

## A selection of candidates' questions and answers

### **Are you generally in favour of the Trust owning 20% of the club?**

**Laura Carn:** Yes I am. I think it would be a good step for the club and fans.

**Gareth Nicholson:** Very simply, I am 100% in favour of the Trust owning 20%.

### **In light of James Brent's proposal to offer the Trust the option to own 20% of the club; what do you believe the pros and cons of a place on the executive board would be?**

**Warren Bowden:** I am very interested in the proposal that James Brent has offered. I have always advocated a stake for the Trust in our club and 20% is a good start. I am against a place on the board as the Trust is a transparent membership-driven organisation and the question of confidentiality on certain issues will arise. This is why I hope that in future the Trust can have a large stake in the club.

The way I have interpreted James Brent's proposal is that the Trust must come to a decision by the 30th September 2012 and not necessarily have the funds in place. If I am lucky enough to be elected to the board I will ask for independent expert advice on this issue.

**Edmund Shillabeer:** I would hope to be elected to the AFT board which would decide how to respond to Mr Brent's proposals, hopefully after listening to what the majority of Trust members want. I personally would then seek the AFT's nomination to be on the seven-strong Green Army Supervisory Board set up to "challenge" the Argyle Board of Directors. As the AFT was set up originally to save the club and fight for a fans' voice in future so we would be able to prevent future club owners from distancing themselves from the fanbase and messing up the club, I see the offer of a 20% share in the club as being a fan's safeguard and achievement of those twin goals, especially as that seems separate and in addition to the formation of the GAS Board.

Obviously the new AFT board would have to know how much money per member would be required to purchase that 20% by September then a decision should be made to ballot members.

**Gareth Nicholson:** I don't believe that a place on the board of Directors would be the automatic conclusion of the Trust taking up James's offer of a 20% shareholding.

On the shareholding point, I think it's something that the Trust needs to consult its members on and needs to do that after having sought advice from Supporters Direct and from other Trusts who have gone through such a move (Brentford and Swansea being two) and after seeking independent financial and legal advice. To do that properly, we need to know in detail what is being offered, how much it will cost and how the Trust can raise the necessary finance. That said, if everything stacks up I am fully supportive of the Trust owning a share in the club. It's a positive move that brings the club and its fans together and in my view lessens the chances of seeing the club go down the tubes

again.

In terms of the Trust having a place on the board with full voting rights, I think the cons outweigh the pros. Firstly it puts pressure on the individual(s) representing the Trust on the board to provide Trust members with detail on what's happening. Juggling the need to maintain commercial confidentiality on a number of issues with the need to give members full information is in my view impossible. Secondly, the Trust needs to maintain a level of independence from the club. It shouldn't be just a rubber stamp used to give the decisions the club makes some credibility. Secondly, the 3 non-executive board members announced on Saturday (14<sup>th</sup> January) are on the board but don't have a shareholding. It would be difficult in those circumstances for things to get done because you could get the Trust being dissatisfied at being outvoted by people who hold no shares in the business. The pros are that it would show the Trust being a strong and active shareholder being vocal when it needs to be and being involved right at the heart of the club.

I would rather the Trust used its shareholding to act as a supportive but very independent shareholder acting outside the Board. It could have specific powers of scrutiny over and above that proposed of the GAS Board and its views would carry weight because of that shareholding. It could have powers of veto on certain decisions and could act as an Argyle 'fit and proper person' test on potential investors or development issues.

### **I'm not a Trust member, what will you do to persuade me to become one?**

**Laura Carn:** I feel the Trust is the voice of the supporters and therefore being a member you will be able to have your say in how you think the club should be run. I would look for members to give suggestions about what we can do to improve the club. One Trust member I know thinks an electronic scoreboard would be a good investment and if the board agreed the Trust could sponsor it.

**Andy Moore:** I am a fairly recent Trust member as my view was that in the early days, for all the right reasons, the Trust was so focused on saving the club there was not enough time to ask members what else they wanted from the Trust. All everyone rightly wanted was for the club to survive and the Trust did a brilliant job. I did not feel that me being a member would add anything to the survival of the club. I have spoken to lots of people who also felt this way.

