

Cross Party Working Group : The Future of Scottish Football

27 January 2020

Hampden Park, Glasgow

Minutes

Present: Fulton MacGregor (Convenor), George Adam (MSP), Calum Beattie (SPFL), Ewen Cameron (Sportscotland), Neil Champion (Scottish FA), Campbell Crawford (Police Scotland), Paul Goodwin (Scottish Football Supporters Association), David Hamilton (Scottish Government), Stuart McCaffrey (Scottish Football Partnership), Ursula McFarlane (Scottish FA), Fiona McIntyre (Scottish Women's Football), Paul McNeill (Scottish FA), Alan McNiven (Engage Renfrewshire), Willie Pettigrew (Scottish Powerchair Football Association), Ann Quinn (Scottish FA), Alan Russell, (Supporters), Cammy Watt (Scottish FA)

Apologies: James Dornan (MSP), Maurice Golden (MSP), Nicky Reid (SPFL Trust) Sandy Riach (SDSA)

1. Welcome and Introduction

Fulton MacGregor opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

2. Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Fiona McIntyre and seconded by Paul McNeill.

3. Euro 2020 Presentation

Ms Ursula McFarlane, Promotions Manager for Euro 2020, gave a presentation outlining the progress to date and the key milestones ahead. She confirmed that we were one of 12 host cities, paired with London and will host 3 group stage matches and 1 match from the Round of 16. Ms McFarlane gave a handout of the Key Dates to those present, as well as a match schedule. The next big milestone will be 4th March 2020 which is 100 days to the opening game (Opening game being on 12 June 2020 in Rome).

Ms McFarlane talked about the Schools Programme which has been developed and Mr MacGregor asked if that would be rolled out to all schools in Scotland, and not those just in Glasgow. Ms McFarlane confirmed that the programme was not bespoke to Glasgow and Mr Paul McNeill confirmed that this was similar to a project which was run for the Commonwealth Games. The programme is linked to the school's Curriculum for Excellence. Mr McNeill confirmed that we would be delighted to roll it out however we would need to put a rider on it to say that we could not provide individual support.

Mr Cammy Watt asked about what the legacy would be from the Tournament (if we qualify or not). Ms McFarlane confirmed that there would certainly be more work if we qualify however she was confident that we could deliver in either scenario.

Mr George Adam enquired as to the e-ticketing system and the importance of this system working. Mr Calum Beattie confirmed that we had used access control for the Betfred Semi Finals and Finals and it had worked very well.

Mr Beattie also raised the question of sale of alcohol, as Glasgow will be the only host city who will be not selling alcohol to supporters. Mr Beattie felt it was important to communicate this to fans in advance of the games. Ms McFarlane agreed and said it would be part of the overall communication to fans regarding security, as this will be much stricter than normal games.

Mr Alan Russell asked if we were planning to use e-ticketing at the Scottish Cup Final in May and it was confirmed that we were not. However Ms McFarlane confirmed that UEFA were using this system throughout Europe and were very comfortable with it. She also confirmed that we were testing all kinds of scenarios to ensure that the system would be fit for purpose during the tournament.

Mr Willie Pettigrew enquired about elevated wheelchair access and, in particular, if it would be retained following the competition. Ms McFarlane confirmed that this would be in place for the tournament and that the Euro 2020 team were looking at ways of retaining this as part of the legacy.

Mr MacGregor thanked Ms McFarlane for her presentation.

4. Community Football Presentation

Mr Alan McNiven from Engage Renfrewshire gave a presentation on Community Football Clubs and the 3rd sector. Mr McNiven believes there are real opportunities for clubs to act in this area and get strong social returns.

Mr McCaffrey asked about staff structures within clubs in response to Mr McNiven saying that as clubs grow it was important to create jobs and not always rely on volunteers. Mr McCaffrey agreed, as he believed that we do not want to be in a position where we are asking too much of our volunteers especially where a club is taking on an asset and running it. Mr McCaffrey believes that in order to be sustainable, clubs need a strong staff structure to avoid burn-out. Mr McCaffrey also believes that clubs do not know enough about what help is out there and that this could be an area which the Scottish FA could help; bringing together the relevant information.

Mr Beattie said that the clubs in the SPFL would also class themselves as community clubs as they all do a lot of charitable work; he used the example of Stenhousemuir. Mr McNeill agreed that there was a lot of working going on currently which may attract funding and also that clubs should be recognised for the strides they have already taken in this respect.

Mr Watt believes that the landscape has changed so much over the last 10 years for clubs; specifically Bonnyrigg Rose FC now have a community nursery. However he felt it was important not to take our eye off the fact that they are football clubs and getting teams on the pitch is the first priority. He worries that volunteers can get distracted with all of the other activities going on that the club.

Mr Watt also had concerns with the Community Empowerment Bill and Community Asset Transfers. He felt that Local Authorities would appear to be happy to give away those facilities which require a lot of work but not those in good condition. Bonnyrigg Rose FC have taken over a pitch which has not been maintained by the council for 6 years. Mr Watt felt there should be much more assistance from the Local Authority on this.

Mr McNeill confirmed that clubs are enthusiastic about taking over assets and that sometimes it is important to have an honest conversation which may mean they do not make the acquisition. Mr McNeill would like to have a model which can be used around this topic so that any conclusions are not personal opinions but are focussed on what is best for the club.

Mr McNiven commented on the fact that the Scottish FA have 100 clubs that they believe are Community Clubs expanding and he expressed a view that this would be a great cohort for research eg what are they doing now and what are they trying to do in the next 10 years. Mr Hamilton also reminded the group of the UEFA Grow Return on Investment work which the Scottish FA is doing and which links into this.

Mr McNiven thanked the group for the chance to present and Mr MacGregor suggested that there may be other forums which would help progress this.

Mr MacGregor thanked Mr McNiven for his time.

5. Creation of a Working Group Report

It was agreed that it would be in order to present a parliamentary question for debate after Euro 2020. Mr McNeill informed the group that the UEFA Grassroots Week was during September 2020 and it would be good timing if were able to have the question for debate by then. Mr McNeill will circulate some ideas/questions for feedback.

6. Next Meetings

The next meeting will be at 6.30pm on 24th March 2020 at Holyrood.