

THST PROPOSAL FOR CONCESSIONARY PRICING IN THE NEW STADIUM



CONTEXT AND EXPLANATION

THST has been discussing all aspects of the ticketing and pricing operation with THFC for well over a year. We've sought to build up knowledge of how the ticketing operation works, what the practical constraints are, and what the commercial drivers for the Club are – although the Club's unwillingness to share commercial data means we have to indulge in a certain amount of educated guesswork.

As with all our work on ticketing, we believe we have a better chance of making a successful case if we try to understand the Club's approach. And if we put forward realistic, reasonable proposals. That inevitably involves a certain amount of compromise. As a supporters' organisation, our purpose is to put the fan perspective – even if that conflicts with the Club's perspective. So we have to balance what we would ideally like to achieve with what we think we realistically can achieve, and conduct ourselves accordingly.

One area we have received a lot of correspondence about from fans is concessions in the new stadium. It's an area we are very aware of the importance of. Months of discussion shaped a detailed proposal that we submitted to the Club ahead of the latest meeting with the Board. We are told that was looked at in depth by members of the Club Board, and were led to believe this would be discussed at our meeting. However, at the meeting we were told that the contents of the document had been noted and would inform the discussion the Board was about to have.

As we are, therefore, unable to provide the details of the proposal through the minutes of the discussion, because there was no discussion, we are publishing the document we sent to the Club Board in full, so that members can understand what we have asked for.

CONCESSIONS IN THE NEW STADIUM

- We recognise there will be a minimum level of ticket income THFC needs to meet, and an optimum level of ticket income it would like to meet. We believe fans are very conscious of the distinction between the two. Either scenario defines a commercial reality, based on the choices the Club exercises, but we are mindful of the fact that a reduction in projection is not the same as a loss. We recognise accessing the debt required to finance the stadium build has required projections, but retain the position that if fans are effectively being asked to share the burden of servicing debt, they should also receive some benefit for doing so.
- So, with this in mind, how many Senior and how many Junior Season Ticket Holders do we have currently? What would be the impact on the various levels of ticket income if every one of those accessed a concessionary ticket at the current 60% reduction?
- It's important to separate out Senior from Junior concessions. They are very different demographics and should be viewed accordingly.

SENIOR CONCESSIONS

- Looking at Seniors, without means testing every Senior ST holder, it's unhelpful to make sweeping generalisations about their individual financial situations. There will be a proportion of affluent Seniors and there will be a proportion of Seniors existing on a state pension.
- The vast majority of Seniors will have supported Spurs for many decades now. Before the advent of the Premier League. Before all seater stadia. Before ticket prices increased significantly. Some will be local fans who grew up in one of the poorer parts of London, who've followed the Club since

before any of us were involved. There will be a proportion of those who can't afford a full price Season Ticket.