I can now see a long term future for the Trust as being a pro-active part of the club that represents the supporters in many different areas that are important to a wide and varied membership. If for example buses to the ground are important to members, then that is something the Trust can focus on.

I would hope that a fresh and wider approach to what the Trust does will appeal to a wider fan base and if you are still in doubt let the actions of the new board convince you that your membership can make a difference.

### **What is your vision for the Trust and how do you see it working with other groups?**

**Andy Moore:** I believe that a long term aim of the Trust should be to raise money to have at least a minority holding in the club or perhaps similar to other clubs, ownership in an asset that would make it very difficult for the club to be stripped of its remaining assets by a property developer.

I would hope that there is room for supporters to be involved in a sort of supporter/ corporate governance role within the club. This is a role that the Trust should be leading on. I undertake this role in business and some of my other voluntary work and it is all about asking those awkward and perhaps sometimes “silly” questions. It is not about trying to catch people out, but making them think and ensure that all the consequences of decisions are considered before a critical decision is made. We all know that some very bad decisions were made in the past and if the Trust can do something to stop this in the future we will be going a long way to ensure the long term survival of the club.

I think that the Trust must also be ready to react to the needs of the supporters and the club as things develop and as such it needs a good mix of people on the board and also a strong set of committees formed from board members and other interested members.

In terms of working with other groups, close to home there needs to be a strong relationship with the Green Taverners as if we are both raising money then we need to ensure that we do not step on each others feet both in terms of how money is raised but also when. People only have so much spare cash! With the various Internet forums I have to admit to being unsure on the question as to if the Trust needs its own forum. It certainly needs an Internet based medium for getting members' views alongside more traditional methods, but I think somebody who understands the technology and moderator type issues needs to be involved in any future thoughts.

There are lots of other groups such as the traditional supporter groups and it would be good to have a Trust representative in each of these groups to act as an interface. I certainly don't believe that the Trust should take over any activities that these groups currently perform unless it is of mutual benefit and everyone agrees.

It would also be good to form close relationships with other trusts in order to learn from their experiences and also pass on our experiences to other trusts.

### **How would you convince those members thinking of renewing that there is still a point to the Trust, now that the club is perceived as being in relatively safe hands?**

**Gareth Nicholson:** I'm fairly confident in saying that the general view of Argyle fans to whom I've spoken is that James Brent has done and said mostly the right things so far, but it doesn't follow that he will always make the right decisions.

Having a strong and active Trust can be both a vital check and balance on the strategic direction taken by the club and an important conduit between the club and fans. The Trust spent most of its first year fighting (with other groups and individuals) a huge battle: now our battle is to help the club and the community it represents rebuild.

**Tim Chown:** I suspect all fans' trusts are formed when their clubs are in crisis. So it's

natural that the first months of a trust's life are spent fighting for survival. The Trust under its previous Chairs did an excellent job of that for Argyle of course, but in many ways the hardest part is to sustain the Trust once that battle has been won. I suspect there may be a drop in membership in the short term because of fans who no longer see a role for the Trust. It's up to the new board to build the Trust's reputation by continuing to campaign in the best interests of the fans, the club and the community to show that the Trust is still relevant and a force for the good of each of those groups. If it achieves that, and the Trust's voice is respected, then membership should begin to grow again. The more members we have, the stronger the voice. And on strategic issues, like buying a stake in the club should the opportunity arise, by being a member you get a vote on the policy the Trust adopts.

Also remember that while the situation may seem relatively rosy now, we need to be ready should the situation change, and be there to challenge and scrutinise what happens in the boardroom.

**4 of the 8 election candidates have been proposed by another candidate or family member. If you are successful would you ensure the Trust is not a closed shop or a plaything for mates?**

**Warren Bowden:** Every Trust member has had the opportunity to step forward. If it is deemed as a closed shop then more should be coming forward for election. I can assure you that the Trust isn't a play thing. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes and a lot of peoples time is spent ensuring the Trust goes from strength to strength.

**What are your views on co-opting representatives on to the Trust board and how would these representatives be selected?**

**Warren Bowden:** I would like to see someone from the local business community, someone with legal expertise and someone with financial expertise.

I would also like to see the new board explore the options of having a small board of young people that deal directly with the full board on young supporters' issues. They would elect a representative from that board to report at board meetings.

