

## **Second Fans Focus Group Meeting**

Monday August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021

Caledonian Stadium Boardroom and Guests via Zoom

### **Present:**

Attendees: Scot Gardiner - ICTFC CEO (SG), John Robertson – ICTFC Sporting Director (JR), Stevie Riley (SR), Peter Mutton- ICT Supporters Trust (PM), Steve Houston (SH) Christine Bruce – ICT Travel Club (CB), Rosemary Webb – ICT Travel Club (RW), Gordon Fyfe – Director, SLO, Community Trust Joint Chair (GF)

### **Agenda Items**

- **Raith Rovers Match**
- **New club Gym**
- **Season Ticket 2021/22**
- **ICTV**
- **ICTFC Academy**
- **First Team recruitment and Sporting Director Role**
- **Commercial**
- **Retail**
- **Community Trust**

**SG:** Communication will be issued regarding Raith Rovers match today. Main Stand Season Ticket Holders will be in the Main Stand, North Stand season ticket holders in the North Stand and fans without season tickets will be in the South Stand. Raith Rovers were issued with 150 tickets via a private link.

Players and officials remain at 2 metre distancing. The away team is getting changed in the sports bar. We have to have Lower D, the centre section in the Main Stand at the tunnel, has to be section off for space for substitutes.

Even when supporters don't have to sit socially distanced, if the SPFL/JRG and SFA still go with these restrictions then lower D will remain out of bounds. There is nothing the club can do it about so we hope supporters can understand.

**SG:** We're now able to have Kiosks open now. We will have limited Kiosks open on the West side of the stadium against Raith Rovers.

We've beefed up our steward company and as hopefully as the games go on they get better. The Stewards can only do so much. They aren't COVID officers. We don't want to aggravate and cause problems as this is meant to be entertainment.

All season ticket holders will return for the first home league match.

**SG:** Two Inverness fans were removed from Arbroath for the first game of the season. The first one for being intoxicated but I saw his removal from the Stadium, and it was very heavy handed and I had one supporter text me during the game about his removal.

The other removal was for verbal abuse of their goalkeeper and if he said what the stewards said he did then the fans was rightfully removed.

I thought the stewards were in the faces of the Inverness fans during the match and it made me feel uncomfortable. We made representation to Arbroath directors after the game about the situation.

Hopefully we don't have any incidents of that but reason I'm explaining is that if it does happen the club will step in and say what's going here, we're not just going to accept things. To be fair to Arbroath, their Chairman was extremely understanding and helpful as he had also seen the incidents and the club planned to look into the situation.

In the Main Stand against Raith Rovers, fans will be able to access the toilets but not the kiosk due to the gym equipment in the Main Stand North Concourse. The equipment has been there since the pandemic and will be moved to the side for toilet access but unfortunately and unavoidably, the kiosk remains out until the equipment can be moved.

A new gym building is under construction at the stadium currently and it will be just outside the sports bar. This is as quick as we can get a building. This club has not had its own gym in over 10 years. The club joined the players in commercial gyms and because they were shut down in the lockdown, the players didn't have access to a gym. We had multiple injuries at the start of last season due to no gym in lockdown and the players came back with long distance running injuries as that's what they were doing to keep fit.

John Robertson has been working on the project for the last two months and we hope for it to be ready before the end of August, and we will then get the concourse back.

JR: Working is now underway. Concrete is starting to be poured and everything goes to plan the company from Manchester will be sending the structure up. That should be done the following week depending on weather. We're very hopeful the worst-case scenario will be late August but it is weather dependent.

KF: It will be good for the players

JR: It will be good for the players as it great to have access to a gym to work on your strength and conditioning. It's most important that with the fans coming back that we get the facilities. There are now 5 new heaters in the Main Stand concourse for supporters.

For the gym, we've managed to secure the right building at the right price.

SG: John spoke to about 6 different companies, and we got the best option. Nottingham Forest are using the building for the same purpose so we thought that would be perfect.

What we will then look to do is use the gym for our Youth Team and Ladies and, once the pandemic is over, we'd be looking to put it out for hire. We want the gym to be cost neutral to us.

### **Season Tickets 2021/22**

Season Ticket Renewals finished recently. We weren't able to do the share idea as it was prohibitive for a number of reasons. There was technical reason.

