these evenings included:

23rd October FAB representation on Away Ticket Working Group, FES update, FAB guest representatives, ticketing (European Conference League ticket collections), Cycle routes and Cycle storage.

22nd November Mobile Phone ticketing, Holte facilities, Transport Officer, Legia Warsaw match, use of GA+ facilities, Accessibility Compliance, FA Cup ticket pricing and Villa Park development.

31st January Transport, EDI update, Crest update, Stadium capacity increase, Ticketing and AV150

24th April FAB Co-chair and Ticket pricing 2024 / 2025

Following the FEP being published, 43 fans contacted the Supporter Liaison Manager to register their interest as a Guest Representative. On 22nd November, the informal meeting included two guest representatives (selected at random) who had contacted the Supporter Liaison Manager. No other guest representatives were invited to other meetings.

Chris Heck, President of Business Operations attended two FAB meetings (16th September and 20th December).

An end of year FAB Assessment was submitted to the Premier League on 15th July. The assessment was completed by Lee Preece on behalf of the club and Co-Chairs David Michael and Mo Razzaq on behalf of FAB fan representatives. Areas for development of the FAB next season were agreed with the Co-Chairs, including the need for a consistent timescale to be identified for meetings, agenda submission and the publishing of notes and a look at the makeup of the FAB representatives to ensure the views of non-season ticket holders are heard.

Heritage Assets

Crest Consultation October 2023. Aston Villa published a survey with a view to reaching an informed conclusion with respect to its future crest. The survey was sent as a unique link via email to each eligible Fan ID. We had over 16,000 validated responses from supporters across our global base of Season Ticket Holders, Members, and those on the Waiting List (to purchase a season ticket). The FA were engaged throughout the process to ensure compliance with FA rules relating to heritage assets – section M.

Our new crest (and brand guidelines) for 2024 / 2025 season were launched on 31st May 2024.

Concerns regarding the consultation process were raised by the FAB on 22nd May (agenda item 3). As stated in the club's response and discussed on the evening, the club acknowledged that certain groups of fans believe the process should have run differently, and whilst no other Heritage Assets were / are being considered for change and / or consultation we will take these views into account.

A list of our Heritage Assets can be found within our FEP.

Working Groups

Away Ticket Consultation Group (ATCG) - following initial consultation meetings with the ATCG on 18th May and 8th November, liaison and consultation was informal across the remainder of the season, with suggested sales criteria being emailed to fan representatives in advance of important matches (Europa Conference League matches for example).

Unfortunately, towards the latter end of the season we encountered a breach of confidentiality with draft criteria for a European away match being published on social media before consultation had been completed and the final criteria agreed.

AV150 - 2024 marks the 150th anniversary of Aston Villa. To ensure a season of celebrations the club has formed an Honorary Anniversary Board to prepare our plans. The Board is made up of former players, managers, community, fans, and club representatives. The Board has met five times across season 2023 / 2024 and led by Richard Stevens, Vice President of Strategy & Analytics.

1897 – during the season, the club was contacted by a new fan group 1897, who wanted to help the club ensure the atmosphere at Villa Park was second to none. We met with representatives of the group on 26th March and have quickly established a strong working relationship with them. For our match versus Bournemouth, the visiting team did not require the Upper Tier of our away section, so we arranged for 100 seats to be reserved and sold exclusively to 1897 group supporters. This allowed them to arrange displays and coordinate support for the team and for their group.

Following on from this successful trial, 1897 subsequently supported the club with TIFO displays, flag display set up and pre-match activity, with group members invited to hold the centre circle banner in place before key matches.

Official Lions Clubs – the club maintains a year-round relationship with our Official Lions club network. In 2023 / 2024 we had 43 UK clubs and 86 Overseas clubs. Our Supporter Liaison Manager continues to be the Lions Club Chairpersons point of contact and communication with the network maintained throughout the season.

As part of our commitment to the Lions Club network, we continue to offer access for Overseas clubs to a small ticket allocation for home matches enabling fans from all over the world to secure flights and hotels early in the knowledge that their tickets are secure. We also offer limited access to away tickets for both overseas and domestic clubs. All ticketing is processed by our Supporter Liaison Manager on a match-to-match basis.

If we travel abroad pre-season, we always look to consult with the Official Lions Clubs based in the country we are visiting to see if we can arrange events and access to ticketing for these pre-season matches.