**Andy Moore:** I think that we should have some form of specialist / wider representation. I agree with Warren about co-opting a representative with legal expertise on to the Trust board

The one area that I could see being a very active group would be young members and it would be good to perhaps see a committee of young members with an elected chair of that group reporting to the main board. It would be good if the young members were not only active in club issues but perhaps also arrange their own social events etc.

**Laura Carn:** If the make up of the new board is lacking in any areas such as legal or financial expertise then I believe that it would be beneficial to the Trust to co-opt a member or members on who has experience in this field. With the young supporters, I feel this would be also beneficial as they may raise different concerns and their input would be valuable. I think that we could see who is interested in these positions before

deciding how to proceed.

**One of the most important aspects of the Fans' Trust is to encompass the local community in order to encourage a growing belief in P.A.F.C. The Foodbank fundraising drive was a great way of doing this but what other ideas do you have?**

**Laura Carn:** I would like to see children supporting their local team rather than Man City, Chelsea or Liverpool. Schools could be invited to send a team of 10 to take penalties against Pilgrim Pete at half-time. At the end of the season the winners could be presented with a cup and a cheque to purchase sports equipment for their school. Another suggestion would be for the Trust to organise a collection of Easter eggs for Barnardos (with their approval). If possible the players could go to the schools and perhaps take football training in the sports lessons.

**What are your views on the Green Army Supervisory Board?**

**Gareth Nicholson:** I think the concept is a great gesture from James Brent and also recognition of the role fans must play in our Resurgam phase.

In terms of the detail, I think a lot is still to be worked out. I think a lot of the role of the Board could be played by the Trust and would question whether if, say, 5 or 6 of the proposed 7 person Board are Trust members, the GAS Board isn't just adding another layer of bureaucracy. If it's going to be more than a talking shop or a rubber stamp, it needs to have specific powers. I think a better form of election needs to be worked out, rather than balloting ST holders and those turning up to one designated game. A lot of this can and I'm sure will be worked out, and I'd like to see the set-up being reviewed critically after 12-18 months.

**In order of priority (say 4 items) which are the most important issues to rank in any mission statement of how the Trust moves forward on election day +1?**

**Gareth Nicholson:** The Trust needs, once its board is at full complement, to work out:

- how it structures itself, what outside talent it wishes to co-opt onto the board (community liaison, legal expertise, business community liaison being three examples of what could be needed) & whether it wants to set up sub-committees (communications, volunteering, fundraising etc) and then appeals for members to fill these roles.

- it needs to arrange an AGM a.s.a.p to set in process a consultation with members on strategy going forward in the short and medium term. That covers the little things as much as it does the big things.

- it needs to agree a position on membership and renewals and agree who fills those roles.

**Andy Moore:** 1) The Trust has to represent its members and supporters in general, that has to be its number one priority at all times.

2) You may have seen in some other answers I have a strong belief that governance and challenging are a very high priority.

3) I think that bringing the club in to the community and vice versa are very important.

4) We then need to look at fundraising and how we can protect the club long term. Other trusts/supporters have done things like buying the centre circle to prevent property developers asset-stripping the club. This is probably not possible with Argyle as the ground is/will be leased from PCC but something along these lines must be investigated.

**Richard Blight:** 1) Improve communication with the membership, both by electronic means and by newsletters etc.

2) Consult with the membership a.s.a.p. with regard to the 20% share option and the GAS Board. Also consult experts on these proposals.

3) Set up sub committees, especially for fund raising.

4) Develop strategic business plans for finances and all other aspects of Trust business.

**John Demellweek:** 1) Maintain its independence.

2) Improve communication/two way consultation with members.

3) Take up the 20% offer in the club if possible subject to members' approval.

4) Get members more active in the Trust.

**Tim Chown:**

**To be a democratic, strong, representative voice of the supporters.** I believe in a consultative style; we must talk to our members and listen to what they say. We must reach out to more offline members, and talk more to the regionals and other supporter groups. An early AGM must be held. While membership may initially drop (some may see the "battle" is won), we should strive for long-term growth to make our voice louder, which I believe would be boosted significantly by acquiring a stake in the club.

