Fan Advisory Board (FAB) 11th September 2024 Villa Park

FAB representatives

Joanne McKibbens	Aston Villa Disabled Supporters Association
John Gillett	Lions Clubs
Lena Curran	Fan Representative
Guri Nandra	Punjabi Villans
Connor Smith	Fan Representative
Mo Razzaq	Aston Villa Supporters Trust
Sarah Breslin	Villa Bellas
David Michael	My Old Man Said
Dave Woodhall	Heroes & Villans
Scott Jones	Villa Talk
Kerry Lenihan	Fan Representative
Ben Redding	Fan Representative

Apologies

Julian Bristow	Independent Supporters Clubs
Nilesh Chauhan	Villans Together

Club representatives

Ben Hatton	Chief Operating Officer
Chris Hornbuckle	Vice President, Business Development & Fan Engagement
Richard Stevens	Vice President, Strategy & Analytics
Tom Otrebski	Senior Communications Officer
Lee Preece	Supporter Liaison Manager

Agenda items and / or comments provided by FAB Representatives are shown in normal text.

Club agenda items or responses are shown in blue italics.

FAB Notes

The club confirmed that Business President Chris Heck would be at the next meeting (scheduled for November). The stated reason for his absence was a Premier League meeting around PSR.

1 Issues surrounding the Arsenal home fixture explanation

- Post Arsenal statement – lack of an apology

The club confirmed the statement had been planned but that this was not released. Steps are being taken by the club to resolve some of the issues and, as an example, fans will have some developments over recent matches.

- The FAB suggested to “walk the floor” ahead of the season opener, as would have been done in a typical event management.

The club acknowledge this suggestion and confirmed that robust pre-match checks are in place and are carried out ahead of all matches.

- The FAB expressed concerns that there seems to be issues every year (i.e. catering and fire alarms in previous) and the club should be better prepared for the season opener. When it is convenient it was suggested a return to a having a home friendly would be useful as a dry-run for any new developments at Villa Park.

A number of factors prohibited the possibility of a pre-season friendly, including concerts and the redevelopment work at Villa Park.

- Late release of digital tickets/ no education videos etc

A number of factors contributed to the late release of digital tickets. It has been a complicated summer for all involved in ticketing and both the release of tickets and the guidance was later than we would have hoped. We were not able to install new turnstiles in all areas in time for Arsenal. For Everton, all 100 turnstiles will be ready, and further information on how to use the new readers will be released ahead of Saturday.

- *Late opening of turnstiles and availability of stewards to help. The FAB suggested a perimeter pre-check system, similar to those seen and successfully implemented at away European fixtures – especially Ajax.*

The stewarding operation was significantly impacted by internal staffing issues involving third parties that support our operations.

- *Problems with turnstiles and digital ticketing*
- *The FAB expressed concerns that it was not only the fans that could not get in that were affected. The stadium was not full for kick-off, of one of the most important games of the season.*

The vast majority of season ticket holders and match ticket purchasers using digital ticketing entered successfully. With each passing match, we anticipate turnstile flows to increase accordingly.

- *Toilet facilities*
- *The club encouraged the FAB to report acts of vandalism and wants this message passed onto the wider fan base. The FAB stated more security needs to be present and the ways of reporting acts like this should be clearer. A suggestion to remove outdated posters in the toilets informing this and the consequences of vandalism should be implemented.*

The issues with toilets in some areas of the stadium was escalated to our owners, who immediately recognised the importance of both immediate and long-term solutions to avoid repeats of the issues. Our facilities team have already worked to ensure all blockages have been investigated and repaired.

A longer-term programme has also begun, including the installation of Air Admittance Valves being added to all male urinals to aid waste removal, hand dryers in all toilets replacing paper towels, new flooring and facilities painted. We will work through the stadium as quickly as we can throughout the season, using gaps in the fixtures to address every area.

Regrettably, in some areas our investigations discovered the use of pint glasses and paper towels being deliberately used to create blockages. The club will look to steward these areas, and anyone found deliberately sabotaging other fans' experience will be banned for life.

- *No rail seating where it was indicated there would be on purchase*

Only part of the Rail Seating in Holte Upper was ready for Arsenal. The remaining rows identified for Rail Seating were due to be completed ahead of Everton, however this was delayed. All planned rail seating has now been installed.

- *Supporters in the Doug Ellis with no seats*

All those affected by this issue have been given alternative seats until such point we can find a long-term solution, and further compensation will be provided.

- *When will supporters who were forced to relocate receive their vouchers?*

All physical vouchers have been posted to the displaced supporters who had not already taken advantage of the voucher in the Villa store. A significant number had already redeemed the discount before the vouchers were sent, and a significant number have now redeemed their voucher. Anyone that has not received their voucher should contact the club.