As we sit today, we are about 50 away from our total from last season. There was a big concern that people wouldn't be coming back for a number of reasons. Many businesses have seen a decline in usage and we were concerned this would be the same for us but the support in relation to Season Tickets has been superb. Donations have only be at about a third of what it was last season.

### **ICTV**

We have looked at launching Pay per view season tickets although this is subject to a few technical and legal issues. Season Ticket Holders are being emailed the details for ICTV. They will log in using their Seat/Row Number and their Season Ticket ID. Ross Tokely will be on commentary for the next two games and commentary went down well for the first two matches.

The cost for a single PPV will be £15. Our costs for streaming are way higher this season. In terms of camera operators, infrastructure etc.

PM: Is there a cap on how many can buy an individual game?

SG: No, there's no cap on that at all. We have additional costs for our production team for it. We had three separate bodies last year and we have three again but we're commissioning each one this time, rather than the companies we were working with previously.

We have good support. You can press the chat bubble in the corner of the ICTV site which will provide support.

GF: Is there an opportunity for us to have adverts at half-time, before games and do features?

SG: We will show the pervious match highlights and will be working on features such as interviews etc.

GF: There's a good opportunity. I would like us to do a bit of the Community Trust. Also for recruitment for the Supporters Trust.

SG: Next Meeting will have it set up so emails questions from other supporters can be put to the focus group. This gives a chance for fans after getting two games under the belt to put their thoughts to the group.

We're hoping we're able to introduce some good ideas which can be implemented. Emails will be sent via The Supports Trust mail which we will publish.

We have made up a digital advertising pack which has been worked on by Keith Haggart, our Commercial Director. People will be able to sponsor different things.

GF: Will the full match be posted on our website following the game?

SG: No, we will only put Highlights up. We are time restricted as there's only certain times when you start putting the goals.

PM: What is the overall allowed capacity for the Raith Rovers game and what is the car parking arrangements?

SG: 2,000 is max crowd against Raith Rovers, which should be more than enough based on previous seasons, this should be the last match with a 2,000 limit.

Due to an overrun with their new development, Bairds Malt have gone over their building schedule. The Malt plan being built in the Longman. All their materials were meant to be gone by now and we have agreed that it will be cleared and returned by November. There's been full and frank discussions with Bairds and they understand the situation, as we do with their overrun which was not their fault. Their footprint has been reduced to a degree.

PM: Will we have to prioritise certain groups of supporters, such as those registered disabled?

SG: There is that right now if supporters contact the club. The car parking situation is not ideal. As I say, there's been full and frank discussions with Bairds and we know where we are.

### **ICTFC Academy**

JR: The Academy is returning, and all lads have their kit now. We've also added Stuart Golabek to the Academy Staff to assist Ross Tokely. Stuart is back in the fold from working aboard.

Ross and Charlie have been working hard in getting training up and running. Our Groundsman Dale Stephen has working hard on Charleston and the new mower has arrived. Things are moving on now and the lads are getting the chance to play matches. We're in very good shape.

SG: Kirk Broadfoot is also joining the Academy and coaching staff. Stuart and Kirk are tremendous for the experience they have in their careers.

## **First Team Recruitment and Sporting Director Role**

SG: On the signings front, we aren't looking to add anyone else barring a disaster. We've added Lewis Jamieson on loan from St Mirren, who's been a target for a few weeks.

JR: It's the usual that loan players aren't available until late in the window. As English Clubs are now 4 weeks behind us in start and keep players in their first team. We have to be ready for the middle of July now. It's getting earlier and earlier now.

We could have waited longer but you saw with the situation regarding injuries or COVID that the bench has filled with our younger players. Lewis Hyde, Ryan Fyffe and Harry Nicolson and we must have a pathway for them. In terms of recruitment, we're in a good place, Billy is very happy with the squad.

As part of my role, once the transfer window shuts, I'll be on my travels around England to go and scout players. We've had several recommendations and that'll be my job to go out and have a look and report back to Billy to see if he wants to go for them.

We've already got three targets that we've been told about and look very good players. We'll try and watch them and do the background checks on them so I can present all the information to Billy.