- Society in general is too dismissive of its older members. Hence the remit and purpose of Age Concern and Help the Aged. These people deserve respect and a few privileges after 50+ years of contribution. They've done their time.
- It's morally wrong to restrict their choice of seating area. These Seniors may well have sat in every area of White Hart Lane during their younger years. Many will sit with long-standing friends. Routine, familiarity and friendship becomes increasingly important the older you get. Some will rely on that circle to help with accessibility, with physically getting around the ground. To have to choose between sitting with that group and paying full price or moving elsewhere to access a concessionary price is not a choice they should be forced to make. There's also a potential challenge on grounds of age or disability discrimination if you make it impossible for seniors to sit with people who enable them to get to and enjoy matches.
- A few examples:
 - You're the eldest of your match going friendship group. You turn 65 before the rest of them. You've retired. You're on a modest pension. You're forced to move elsewhere on your own to access a concessionary rate, hence your match day experience is altered irreversibly.
 - You're a grandparent or a parent who goes to the match with your children. They are now adults but it's something that you've always done as a family and continue to do in your older years. *'Tottenham Hotspur is handed down through sons and daughters'*. This kind of behaviour is vastly important to the longevity and sustainability of the Club. You hit retirement age. You either need to move from the area you've always sat in - and move your other family members too - or you carry on paying full adult rate when your income has been slashed.
 - You retire, your disposable income is significantly decreased. You need to move into a concessionary area to continue watching Spurs live. There is nowhere to move you to as there's only one stand of concessions and it's full. You are forced to stop going to the game, after decades of service, because you can't justify paying for a full price ticket given all the other demands on your limited funds.
- Our request is that, for Seniors, the concession is connected to the person, not the stand. Concessions should be available in all GA areas. Seniors wishing to purchase premium tickets should be exempt from concessions, as that is a different proposition altogether and clearly a 'luxury'.
- We can't be in a situation where we're forcing Seniors to sit in one place, potentially away from their friends and family, when there may well be insufficient concessionary seats available under that plan.
- We'd recommend THFC undertakes a comparative study of the Senior discounts offered at other Premier League Clubs for context (although strongly suspect this has been done already). Armed with that information, we could then discuss the level of discount offered.
- The average age of a ST holder is increasing. It's mid 40's now. THFC should also conduct a study into the future shape of the ST base over the next 5, 10, 15, 20 years to project whether there will be a tipping point where the majority of ST holders are over 65, if those in their late 40's and 50's continue to hold onto their Season Tickets. There will be a long-term impact of adopting an all-area Senior concessions policy that we would recommend THFC fully explores. It's in all of our interests that the figures add up and we're financially secure for the future.
- We understand the concern that if current levels of concessions (60% for seniors) is applied throughout the ground, including for the most expensive seats, the concession amount could be significant. On the other hand it seems overly restrictive to confine concessions to the North Stand only -- Seniors who want to sit with family or friends around the stadium, for example.

A way through this would be to take the cash value of North Stand concessions and apply it -- as a cash amount, not as a percentage of the purchase price -- elsewhere in the ground. For example: suppose a North Stand season ticket costs some £775 and qualifies for a £400 concession for a senior. That amount -- £400 -- could be fixed as the maximum concession a senior will get no matter where in the ground s/he sits. If, rather than the North Stand, the senior opts to sit in an area of the ground where season tickets cost £1200, the concession remains at £400; and so the senior pays £800 for her/his season ticket.

This way, the senior can sit wherever without forfeiting the concession; and the Club doesn't lose out through having to offer concessions at 60% of £1200. The concession remains at the level the Club would have made for a North Stand season ticket.

JUNIOR CONCESSIONS

- At the other end of the cycle, we have Junior ST holders just starting out on their Tottenham journey. As they're not earning anything, they're relying on parents, grandparents, guardians and benefactors to pay for their tickets. So, in the vast majority of cases, this won't be a one-off purchase. This will be on top of a full adult priced Season Ticket. The person who is paying is buying another product already.
- With increasing safeguarding measures, and under Club rules already, a junior under the age of 14 has to be accompanied by an adult. That means that for every two seats sold in a concessionary area, only one will actually be for a junior concession. There needs to be sufficient available.
- Under Premier League rules, THFC has to provide a family area. This should be prioritised for adults with children. Measures to restrict adults without juniors buying in this section should be explored. Or full paying adults will be taking up limited seats in a concessionary area.
- Under the current proposals for selecting seats in the new ground, adults with ST holding children will - in the main - be waiting for their child's window before selecting their seats. This will be after a good number of seats will have been chosen. We need to make sure enough seats are left in concessionary areas to fulfil that demand.
- While everyone recognises younger supporters are the future of the Club, the impact of younger children on atmosphere can be a challenge. AFC Wimbledon in the FA Cup this season resembled a kindergarten and the biggest complaint we had after the game was from adult fans who had excitable children next to them. There will be areas where fans will want to stand, where the language will be more choice. It's not necessarily a good idea to encourage younger children into those areas.
- Our recommendation would be to think carefully about which areas offer a Junior concession, with the South Stand in particular given a lot of thought
- We don't think it's necessary to offer Junior concessions in every area but we do think it's necessary to offer sufficient for those lower down the migration list to have a genuine choice to access that discount for their child
- Looking at the 60% reduction for juniors, we'd like that to remain if at all possible, considering the Junior Season Ticket is an additional purchase for the accompanying adult and, hence, a significant financial outlay