The Aston Villa Foundation engaged with Official Lions Clubs from Cornwall, Hampshire & Sussex to run "evening with" events which successfully raised funds to support Foundation activities in Birmingham.

The Foundation also ran two mental health related events as part of Men's Health Week and Stress Awareness Week which were an open invite to Lions Clubs both UK and internationally. As well as UK attendees, we had fans join from Canada, Cayman Islands, Ireland, South Africa, Australia, Iraq, Ghana, Thailand, USA and Switzerland.

Womens Team - Emily Peacock, Marketing Executive (Women's Team) leads on engagement with fans of our Women's Team. Emily hosted three meetings with fan groups Villa Bellas and Villa & Proud on 28th September, 18th October, and 7th May. No formal notes were kept of the meetings. Constant contact between Emily and key members of the fan groups is maintained and extends to the Aston Villa Women Fan Club and Aston Villa Women Supporters Association.

On 6th November, Villa Bellas founder and Villa and Proud Co-Chair Sarah Breslin went over to our Training Ground talk to the players and support staff about Villa Bellas and Villa & Proud.

Her Game Too – our mens home match versus Chelsea focussed our support on the #HerGameToo campaign. Through Villa Bellas, our Official women and non-binary network, we identified two Her Game Too ambassadors. Both Priyanka and Lena were interviewed at half-time pitchside as part of our supporting Villa Bellas and the #HerGameToo campaign. The support for the campaign was highlighted in our Matchday Guide.

Wider Consultation

Across the season, we conducted surveys and research activity ranging from matchday experience to partner surveys. We received a combined total of 32.7k responses.

23/24 Matchday Fan Experience Survey - HOSPITALITY

Matchday Experience across the season 308 responses

Matchday experience feedback for Hospitality ticket holders at Villa Park.

Delivery QR codes available on tables and automated email sent post-matchday to selected % of lead bookers.

Output

1. NPS score for each area of hospitality by fixture.

2. Experience and service scores for each area to feed into operational reviews, leading to general enhancements.

3. Regression analysis of impact of service/ experience to NPS score given.

23/24 Matchday Fan Experience Survey - GA+ / PREMIUM

Matchday Experience across the season 500 responses

Matchday experience feedback for GA+ (The Terrace View & The Lower Grounds) ticket holders at Villa Park.

Delivery Automated email sent post-matchday to selected % of ticket holders.

Output

1. NPS score for each area of GA+ by fixture.

2. Experience and service scores for each area to feed into operational reviews, leading to general enhancements.

3. Regression analysis of impact of service/ experience to NPS score given.

23/24 Matchday Fan Experience Survey - GA

Matchday Experience across the season 1,912 responses

Matchday experience feedback for General Admission ticket holders at Villa Park.

Delivery Automated email sent post-matchday to selected % of ticket holders.

Output

1. Assessment of Service and Experience across three intervals - pre-match, in-game & post-match by fixture.

2. Service & Experience scores by stand.

3. NPS scores by stand.

4. Open response feedback for internal stakeholders to review.

AVFC Partner Survey

Partnerships across the season 500 responses

Sample of AVFC and PL fans across four global regions.

Delivery Survey sent and delivered via YouGov's global consumer panel.

Output

1. Understand brand and partnership awareness for principal Partners affiliated to Aston Villa.

2. Responses also used to understand receptiveness to prospective partners.

AVWFC x LEGO

Unstoppable Workshop Feedback August 2023 32 responses

Feedback from workshop/partner event held at BMH.

Delivery Invites sent via email to workshop attendees.

Output

1. Feedback on the event from initial communication through to post-event.

2. Feedback shared anonymously with the partners to demonstrate overall positive feedback.

3. Results used to encourage Partnerships team to hold similar events in the future."

2022-23 Women's Season Tickets

Renewal August 2023 25 responses

Delivery Invites sent via email to a sample of Aston Villa Women Season Ticket Holders yet to renew their ticket for 23/24 season.

Output

1. Support the future growth of Aston Villa Women's ticketing by understanding the perspective of season ticket holders who had not yet renewed.

2. Develop the overall season ticket holder benefits or adapt ticketing strategies to meet the desires of attending fans.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Survey

EDI Monitoring September 2023 537 responses

Monitoring the diversity of our supporters and other groups associated with the Club. The survey questions have been designed to help us to conduct this process and will make a real difference to what we do.