**To seek to establish the greatest possible supporter and community influence in the running of the club.** We need to ensure appropriate channels of communication are quickly established where missing, and co-opt the right people to the Board to assist with this. An immediate task is to research the issues over Brent's offer of a 20% stake and to consult the members explaining those issues in simple terms. I fully support acquiring a 20% stake providing no unforeseen legal obstacles arise. We need to quickly adopt the new SD Model Rules to help facilitate fundraising.

**Be a critical friend to the club.** The Trust's primary reason to exist is to support the future success of the club, in partnership with fans and the community. But we must also remain independent of the club boardroom and be prepared to scrutinise its actions. Whether the GASB proposal goes ahead or not, the Trust must continue to challenge and speak out where necessary just as it did during the administration. An immediate

task is to give critical feedback on the GASB proposal.

**To campaign for positive change in the way football is run.** James Brent has said he wants Argyle to be a beacon for how clubs should be run. Yet around us we see other teams, most recently Darlington, suffering from what is a rotten system. The Trust should work with other organisations including SD, other Trusts, and government to promote change. Not an immediate priority, but something I believe we must attempt to achieve; long-term it would allow a club like Argyle to more readily compete fairly in higher divisions without pressure to spend recklessly again.

### **If elected, how would you go about strengthening ties with the Plymouth community and promoting the club?**

**Gareth Nicholson:** The best way of promoting the club is if it is playing 'good football' and if it is successful.

That said, I think there are steps the Trust can take. We need to plug Argyle in to Plymouth civic life. That means agitating for it to be represented properly in things like PCC sports and leisure strategies, making more use of HP as a link to the Life Centre and as a hub for community activity, and making business in the City aware that there is a market in Argyle fans that it makes sense to court. There is also a role for the Trust in going out in to the community and demonstrating by deed and not word that Argyle is an important part of our City.

If elected, I'd press for the Trust to co-opt on to its board a representative from Plymouth community groups who could give us ideas and feedback and with whom we could work to put Argyle where it belongs at the heart of City life.

**Richard Blight:** As Gareth has said the best way for Argyle to strengthen ties with the community is to be well-run and winning. The Trust needs to sort itself out first and have strategies in place for running it as well as increasing membership and fundraising. It needs to expand involvement from its members: the more people helping, the more the Trust can do. Initiatives like the Foodbank Appeal can be taken on quite easily without costing the Trust money. The Trust will be restricted in what it can do until it builds up some reserves.

The Trust could take the gazebo to community events, along with events on the Hoe, Devon/Cornwall County shows or smaller ones like Totnes / Kingsbridge. Events at schools would be good. These could be joint events with possibly the Green Taverners and some players. To do this though the members have to play their part, this is your Trust. The board are just the people who carry out your wishes (if possible) and look after all the administration etc.

### **Do you have any specific ideas about engagement with the local community in terms not of increasing Trust membership but rather raising the positive profile of the club?**

**Tim Chown:** I think the Foodbank collection was a good example of the type of activity

the Trust can support here. A lot of fans made the effort to bring a bag of tins along to the game that week, and I know the Foodbank staff were overwhelmed by the generosity of the supporters.

Another aspect is to get commercial sponsors back into the club. There are still many empty "corporate" tables at home matches for example. Helping to (re)build the club's image in the community (popular and business) takes time, but is certainly something the Trust can play a positive role in.

**Andy Moore:** The club will I am sure be very different in the next 5-10 years and the Trust must adapt to these changes. As to what they will be that is difficult but I believe that Argyle needs to be a more open and community minded club with a sound business plan for the future.

I believe that the club and Trust should get involved with schools. From simple things such as encouraging the club to let players go in to the schools to getting the trust involved in things like summer fairs etc. The club used to have an inflatable goal and a speed gun to measure that power of shots. My school used to have this coming every year and the kids loved it, they had Argyle goodies and if we can get the kids proud to wear green shirts rather than some Premiership club kit then we will have a future. At the same time as trying to do this the Trust can also be talking to parents about the Trust and getting families involved in the club.

**Richard Blight:** We already work with the Green Taverners and I could see where we could hold joint events on the Hoe with things for children and some of the players supporting us - so we take Plymouth Argyle to the people as a club/Trust/Green Taverners event. The recent America's Cup event would have been an ideal time to have done this sort of thing. Taking the club to children has got to be on the agenda. They are our future.