SR: Did you say John that new scouts will be joining.

JR: I already have scouts that cover most areas in England. As well as guys in North and South of Ireland. We're on transfer-room which is a big network where you can speak to other clubs, check if players are available etc. English sides are flooding the marketing with players 18-20 years old. We haven't seen them before, they have been playing under 23s football but I can have a look at them and see where they are. I can tell Billy who is ready for first team football and that's what we're looking for. Also, I'll be able to see out of contract players.

JR: If something came on the market for the right price then we'd be foolish not to look at it. Billy would come to me, I'd go to Scot and he would make the case to the board.

SG: Scott Allan is probably the best example of that. We weren't looking but when we were told he was available we burst a gut to make the deal happen.

JR: We always talking to other clubs. We're open to partnership with other clubs. As a club we're looking to be progressive.

SG: We're having this conversation and that's the real big bonus of having John as Sporting Director and being free to widen the net. When you're the Manager then you're fighting all the time towards the next match. We now have a top professional who is able to engage with other top professionals for the benefit of the club.

John is able to look at players, speak to Billy and say I'll sort that. It's a huge leap forward for us as a club, as an Elite football club which we need to behave like.

Since our last meeting, we said we'd hope to have the direct debit system in place and that has not been launched. The Ticket prices are the same for this season as last season. I still think it's value for what we're trying to achieve as a full-time football club and full-time team.

### **Commercial**

We will produce our commercial document on our website this week and we will have hard copies also of it. We're hoping we can get fans engaged in that.

We're still in discussion in relation with our second concert. We will be announcing the second concert later this month.

SR: With Nessie's Numbers we're just waiting for the admin papers coming through. That should be launched by the end of August. We have the logo plus branding for it.

SR: Looking further ahead, when will you be able to open hospitality

SG: That is dependent on the areas we use. The Press and Journal suite has now been rebranded as the Highlander Suite. The Players have been using that room as a changing room so we couldn't do anything before now.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> August, we will have hospitality on sale for that game. We have already sold about half the hospitality that we can. We are working under Scottish Government Hospitality rules. We will also have a specific wedding offer and specific funeral tea offering and none of these things we've done before, in terms of creating packages but all of that is done.

SR: Will Keith Haggart be hosting it?

SG: Yes he will with guests. Billy or a Player will go in for a chat and John will also be there speaking if he's at our game. We're looking at different and more creative offering.

SR: Speaking about the ICT25 package, will there be a fans version of that package?

SG: Keith's looking at that. He basically trying to get all his ducks in a row. Getting the Hospitality back, boxes filled and different packages up. ICTV and match coming advertising. It's easier for Keith to go and see people now and that helps him sell things.

### **Retail Offering**

SR: How's the City centre Presence going? Are we still going forward with an area in the Highland Hospice shop?

SG: Yes, all the stock is boxed up and ready to go. I hope to have a meeting with the shop manager shortly. We're going with a pink range first then we'll look to move it on from there. We are just waiting for the Manager to meet us and then go into a set it up.

SH: How have sales of the new kit gone?

SG: Very well. We've had to reorder the white jerseys in again as they've gone so well. We've had to order in adult home shorts also, something we never do normally but such was the demand. We have a completely bespoke home kit in a Puma template.

The pink kit has been reordered three times and the white one had to be order immediately.

We now have in stock last season's framed signed shirts. They can walk into our club shop and buy a new signed shirt without themselves having to go through the process of getting it signed.

SR: An idea maybe would to be to sell match worn shirts at the end of the season?

JR: The problem with that is that there is very limited numbers of match worn shirts. Each player maybe have three shirts for the season and the player sponsor also get the match worn kit in the first instance.

SG: By the time we get to October. We will have worked on the new kit range for the players and coaches. The Away Strip will always get 2 years, there will always be a new home and away/third kit. So, this will be the last season of the pink kit.

SR: In terms of Winter wear in the shop, is there any plans to order the likes of body warmers?

JR: We looked at it. I got one from the Golf range which we had to badge up. It's purely a golf range they do. They don't do it for football and their jackets for football term to be heavy for football.