YOUNG ADULT CATEGORY

- We've mentioned this before and we'd very much like to see Spurs introduce a Young Adult category for those aged 18-22.
- While we respect the effort Spurs puts into the family experience – the family packs, the 60% discount etc., it seems nonsensical to make all that effort and then risk losing them at the age of 18.
- 18 – 22 year olds are either still in full time education or right at the bottom of their career ladder earning the least money they'll earn throughout their careers. The jump from 40% to 100% of an adult price is too great. Either their parents can't afford to pay for another full price Season Ticket or the Young Adult in question can't afford it.
- 18 – 22 sees a time when Young Adults are most likely to find other things to do with their free time and limited money. When football really needs to compete against the wider leisure industry. And if you lose fans then, statistically, you don't often engage them again.
- Increasing numbers of Premier League Clubs are operating such categories in recognition of the financial realities within this demographic and in recognition of the effort Clubs need to put in to keep fans engaged at this pivotal stage of their lives.
- We'd like to see a transitional pricing category for Young Adults, which would be a significant discount off a full adult season ticket, available throughout the ground.

COMMENTS FROM THST BOARD

The THST Board is comprised of a cross section of fans in different circumstances and with different ticket and membership statuses. During our discussions about this proposal, some interesting points were made which, because they will be pertinent to the situation many other fans find themselves in, we have included as direct quotes.

1.

“As someone who attends matches with two children (possibly three next season) and my father-in-law who is a senior, we will be very restricted if concessions are only offered in the North stand. I can't be the only one who will attend with younger and older fans - so many will suffer if concessions are only offered in limited areas.

“If they plan to only have concessions in one stand, surely they will have to identify a way to keep Supporters without a concessionary payment in their group out, otherwise again, the choice for those with juniors/seniors is further limited.

“I'm not sure how they do that or again, how fair that is on the supporters who may want to sit in this stand behind the goal without juniors/seniors in their group. Would be much easier and straight forward therefore to allow all supporters to choose where they sit.

“Having a concessions stand works to the extent that most juniors and seniors head there (like the Paxton), but what happens if that is 95 per cent full with season ticket holders? Junior and senior members won't get to as many games as they won't always being willing to pay full price so it is almost counter-productive as it restricts members.

“You could end up for certain games with the North Stand full and seats available in the south stand that would have been sold had concessions been available.

“Even offering concessions in the lower tiers only around the stadium and the lower part of the south stand would make more sense. At least it gives supporters more choice particularly when the family stand, or whatever they call it, has sold out.”

2.

“Speaking as an OAP, I think restricting our concessions to only one stand amounts to discrimination, for all the reasons you say. It also risks reducing the North Stand to an Old Farts Ghetto – the equivalent of Wednesday afternoon matinee at the local theatre. Means testing would also be unpleasant and not really workable.”

3.

“While I may not be typical of our 65+ aged season ticket holders there are a number of things one can generalise from my experience.

- When I turned 65 and benefited from a season ticket price reduction I think it was only available in family areas. However, that was seven years ago and expectations and perceptions on this, as in so many issues relating to fairness, non-discrimination etc. have shifted.
- I’m probably not at all typical here but I can only think of one or two Spurs friends who are around my age and I don’t sit with them. All my mates are much younger and we have all been talking about where we want to be in the new stadium and it’s not the North stand. Being at the game is a social experience; social interaction with friends, with people one chooses to sit with, is vital.
- Add to this the example of my 17-year-old grandson, who significantly will share his 18th birthday with my 72nd on the same day next month. When he was offered a season ticket at Wembley he would have had to reject it, and thus his chance of one in the new stadium, had I not bought it for him. He could not afford it, nor could his parents with five children and a low income. Not untypical. We sit together and would like to continue so to do. Next year he will be full price and is intending to carry on with full time education. I will have to find the money to renew his ticket and further, unless I also can find the money for a full price ticket myself, will have to sit apart from him. Why should he want to be with a bunch of kids and old buggers? Thus the importance of the arguments for a young adult concessionary price....and to be available throughout, or in many areas of the stadium.”