

Supporters Direct Annual Conference

On Saturday 12th June 2010, I attended the Supporters Direct (SD) Annual Conference, the theme for which was “ A Better Vision for Football”.

For years, concerns have been voiced regarding the financial mismanagement of football clubs, the penalties for which have to say the least inconsistent. Point deductions, relegation, and worst case scenario as we are well aware, clubs being wound up. The sad fact is that the authorities making these decisions do not always consider the impact that their decisions may have on local communities. In some cases those irresponsible Directors run away relatively unscathed, but fans and community can be left bereft. Directors come and go, but fans are forever.

SD have commissioned a study entitled “The Social and Community Value of Football. The full report can be viewed at www.supporters-direct.org

The study investigated the following:-

- a. Ways in which we might measure or account for the social and community “value” of football clubs.
- b. Identify the evidence of the added value that alternative fan or community ownership might bring.
- c. Outline how the community roles of football clubs relate to wider regulatory issues.

The events of the day included debate on fan ownership, and formal regulation and policy for the future financial management of football clubs. The idea being that regulation could identify financial irregularities before situations become catastrophic. Although the main debate was inclusive of all attendees, the panel comprised of the following well informed individuals:-

Dave Boyle (Chairman)	-	Chief Executive of SD
Lee Strafford	-	Former Chairman of Sheffield Wednesday FC
Gavin Megaw	-	Director of External Affairs, The Football League
Christian Mueller	-	Former Chief Financial Officer of the DFL German Football League
Oliver Houston	-	Vice Chairman of the Manchester United Supporters Trust

It is SD's intention to use the results of the study and the views of SD members as evidence to encourage the new government to deliver its promise made in their election manifesto. Fairly high on the manifesto was their intention to formalise the investigation of football clubs, and to act to enable fans to have a greater say in the running of their football clubs. Perhaps the government acknowledges that we can "Achieve More Together".

The conference provided a great and informative day, which also gave pointers to Supporters Trusts on how to move forward. I would encourage you to catch up with the events of the day on the SD website.

Len Candlish

Chairman

Blue and Gold Trust