**Gareth Nicholson:** It's important to demonstrate to Plymouth civic society - to business, to local government, to community organisations - that Argyle is an important part of community life. I'd like to see the Trust press for Argyle to do more work in the community and link up with initiatives aimed at young people, education, providing voluntary work and using Home Park and its proximity to the Life Centre as a community hub. My aim would be for Argyle to be held in the same esteem as the Theatre Royal and the University as important parts of the city's cultural capital but also for Argyle to recognise that we must contribute to the community to get anything out of it.

**Do you think the Trust should deal equally and without prejudice with questions and concerns/desires of non-members alongside those of members ?**

**Richard Blight:** As far as I'm concerned, I'll listen to the views of all Argyle fans. Trust members will obviously set the agenda that Trust board members will work to. If we want to get a general view of the fans on a particular subject we might use our survey facility to ask the members' views on something but that doesn't stop non-members commenting on things.

**John Demellweek:** I am quite happy to engage with anyone, as all fans have an opinion. I might not agree with you, sometimes it is impossible to agree with everyone but a balanced approach to all views should be taken into account; after all, non-members are the members of the future.

**Tim Chown:** I think the Trust needs to listen carefully to non-members, as those are the people who are needed on board if the Trust is to grow.

I don't think non-members can ever be given equal consideration simply because there will be strategic issues that members will be consulted on by ballot or similar means, and which non-members won't have a vote on. It's only right that Trust members set Trust strategy.

However, if fans or members of the community who are not Trust members raise specific concerns with the Trust, and the issue is clearly one that's in the Trust's remit, then I believe the Trust should take the matter up. From that perspective, yes there should be equivalent consideration.

**Gareth Nicholson:** No I don't, but that's not to say that the concerns of non-members aren't valid and it's important views aren't ignored.

The Trust is a mutual organisation and mutuals or societies are set up to further the interests of in the first instance its members. That's the same as if the organisation was a credit union, a guild, or a trade union. However, part of the Trust's aims and objectives are to strengthen the links between the club and its fans and the wider community. That necessarily means engaging with non-members and maybe even non-Argyle fans. And of course the Trust will need to drive new membership by demonstrating that being a member is better than not being one.

In terms of day to day Argyle business, the Trust would be foolish to ignore the views of non-members. I'll give you an example: if a non-Trust member is treated badly by police at an away match (the Doncaster game a few years ago being a case in point), of course the Trust should provide advice, link to Supporters' Direct legal advice and help in whatever way it can. And in general I don't think the Trust would ever shy away from a debate about either the direction the Trust is going in or about what's happening at the club. But being a member means that we're mandated by constitution to take those views on board and give them due weight.

**All of you have spoken in your statements about the need to involve fans who don't necessarily use the Internet. Could you give us a bit more detail about how you'd make sure non-Internet members are able to stay fully involved, particularly if things are happening quickly?**

**Andy Moore:** The Internet is clearly the fastest & most powerful tool in communication, however it is clear that this is not right for everyone. A regular column in The Evening Herald could perhaps be an option for simple easy regular communication. The press could also be used for relatively fast communication if required. A lot of schools use text messaging, this could be an option but there is obviously a cost involved and this may not be financially possible.

**Richard Blight:** I think some of the others have covered most of our options. Newsletters by email and post are a must I think. We have to be aware of postage costs but we may be able to hand deliver a lot with volunteers. Text messaging is another option but again we have to watch the cost. Use of all the various Internet options are the best way but talking to fans it's apparent that some people look at their emails once a week! I'm open to all ideas. Board members need to make members aware of where they can be found if someone particularly wants to speak to one. The gazebo is one meeting point. I'm always available in either the Far Post club and sometimes the FanFests before games and always in the Far Post after games for half an hour or so. We could develop a system where certain people would be responsible for contacting so many of these people by text or phone to spread urgent news.

**Warren Bowden:** This is a tricky issue and one that has been posed at nearly every board meeting that I have attended. Simple things first with a monthly newsletter (PDF for Internet users). The gazebo at matches is a great focal point for members where they can have their say. If things are happening quickly maybe we can utilise something like textmagic, which would send out a generic text message to members that sign up to it.