Delivery Invites sent to sample of Premier League matchday attendees via multiple channels through the CRM.

Output

1. Report for Aston Villa fan base identifying & splits of protected characteristics.

2. Feedback on accessibility, highlighting any issues around discriminatory behaviour witnessed and determining areas of improvement.

Crest Consultation

Crest Consultation October 2023 16,000 responses

Following on from recent communication and in keeping with its commitment to continue to consult with fans on a regular basis, Aston Villa published a survey with a view to reaching an informed conclusion with respect to its future crest.

Delivery Survey was sent as a unique link via email to each eligible Fan ID.

Output

1. 16,000 validated surveys… Supporters across our global base of Season Ticket Holders, Members and those on the Waiting List.

2. Visually striking and recognisable… 60% believe that whilst the new crest should be claret and blue, it should also be visually striking and recognisable.

3. How the shield design reflects our history… 52% strongly agreed or agreed that the shield shape design best reflects our heritage, with 20% holding a neutral point of view

4. Building a picture of our heritage… 68% felt that it is most important for the crest to build a picture of our heritage as a traditional club.

5. Our name represented… A combined 81% of you would like to see the name represented as either Aston Villa FC or Aston Villa.

6. Lion facing left… As for the Rampant Lion, 47% would like to see it facing to the left and 30% open to either direction.

7. 73% agree that 1874 should be included in the crest design

8. 1982 European Cup celebration… An overwhelming 85% would like to ensure we incorporate our 1982 European Cup star into the design.

Memberships Product Survey

Memberships October 2023 2,894 responses

Delivery Fourth Wall

Output

Results focused on the quality of existing gifts and assessing ideas for new ones in future membership packages.

Premier League Matchday Experience Survey

Matchday Experience October to November 2023 1840 responses

This Matchday Fan Experience Survey examines fans' attitudes toward their Club and the overall matchday experience, alongside Club and League engagement metrics.

Delivery Invites sent to sample of Premier League matchday attendees via multiple channels through the CRM.

Output

1. Aston Villa's Matchday Fan Experience Score for 2023/24 is 68.6, placing it 10th in the League and close to the League average, though there are clear patterns underlying this.

2. The Club performs much higher than the Premier League average when it comes to overall impressions of the Club. The majority of Aston Villa respondents are positive towards the Club, think it is well-run, and think it has a long-term vision. These scores have remained relatively stable over a three-year period.

3. On the other hand, the Club performs below the Premier League average on specific measures relating to Villa Park facilities and some fan engagement measures. Many of these are trending downwards over the same three-year period.

4. For instance, the proportion who rate highly the range and quality of food and drink available has halved since season 21/22, satisfaction with the performance of catering staff is the lowest in the League, the proportion who rate the Club highly for investing in facilities has fallen by over a third, and ratings for cleanliness have fallen by around a quarter.

5. When it comes to fan engagement, there has been a significant fall in the proportion who think the Club responds to contact, listens to supporters, or is open and transparent (though the latter score remains above the Premier League average).

6. Addressing perceptions relating to the food and drink offering at Villa Park could help improve the Matchday Fan Experience Score given that most Aston Villa respondents say they spend £10 or more on food or drink across the course of a matchday either at Villa Park or outside the stadium.

7. Despite some of those concerns, most Aston Villa respondents still think that Villa Park is a welcoming environment overall and that the match atmosphere is strong."

Villa Members Annual Survey

Memberships April 2024 4,209 responses

AVFC Members & Non-Members Survey 2024 to assess fan happiness and the chance recommend improvements to membership.

Delivery Fourth Wall

Output

Quantifiable feedback and reaction to membership products available.

Food & Beverage Feedback - GA

Matchday Experience May 2024 1,913 responses

The research that will be delivered as part of this project intends to capture fans' awareness of recent F&B improvements, the impact of them, and to understand which areas are not currently meeting expectations of supporters.

Delivery Goodform

1. Attendee information – stand, membership status, companions, typical food & drink purchases at Villa Park.

2. Awareness and impact of recent changes / improvements.

3. Rating of food & drink experience – quality, variety, price & service, queueing, concourse space.

4. Comparison to previous offering / historic use.

5. Typical spend + potential spend (opportunity to increase fans spend).

6. Further areas to improve & suggestions around food & beverage types on offer.

7. Within the survey, fans will be routed / shown a tailored UX based on their responses given (i.e. if a certain offering is only available in the Holte End, it will only show to those who state they sat in that area of the stadium).

