



Statement in support of nomination – 400 – 1000 words

Once completed, please email (with your nomination form) to ashley.brown@thefsa.org.uk

Your Full Name: Tom Rutherford

Your Statement:

I am a season ticket holder of over 20 years and have been a regular away traveller during this period. Prior to this my first game was a 2-0 defeat at home to Manchester City in a league cup replay back in 1994. As you all know this has been a period of been ups, downs and a lot of mediocre football, but days watching Newcastle United still rank as some of the best of my life. The club has also been my connection to Northeast and family during periods, including now, when I have lived outside the region.

I have a strong committed to the trust's values and to independent, democratic and member run organisations as I currently work as an Advocacy manager within a Student Union, that operates under the same democratic principles as the trust. Alongside this I have over ten years' experience in providing advice and representation to individuals and groups supporting to them to stand up for their rights and interests. I believe I can use this skill and experience to benefit the trust and help raise issues to the club that matter to you.

While the last four years have been transformational on the pitch, in my opinion the club still has a long way to go to build trust and to stop the sense that we as supporters are increasingly exploited under the guise of needing the money for 'PRS'. The feels particularly relevant in relation to ticketing with access, price, and transparency feeling like key issues that have yet to be resolved.

To me season ticket holders are a vital part of any club, so the move by premier league clubs in recent years limited season tickets is a worrying trend that we need to push back on. This can be seen at Newcastle with the repeated price rises over recent seasons, no season tickets going on sale for year or there being any form of waiting list or pathway for those wishing to get a season ticket in the future.

It can at times feel however that season ticket holders are pitched against members, and non-members, so it is important that as a trust we push back against this mindset and make sure we represent all Newcastle United supporters. This means finding that common ground that unites us all such a fair and transparent booking system, stopping touts and having access to affordable tickets. While challenging a ticketing system that seems increasingly designed to push people to buy ever more expensive corporate tickets and is exploited by touts.

There also needs to be much greater transparency around how away tickets are allocated, particularly those that aren't being made available through the loyalty point/ballot system which has been highlighted on the back of smaller allocations in the Champions League this season.

Looking at the situation now I can appreciate how lucky I was to be able to get a season ticket as a teenager and then be able to build up loyalty points by attending away games on a regular basis. If I was a 15-year-old now this would be nearly impossible which cannot be right and could have long term implications for the club. This is something I would be keen to focus on if elected to the board.

There seems to be a strong possibility that one option could be a move away from St James Park to a new stadium. If this is the case, then it is vital that any decision to move is not taken without proper consultation with supporters to understand our views. It is also important that supporters' views input into the location and design of any new stadium so that works to tackle the current issues around affordability and access and improving the match day experience. Not as an excuse to increase corporate seating and force prices up more.

As supporters it can at times feel like we have little power, but we can make a difference as has been shown through campaigns such as the 'Footballers Supporters Associations' to cap away ticket prices. It can be easy to forget that there were games in 2005 where we were paying more for away tickets than we do now! This wouldn't have been possible without supporter action and shows what supporters' groups can achieve. Ultimately, we the supporters are what makes the club what it is, and it is us that will make it better.

Newcastle United means everything to me, as I know it does to you, that is why I would love the opportunity to be part of the trust and support the continued efforts to ensure our voices as supporters are heard.