**John Demellweek:** The percentage of Trust members online is currently approximately 85%, whereas the national demographic for Internet usage in the general population is only between 50-60%. This is probably a consequence of the speed with which the Trust was set up and the fact that the previous board had too many other things on their plate at the time; the easiest group to target for communication etc is those who are online.

The Trust has to target communication with all fans/members. We already have the means to communicate by email, and using the Intouch System of Supporters Direct we can utilise text messaging (subject to cost). Other approaches could include: newsletters (first one has just gone out), building relationships with the press, TV and local news etc. to gain better exposure, developing links with supporters' branches and groups.

**Tim Chown:** The early focus has been on Internet users simply because those are the easiest to reach. And the online fans will spread news by word of mouth to the offline fans. But of course we need to embrace all fans.

There are many ways the Trust could reach out to a broader audience, e.g.

- information (and perhaps the option to join the Trust) sent out with season ticket renewals.
- half-page features in the matchday programme.
- increased coverage in the local press and radio (indeed the Trust highlighted the Save Local Radio campaign).
- distributing information/flyers/posters to local pubs, clubs and newsagents. I suspect many landlords/owners would be sympathetic.
- starting up a regular newsletter (already in the pipeline) which can be sent by post or email.
- using the gazebo regularly on match days.
- holding regular open meetings beyond just an annual AGM, perhaps with a special guest each time.

If urgent matters need dealing with, then the approach taken for the Pavilions meeting in

August 2011 would be appropriate, although we don't know how many of those attendees were online/offline. We'd have to hope that at short notice by hitting the press, radio, and our own web site, Facebook and Twitter accounts, that word of mouth would spread to as many fans as possible. For strategic Trust issues, a postal ballot is supported by our rules.

The simple but reliable methods of being available by post and phone shouldn't be overlooked. If anyone wants to raise any issue with the Trust they should be able to find a number to call or address to write to (probably to the Secretary). Members at least would have this from the newsletter or membership letter.

The trickiest fans to reach are the non-local offline fans. There, attending or communicating through regional supporters groups like PASALB could work well. Also, I leafleted about Fans Reunited at Southend and Barnet; methods like that are old fashioned but effective.

**Gareth Nicholson:** The gazebo we bought is already in place at most Saturday home games and the Trust could do more to promote it as a hub to meet board members, pose questions and provide feedback.

Depending on the relationship between the club and the Trust, we could have a Q & A every other month in the match programme.

We could offer a briefing or Q & A to Trust members either by organising one with a Trust fundraising event - a pub quiz type affair, or we could link up with regional bodies like PASALB to come to their events.

I think a newsletter emailed to members who use the Internet and only posted out in print to those who don't could also be valuable.

If things are happening quickly and there is an emergency then hopefully the board would have the mandate and confidence of members to take the right decisions, but depending on the notice emergency meetings could be held.

## **What are your thoughts on preventing Central Park from unwanted development?**

**Gareth Nicholson:** Green space is extremely important for the City and Central Park is a vital part of that. A fully-developed Home Park that affords for a link to the Life Centre is vital, in my view for Argyle over the next decade. Having respect for the two isn't mutually exclusive.

I can see that the Trust will need to take a view, guided by its membership, on the issue of James Brent's development plans, but I don't see that entering into debates over 'what ifs' is going to be helpful. Consultation with fans, with city dwellers and with local residents is going to be important, and there's no reason in my view to suspect that Mr Brent feels any different to that.

Do I think Central Park should be protected from unwanted development? Yes. But my

idea of what's unwanted might well be different to yours so I'd rather concentrate on the plans if and when they are put forward.

**Andy Moore:** This is a very emotive subject and I don't think that there is a right or wrong answer. The area around Home Park and Mayflower centre/swimming pool is a bit of a mess to be honest. There is already a mix of buildings, some are ugly and add nothing whatsoever to the park. The Life Centre itself is huge, but if you look at the footprint it is not much more than the football pitch that used to be there and once it is complete I believe that the Mayflower and swimming pool will be demolished and returned to parkland. I would guess if anything the park would be bigger.