Aston Villa Women's Team Partnerships Survey 2023/24

Partnerships May 2024 585 responses

Delivery Sent to Aston Villa fans with differing degrees of engagement with the Women's team via email.

Output

1. Understand brand and partnership awareness for Partners affiliated to the Aston Villa Women's team.

2. Responses also used to understand receptiveness to prospective partners.

Fans Fund Project

The Fans Fund Project is a good example of how we have connected with and supported Supporter Groups. We have funded four community groups in total, which has included Villans Together and Saathi Villans to deliver activities at Villa Park. This has helped raise their profile and increase their membership within the local community, as well as expand their reach to engage with more supporters close to Villa Park. We have also connected with Villa Belles to support the female element of the Fans Fund project, more information below:

Towards the end of 2023, the Aston Villa Foundation held a series of community networking meetings at Villa Park, consulting with a range of local organisations, councillors, and supporter/fan groups, to gain an understanding of the local need and help steer the direction of the Fans Fund project It was decided within the meetings, that we will position Fans Fund to engage with at least four community organisations, local to the football club, who could successfully open the doors and connect the club to residents, who live close to the stadium.

This localised approach, is aligned to the Foundation's new strategy of enabling and connecting with local community-based organisations, as well as benefitting residents who are most affected by the football club, especially due to the impact of matchdays (i.e. road closures, noise, litter, and disruption to everyday life). This project has been conceptualised to create a stronger bond with the local community and help create an affinity to the club through feeling like the doors are open to them and the stadium is a community asset, rather than an exclusive venue.

We designed the project in such a way that the impact and benefits are mutual. More specifically, it has provided a unique and inclusive opportunity for people to experience sporting and non-sporting facilities available at Villa Park. In return, it has created a sense of belonging to the stadium and club amongst local residents who have never attended a football game, accessed the building, or accessed any of the Foundation's services previously.

Since January 2024, we have worked in collaboration with three community organisations, two of whom are club support groups (Villans Together and Saathi Villans), who have led on the delivery of a range of activities (with the support from AV Foundation staff) and recruited both young people and adults to participate in weekly sessions at Villa Park. Through regular engagement in the weekly physical activity sessions, we have seen a range of benefits for

participants, who have indicated an improvement in aspects such as their physical and mental wellbeing, built friendships and connections with likeminded participants, as well as creating a stronger connection with the football club.

Villans Together - we are working with fan group and community organisation, Villans Together, who have offered a similar approach to the above, but for local men from Aston. The weekly football sessions take place every Thursday evening and has engaged with over 25 men since January. The session has been delivered collaboratively, with one coach from each organisation working together to deliver a range of footballing activities each week.

Villans Together are a community organisation and a fan group, who aims to encourage more ethnic communities to take an interest in football and support Aston Villa Football Club. Nilesh Chauhan, Founder of Villans Together and Fans for Diversity Campaign Manager, states that "We aim to bring communities together by lighting up Villa Park and making Aston Villa the most all-inclusive, culturally diverse and growing supported clubs in the UK. We want to provide an enjoyable experience for all supporters and hold inclusion and anti-discrimination at the core of our morals".

Nilesh continues "the Premier League Fans Fund project has significantly enhanced the impact of our Local Play initiative, contributing to the holistic development of the local community through football active football session. We have already seen a range of benefits such as an increased engagement and a greater connection with the local community, participants having a sense of community belonging, as well as having a safe space to play each week, with the removal of financial barriers."

Kashif Bin Taj is one participant who has been attending regularly, he states that "the PL Fans Fund project has impacted my life by keeping me fit, keeping me motivated to play football, because I stopped for a while, I gave up on it (especially being unemployed) and thanks to the PL Fans Fund, its helped me to get back in shape and feel the love of the game again".

When asked about how he knew about the sessions, Kashif added "I only live down the road. I got a phone call from my brother, who got my involved to play. I love the game of football and keeping fit, so I was like…absolutely! It's been really good since. As a massive Villa fan myself, I do come to some of the games, but coming to the sessions at Villa Park has got me involved and watching more."