The FAB challenged whether a store voucher was fair compensation for the above two issues, as people paid cash for the experience. The club confirmed they believe it was as that was the offer given

- *Perceived lack of beverage choices compared to last season*

There has been no reduction in the product offering since the start of the season, with Carlsberg providing the same number of options that were previously available. Purity has now been replaced by a local business, the Indian Brewing Company, and the offering from them will increase over the coming matches.

2 Champions League tickets

After three consecutive sharp increases in season and match day tickets, we don't accept the excuse of PSR to justify unsavoury prices that have priced some long-term match-going fans out and compromised match-going families too. Fans had expected to pay a premium price, but not these alarming prices which demonstrate an alarming lack of empathy and respect of the fanbase. This is blatant exploitation of what should have been a joyous occasion for all Villa supporters and which the club's commercial team have already soured.

- Examples of fans not being able to go were given
- The FAB presented benchmark costs to other UK teams and the significant difference. The club stated that benchmarking cannot apply as those clubs have more tickets to sell. This doesn't seem to apply for Premier League prices.

- The FAB stated that Bayern is a one-off special game in Villa's history, but in terms of a demand and supply, people will certainly be put off by the price in terms of attending the Bologna game.

As per the statement issued by the club when announcing that general admission had sold out for the match:

We recognise and understand the depth of passion felt amongst fans and their recent frustration around ticket pricing. Achieving our sporting ambitions while complying with financial stability regulations requires difficult decisions. Financial fair play rules prohibit owners from covering shortfalls to finance this ambition, so we need to generate as much revenue as possible through sponsorships, merchandise, and ticket sales to ensure that we can keep the Club where it rightfully belongs - competing (and winning) at the top of English and European football.

Can the club not source additional sponsorship (training kit for example) to avoid Champions League pricing? And what is the current situation with the Villa Women's team not having a shirt sponsor?

Whilst we have already achieved record levels of sponsorship revenue, having doubled this revenue for this season compared to 2023/24 season, the club continues to actively seek sponsorship, providing we find the right partner and at the appropriate price.

Will the club increase price further if we progress through the group stages?

We hope not to increase prices should we progress through the group stage.

- Will the prices be the same for other group matches?

Yes - the price will be the same for all four matches.

- Based on conversations in the meeting, the FAB expect the ticket prices to go up if we play the likes of Real Madrid at Villa Park in the knockout stages, with members prices going over the £100 mark.

This was not confirmed by the club.

- Hospitality away allocation - remains the same at 9%, but how that team allocates them is up to them. Only change is that they are now visible on the online site.
- The FAB raised the consistent concern of not being able to contact the ticket office. The club was asked to raise the issue further.

3 Disabled parking

Who at the club signed off on doubling the price of disable pricing?

All decisions are taken collectively. In relation to parking, there is a significant reduction in spaces available at the stadium this season. It was regrettable that the price of disabled parking was assessed in line with other parking, but this decision is one that the club were happy to correct. Our thanks to those that raised the issue and our apologies to those who were affected.

We would like to note that despite reductions in the number of parking spaces available on site, the numbers given to our disabled fans continue to be far greater than accessible guidance. We are also introducing a new drop off and pick up service to supplement accessible provision.

Can we book a designated meeting around disability & access issues that have been continually kicked down the road over the years.

We will ensure this meeting to confirm the path to compliance with the accessible stadium guide takes place within 4 weeks.

4 Timetable for remaining Villa Park improvements.

New fan zone in the players car park will be ready for the Everton game. This facility will also open for WSL matches. There will be no cost for entry.

The entrance to the new store will be completed by February.

A new matchday ticket office will follow next season.

The warehouse facility (academy building North Stand) will be completed December 2025.

North Stand Upper concourse extension will take a few months.

As stated at item 1, in relation to toilets a longer-term programme has also begun, including the installation of Air Admittance Valves being added to all male urinals to aid waste removal, hand dryers in all toilets replacing paper towels, new flooring and facilities painted. We will work through the stadium as quickly as we can throughout the season, using gaps in the fixtures to address every area.

Stadium seating capacity will increase by approx. 800 seats in the summer of 2025 as we realign gangways on other areas of the stadium (following Holte End lower and North Stand upper this summer).

5 **Villa (Pride) Rewards?**

What's happening with Rewards, as it's been offline despite the season already starting.

Pride Rewards is now back up and running.

6 150th Anniversary

Richard Stevens gave a presentation to the group showing our intentions to celebrate the 150th. Details can now be found on the AV150 section of our website.

7 Euro 2028

Villa Park remains a 2028 stadium, and the club are in regular contact with The FA and UEFA. There is no news in terms of development of Witton train station.

Following the meeting, the Club acknowledge and accept the resignation of Dave Woodhall. The Club would like to thank him for his efforts and contribution to the Board and wish him well for the future.