Your question is obviously aimed at higher Home Park and I would certainly not support the old board's plans that they had. However, I think that development of the old Grandstand and the higher Home Park car park should be allowed as long as it is sympathetic to the area and it does not increase the footprint. It must also be leisure related, by this I mean perhaps an arena and supporting facilities. There has been lots of talk about a hotel for obvious reasons and I think that this fits well with Home Park and the Life Centre but it must not be a big tower block.

**Several of you have mentioned getting involved with bigger issues affecting football supporters that extend past the gates of Home Park. The campaign to introduce safe standing is an obvious one, along with assisting supporters of clubs that find themselves in serious financial trouble due to the actions of careless owners. How would the Trust conduct such campaigns? Are you looking to be part of a bigger organisation/pressure group - such as through Supporters Direct - or would the Trust merely add its voice as an individual organisation?**

**Edmund Shillabeer:** My view is the new Board should discuss affiliating to Supporters Direct who have helped us so that AFT can add its weight to SD campaigns it agrees with.

**Tim Chown:** There's been recent press coverage of moves by bigger clubs to look at reintroducing safe standing, for example The Guardian article on Aston Villa's initiative. It's something I agree the Trust should support. It will need a change in the law, and thus will need backing by the clubs themselves, other fan Trusts, groups like SD and the FSF, and most importantly key politicians.

In my view the Trust should urge the club to state they are behind the idea in principle now, and to commit to introducing safe standing as a matter of high priority once the law is changed. Where the standing areas would be would be down to fan consultation.

It's a bit odd that the way the rules have been implemented mean that a League 1 or 2 team that's never been in the Championship can have terracing, but Argyle cannot re-introduce it.

The biggest problem in the game is the financial side, and I think that's the most important issue that needs addressing. The new rules on wages against total turnover in

Leagues 1 and 2 will help, but there's still too big a gulf between divisions, and it's still too easy for a small number of people to ruin a club and have minimal comeback for doing so. It is of course a very difficult issue to resolve, but there are ideas to be drawn from the German leagues, for example.

## Individual questions

**To Gareth Nicholson: As you are based in Bristol, will this be a hindrance for you to attend meetings should you be elected?**

No. We already have teleconferencing facilities set up and try and hold regular meetings around home games. Ivybridge is my family home and I am back there regularly so any meetings outside home games including evening meetings are manageable too.

**To Laura Carn: You are the youngest and only female candidate and can perhaps bring a different perspective to the Trust. What skills can you bring to the table, and what is your vision for the Trust going forward?**

My vision for the Trust is to be a voice for the fans and take suggestions to the board to ensure that Plymouth Argyle runs smoothly and effectively and we do not fall into the situation that we have just seen ourselves in. The skills I bring to the table include good communication skills, IT skills and having ideas for fundraising events.

**To Tim Chown: Knowing that you are the technical guru on the board dealing with twitter and Facebook, how do you feel that the Trust should communicate with its less tech-savvy members? How frequently do you think this should be done?**

I think there's a few obvious but important things we could start up pretty quickly to get the ball rolling. The first would be a newsletter (perhaps fanzine style as was mentioned elsewhere), ideally monthly. We've already had some volunteers to help with this, and we can learn from the existing newsletters that groups like PASALB have been producing for years. Members could opt to receive copies by post or in email - it's good to keep costs down by using email if members prefer that. Second would be to get a regular feature in the match day programme. We've used that to announce the election for example, but a regular column would be good if the club was OK with that. Third is to get coverage and articles in the local papers and radio, which are actually still good ways to get news out quite quickly.

I like that the PASALB newsletter has postal, phone and email contacts for their board members. That allows/encourages members to get in touch in the way they prefer. If they get the newsletter by post, they don't have to ever go online to get in touch.

We should hold at least 3 or 4 open meetings each year, one of which of course would be the AGM. If we could secure guest speakers/attendees from the club or maybe past players we'd get the attendance up, be able to discuss any issues fans have and make a good evening around it.

I'm sure there's lots of pubs, clubs and newsagents that would happily distribute material and put up posters etc if we got in touch.

We could also just have informal "meet a Trust board member" nights where for example one or two board members could be in such-and-such a pub on a certain night - members could feel free to come along and chat. We could do the same for some away games, maybe once a month or so.