When asked about the benefits of the sessions, Kashif outlined that "it's the connections you make with the people you play with. It keeps you in shape. It keeps you fit. Keeps you learning the game. It brings everyone together, which is a good thing".

Andrew Kyriakou, is another participant that was interviewed about his time on the project so far. Andrew states that "my next-door neighbour got me involved as he played football every Thursday and he told me to come along, and I haven't stopped since." He added "The PL Fans Fund has impacted my life in several different ways, my fitness levels for one. But mainly it's the community thing, new friends and just being part of the community…this community is part of my upbringing, hence why I am a Villa fan! My grandmother used to own the Villa Fish Bar, so I used to be around these parts all the time, so to be back here (Villa Park), apart from actually watching the Villa, it's great to be playing here again, it's fantastic".

When asked about his connection to the club, Andrew mentioned, "I suppose (the Fans Fund project) has made me more connected because I am around these parts again and I feel more

connected to my Nan again. As I said, I used to be around these parts all the time. I remember when Euro 96 was at Villa Park, which was a glorious time, and my Nan had the fish and chip shop then. We had international visitors (Scottish, Swedish etc.) and I remember playing football with them on the grass pitches close to the stadium. So, coming back to the stadium each week to play, has reconnected me to those times really."

Saathi Villans - in February, we commenced sessions with another community organisation, Saathi House, who is also a fan group in their own right (Saathi Villans), to provide a space at the stadium for young women and girls multi-sports session every Wednesday (2-3pm). The group, which is 20 strong, has been from a local all-girls Islamic school, and again, like other groups engaged in this project, many of the girls have never stepped foot in Villa Park before.

Tiffany Joseph, the Saathi House Centre Manager states that: *"Fans Fund has helped us to provide opportunities for community members to engage in physical activity and sports, promoting a healthier lifestyle and overall well-being. It has enabled us to have a first-class venue at Villa Park, which is hard to come by in the area, and pay qualified coaches and trainers to lead sessions, ensuring a high-quality experience for participants. Additionally, it has helped us invest in equipment and resources to enhance the sessions, which is not only promoting physical fitness but foster teamwork, communication, and social interaction among participants, creating a sense of community and belonging."*

For the WSL element of the Fans Fund project, the Foundation provide unique and inclusive opportunities for girls, particularly those from underrepresented and diverse ethnic communities, to experience sporting and non-sporting activities at facilities available at Villa Park and the Inner-City Academy. In return, we have seen benefits such as a sense of belonging and connectivity to Aston Villa being formed, amongst those communities who may have never attended a football game or accessed any Foundation's services. This connectivity and belonging have been strengthened with the activations also linked to a WSL fixture, to provide first-time opportunities for girls to attend AVFC Women's matches, as free tickets to games are distributed to all that take part.

To help create a welcoming atmosphere for the girls, we have positively engaged with Women's Supporters Club, Villa Bellas, to receive their support for the project to try to increase and diversify their membership. For example, we have consulted with the group to request their support for the match day attendance, offering a meeting place and friendly face for those attending games for the first time (which occurred for the West Ham fixture).

Sarah Breslin, Founder Villa Bellas states that "*The project is fantastic and definitely something Villa Bellas is happy and proud to support. One of our main focus areas is to support and encourage participation at grassroots level and help grow the spectatorship of the women's game. Coincidently Sunday's game (West Ham Fixture) is our dedicated Her Game Too fixture, so a great one for the girls to attend."*

In the future, Villa Bellas have agreed to support the project, to improve the experience, pathway, and connectivity that we can create for local girls.

Fans Charter

The club maintained our Fans Charter across 2023/2024.

Link Fans Charter

Official Complaints Process

Fan complaints continue to be registered by fans via our email address fancomplaints@avfc.co.uk .

Complaints are logged by the Supporter Liaison Manager and forwarded for the appropriate department to respond accordingly.

We endeavour to respond to complaints at our earliest opportunity.

Club Contact Information

Key contact information for the club can be found on the Contact Us page of our website.

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Link Contact Us

Our Support Liaison Manager can be contacted as follows:

Email lee.preece@avfc.co.uk

Tel: 0121 326 1502

Fan Engagement Plan 2024 / 2025

In line with Premier League commitments, the club will publish our Fan Engagement Plan for next season, outlining our aims and objectives for Fan Engagement across season 2024 / 2025.

The Fan Engagement Plan will be published on our website in August 2024.