

NUST Chair Report – AGM 29 January 2025

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening and thank you for joining us at this year's Newcastle United Supporters Trust AGM. It's a privilege to stand before you as Chair of this remarkable community—a community united not only by our love for Newcastle United but also by our shared belief in the power of fans to shape the future of our great club.

Tonight, I'd like to reflect on what has been an incredibly productive year for the Supporters Trust and highlight the achievements we've made together in strengthening our influence and deepening our collaboration with Newcastle United. This has been a year of meaningful progress, underpinned by our commitment to ensuring our members' voices are heard in the decision-making processes that shape the club we all hold so dear.

Enhanced Consultation

One of our most significant achievements this year has been the establishment of a more formalised and transparent structure for consultation between the Trust and the club. Following our continued engagement and advocacy, Newcastle United has implemented quarterly Fan Forums, where representatives from various supporter groups, including the Trust, meet with senior club officials to discuss a wide range of topics that affect supporter experiences. These forums have provided a vital platform to discuss key issues, such as ticket pricing, stadium accessibility, and community initiatives. It's a milestone in fan-club relations, and we're proud to have been instrumental in bringing this framework to life.

In addition, we have worked closely with the club to build enhanced relations with the club's Supporter Liaison Officer and the wider Supporter Services department, ensuring there is a consistent and direct point of contact for supporter concerns. This relationship has already proven invaluable, allowing us to raise issues on behalf of members, and the wider supporter base, quickly and effectively.

Influence in Decision-Making

Over the past year, we have made strides in influencing a number of off-pitch decisions that affect supporters. We successfully consulted with the club on member led issues such as the ability to transfer away tickets and some tweaks to the member ballots that make it a little easier for supporters. Whilst there is still work to be done with ticketing, this enhanced consultation underscores the importance of collective advocacy and demonstrates the power of our unified voice.

We have also been involved in discussions regarding the future development of St James' Park, via the Fan Advisory Board. Through our consultations, we've emphasised the need to preserve the iconic character of our stadium while discussing options for increased capacity to accommodate our growing fanbase. Our input has been met with genuine consideration, and while these plans are still in the discussion stage, we remain committed to ensuring the fans' perspective is central to any decisions. Further information will follow in the coming months.

Fan Advisory Board

Myself and our co-vice chair, Adam Stoker have sat on the Fan Advisory Board for a little over 12 months. For those unaware of the work of the FAB, The Fan Advisory Board (FAB) is made up of nine dedicated fan members who play an integral role in advising and supporting the club's leadership team across a range of important areas. These include helping to shape the club's vision and strategic objectives, enhancing the matchday fan experience through both in-person and digital engagement, and providing input on proposals related to the club's heritage assets. Additionally, the FAB contributes to advancing the club's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) commitments, as well as offering guidance on development plans for St. James' Park. They also support initiatives aimed at growing the club's fanbase both domestically and internationally, improving communications between the club and its supporters, and fostering the club's work within the local community. We are proud to sit alongside the executive Board at NUFC and the members work tirelessly for the benefit of the supporter base.

Community Engagement

Beyond our work with the club, NUST continues to work closely with our nominated charities, NU Foundation, NUFC Foodbank, The Alan Shearer Foundation and The Sir Bobby Robson Foundation. It's wonderful to see how the delivered funds from the 1892 Pledge Scheme is really making an impact on people's lives across the North East. We've recently partnered with The Bubble Foundation, who do incredible work out of The Great North Children's Hospital at the RVI. You can read more on our charity work on our website.

Member Engagement

In 2024, we took even greater steps to connect with our members through a range of initiatives. Early in the year, we launched a WhatsApp Broadcast group to ensure important information reached our members quickly and efficiently. If you'd like to join the group, simply refer to any member email and click the provided link.

A number of members requested a memento or keepsake, so we partnered with The Badgeman to offer NUST pin badges for £6 on his website. All profits from the sale of these badges will be donated directly to The Bubble Foundation, as fully agreed by our Board.

Throughout the year, the club reached out to us seeking volunteers for various filming opportunities. We organised member participation in the club's Formula E campaign (featuring Alexander Isak as the driver), Rob Lee's away shirt drops, a Magpie Mover video (yet to be released), and two "day in the life" videos – one featuring an adult member and one with a child member. These projects have received fantastic feedback from the wider fanbase.

We also continue to assist both members and the wider fanbase through social media, including Facebook, Instagram, X, Blue Sky and emails. We've even got a TikTok account, although Lisa hasn't yet plucked up the courage to post on there!! I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Board who work tirelessly to help supporters with a wide range of functionality questions, and to remind our members of ballot dates, loyalty points drops and a whole lot more.

Stop Exploiting Loyalty Campaign

NUST has played a key role in leading the Football Supporters' Association (FSA) campaign against the exploitation of fan loyalty. Focused on safeguarding the interests of local supporters, NUST has highlighted issues such as increasing ticket prices, and other commercial practices that take advantage of fan commitment. Through grassroots activism, lobbying, and collaborating with the FSA, NUST has successfully raised awareness and pushed for more transparent, fan-friendly policies in football. Their efforts aim to ensure that supporters are treated with respect and their loyalty isn't exploited for profit, championing fairer practices within the sport. We'd like to take this opportunity to not only thank the FSA for leading on this, but the other local supporter groups for embracing this campaign with us in the last quarter of 2024 and beyond. To date, we've stood with Chelsea Fans at Stamford Bridge, and at the home games against Arsenal, West Ham, Liverpool and more recently, you might have seen our banner in the Strawberry Corner (as part of a wider display from Wor Flags) at the Leicester game. We stand together with Trusts and supporter groups across the Premier League to campaign against the rising cost of football! We are pleased to see some of the wider media, including Channel 4 and Talksport taking this campaign seriously, and locally we have engaged with a number of journalists to give interviews and comment across the piece.

Premier League Structured Dialogue Meetings

Through 2024, Adam attended the official dialogue meetings with the Premier League, and we continue to be proud attendees of these meetings. Whilst you can find more information on our website, with the latest minutes, we can confirm that it was a lively meeting, with Adam challenging Richard Masters on both PSR and Associated Party Transaction rules.

Election Results

The Board of NUST is delighted to present to you our two newest members of the Board. Through October, we ran our annual election and two exceptional candidates put themselves forward. We are pleased to introduce you to Karl Williamson and Richard Barnsdall. In accordance with NUST rules, it is a requirement for the appointments to be ratified at this AGM. With that in mind, please can I have a show of hands to ratify the election results.

Looking Ahead

While we can take pride in these achievements, there is always more to do. As we look to 2025, we will remain steadfast in our mission to represent *your* views, protect *your* interests, and champion the values that make Newcastle United and its fan base special. Whether it's advocating for continuous improvement of fan engagement, fair and affordable ticketing pricing and policies, ensuring transparency in the club's governance, or enhancing the matchday experience, our work continues.

In closing, I want to thank each and every one of you for your support and engagement over the past year. The progress we've made would not have been possible without your passion, dedication, and belief in the power of fan representation. Together, we're building a stronger Newcastle United for future generations.

Let's keep pushing forward, united in our love for the black and white.

Thank you.