I think these are all realistic and achievable, though we'll need volunteers to help out. But with the way people have come forward to help distribute share certificates, I'm quite optimistic!

**To Tim Chown: As you are based in Southampton, will this be a hindrance for you to attend meetings should you be elected?**

I have attended all but one of the Trust Board meetings in Plymouth in person since joining the Trust Board in the summer, and I attended the other by the voice conferencing system that I arranged for the Board, so I don't see being an exile as a problem in that regard.

The Board meetings are usually held the morning of a match, so that makes it easier to attend.

Given that 30% of the Trust members are living outside Devon and Cornwall, I'd like to think that at least one Board member should be an exile. I'm only an hour by train from London which may be handy should a Trust presence be needed for any events/meetings there.

**To Andy Moore: You are of the opinion that the Trust should represent all fans. There are many factions. How do you think the Trust should look to seek the majority of fans without treading on toes?**

The only way of gathering a broad cross-section of views is going to see members and talking to them. Ideas for this could be to make sure that there is always a board member at each match in the gazebo, on a rotation basis and engage with people. As I have said before, take the gazebo to school fairs and other events around the region such as the Balloon Festival, Fireworks Championships etc. You tease things out of people and you will get a wider view of the supporters opinions than from just reading Internet forums. We also need to get closer to the various supporters groups and get their opinions as long as they also truly represent all members rather than just a few committee members.

**To Andy Moore: Andy, one of your biggest challenges is getting people to vote for you as a new contender. What is the one thing that you would like to see the Trust do above all else?**

To be honest, I am very much unknown to the vast majority of voters and it will not be easy to get elected, that is for sure.

I don't think there is one single thing that I would like the Trust to do, but there is one very big general aim that I would like the Trust to achieve by doing lots of things. That aim is for the Trust to be a body that represents ALL supporters in a fair and honest way with integrity in matters that are important to supporters. This could be directly related to Argyle or football in general. I know that this is nothing radically new, but as I have said before the focus of the Trust now has to change from its previous role of helping to save the club to normal matters that affect our great club. The existing and potential new members have to see this new role and see results if it is to maintain and grow its membership. It must not be a Trust for a few people who can have their voices heard because they like the sound of their own voice, it must be proactive and open to all with green blood. I personally don't think that is the case today, but some people do think that and if we are not careful that feeling will spread and so we have to work extra hard to overcome that feeling. How you achieve this is not by any single action, but by lots of differing ways. You will have seen in other answers my views on getting involved in the community, in particular schools, governance and challenging the club etc.

Supporters have got to feel that their views are important, their membership fees are being spent wisely, they can get involved (if they want to) and be proud of being a member of the Trust.

**To Andy Moore: In your election statement you say that you "look forward to the Trust playing its part in shaping the future of our great club". How would the Trust do this?**

I feel quite strongly about governance and challenging. I think at the moment that the club is almost in a holding position, whilst James Brent considers how he is going to move the club forward and obviously part of that is putting together his management team and board of directors.

Once that is done I think we will see some fairly significant changes at the club that will shape the future for a very long time and this is on top of what we have already seen in terms of openness. These changes are critical to the future of the club and I hope, and all indications are good, that James Brent will allow supporter interaction/dialogue etc so that these changes can be discussed before they become cast in stone. A challenge should be made in all cases not just where you may disagree, but also where you in principle fully support something as you have to try and remain impartial and quite often play "devils advocate". Over time I would like to think that mutual trust could be developed between the Trust and the club and as such that they will come to us for advice early on.

I believe that the Trust should be playing a leading role here and with my experience of this sort of activity I believe that I would be of great benefit to the Trust Board.

**To Laura Carn: In your election statement you say "the Trust still has a role to play as the independent voice of the supporters." Where and how in the club would you use that voice? How would you gather soundings from the supporters in order to gather opinion?**

I feel that there should be regular contact between the club and the Trust, so that we can challenge decisions made by them that we feel is relevant to the supporters.

There should be two members of the committee at the gazebo at every home game. Supporters can come to a member of the Trust with suggestions or any concerns. Some supporters do not have access to the Internet therefore a regular newsletter needs to be sent to all members with a point of contact so suggestions and concerns can be raised with the relevant person.