SG: The Gillet is a real problem as we're dealing with Puma Football Global. Brora are wearing PUMA and buying it from online. We're a licensed PUMA club and everything we're buying from

SG: We have a winter range which is coming in. I'm very pleased as we must reach certain number and we hit price points due to the good sales.

PM: When will the Club AGM be?

SG: We're looking to launch in the coming week or two. We were waiting to see if it could be indoors. We looked at having it externally with the lounge downstairs we could only get 25 in with distancing in. We now plan to hold it before the end of August, subject to

everything being technically correct with the paperwork. Once the distancing rules end (9 August) we knew we could then hold it after then in the Highlander Suite.

### **ICT Community Trust**

GF: I'll give update on the Community Trust, I'm joint Chairman with Dr Iain Smith. We have a strong trust now. We have the professor of the UHI, Linda Stewart who used to work for the UHI and is experienced is gaining grants. What we're trying to do is sell more strongly the community element of the club. Craig Masterton is our community coach and looking after summer schools for kids 5 and upwards.

Also do football courses for kids 5 and above, walking football for people my age and football memories. We're working with the Highland Disability Association with a view to taking them under our umbrella. As a Community Trust we're looking after and training kids right through to the elderly. What we want to do is a short video which I hope that ICTV can show at half-time on ICTV to project the important role the club can play in the community.

What we're looking to do is have a good active number of active trustees and have good equality and gender balance. We now have Karen Mason, who is the Women's team coach.

SG: The club is paying for Karen, who is head coach of the Women's team, we're paying for her to go through her coaching badges. Before I think the women's team was there in name only and didn't get any help or support. John has been speaking to them about having a couple of games at the Stadium as they are our team and we should help them where possible.

JR: The Community Hub project is at a standstill at the moment. We're waiting for the council to give us the details of their the representative as the excellent HC officer we were dealing with is unfortunately now ill. So it's fair to say that it has slowed down but we're getting things in order. In terms of Sports Scotland etc.

In regards to the women's team, we've been given new equipment so they have the game stuff as the men's team. We're looking at the moment at having a Women's weekend to promote the women's game on the Sunday.

Going forward, they will be huge partners in the Community Hub. That's where they will play their home games alongside our Academy Players. We're looking at having an actual Community Hub for all the courses.

I don't think the club has connected with the Community, the Fans and the Businesses in the past but hopefully with Scot in charge now that will change. We can talk to the businesses to see what they can do for us. The club will need help for the Community Hub, it will be fairly substantial investment and it could be real legacy project.

GF: One of the problems with the area of the Community Hub is there is poor drainage there.

JR: Yes, it's very poor drainage there. We have spoken tentatively to Greentech about that but we have to dot the I's and cross the T's. It could be a great place to launch Community projects from. We still have our outreach programmes which are very important to us.

Craig is extremely excited that they could have a home base where people could come to see them. It would be a real focus where the Community Hub would be.

SG: The club are working with the Trust all the time. Craig Masterton is a very good operator and I think we're lucky to have him.

We had meeting with the department for Work and Pensions about the club becoming, the Sports Bar in particular, a Youth Employment Hub for the Highlands. As the pandemic lifts, that will advance. There's a strange situation in the Highlands where youth unemployment is higher than anywhere else but yet you speak to hotels and hospitality who couldn't get anyone. That's something that will have happen and it will be tremendously important to the club and to the ICT Community Trust.

I think we should be proud of the work they do in the club's name. They work tremendously hard.

GF: Is there anything the Supporters Trust sees a mutual and can work with the community trust then we're open to that.

SG: We had a very short debate about the Car Park money whether that should come into the club since we need the money now but ultimately, we decided that it should still go into the Community Trust.

SG: The key with the Trust is pick certain projects and focus of them. Because the danger is if you spread yourself too thin. At Dundee when the fans saved the club, they looked to help everyone who helped the club. It was a noble thing but they had a different charities every single week. What end up happening is the charities spend more on leaflets etc than they take as there's charity fatigue as there's one every single week and people begin to not notice or don't donate as they put their money in the week before. It's not something new.

We agreed to have Highland Hospice for at least a second season as they didn't get the most out of it during their first season as our Charity Partners. There's always stuff you can do better and more. I think we're in a much better place than we were.

**Next Meeting scheduled for Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September at 11am**