



THST

**TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR SUPPORTERS' TRUST
ANNUAL REPORT 2014/2015**

16 February 2015

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Darren Alexander

The sudden death of our joint chairman, Darren Alexander, on 7 March last year cast a shadow over our work. Darren had been an active advocate of Spurs fans having a louder voice for many years, and it was his energy and determination that proved to be a catalyst in regenerating the Trust. Darren's contribution to making the Trust what it has become cannot be underestimated, and we wish to put on record our determination to continue building the kind of organisation for all Spurs fans Darren worked so hard to create.

Darren was also instrumental in forging contacts with other supporter groups and the impact he had was acknowledged in the many letters of condolence we received from our friends in the football supporter movement. The fact that Liverpool fans flew a banner on The Kop bearing his name underlines the respect in which he was held. We also wish to put on record our thanks to THFC for their kind words and attendance at Darren's funeral. It would have meant the world to him.

In Darren's memory, the Trust presented Ledley King with the Darren Alexander Award for Outstanding Service to THFC to mark the player's testimonial.

Introduction

More members, more activity, more profile, more impact – 2014/15 has been the most successful year yet for the Tottenham Hotspur Supporters' Trust. We are now established as a credible and independent voice for Spurs fans at club level and as one of the leading fan bodies at a national level, where we continue to work on issues affecting all football fans.

None of this would be possible without the active support of our members, and all Trust members should feel proud of what has been achieved. Some important foundations stones have been laid, and in the coming year it is important that we build on them. Football fans across Europe are finding their voice and growing in confidence, and we are determined that Spurs fans should be able to continue to play our part by demonstrating what is possible if we work together. It's a team game.

Membership

The clearest indication of the Trust's success this year has been the enormous growth in membership. Just two years ago, the Trust was an organisation that had closed membership and little idea of how to contact the members it had. Today, the Trust represents a membership of over 10,000 Spurs fans, including 25 supporters clubs in the UK and across the world, and communicates regularly with them.

This membership growth is a tremendous success by any measure. But there is clearly still much work to do. We

need to convert associate members to full members, building our strength, increasing our income and enabling us to become more representative. Our associate membership offer is a demonstration of the confidence we have in what the Trust can achieve, and we are confident that, having seen us at work and sampled membership, more and more associate members will see the benefits of converting to full membership.

We want to encourage members of affiliated supporters clubs to sign up as full members too, while examining ways in which we can improve and build on what we offer to supporters clubs, particularly those overseas. We are currently consulting with a number of overseas clubs on this subject and hope to roll out a fuller consultation in the near future.

And, of course, we need to spread the word about the Trust to attract new members. One obvious target is persuading those who follow the Trust on social media to become members. At the time of writing this report, the number of Facebook followers stood at 4,131 – a year-on-year rise of 86%, and the @THSTOfficial Twitter account had over 21,500 followers. We'd like more of those who follow us on social media to sign up to full membership.

Finances

The Trust's financial performance in the year to 31st August showed a significant improvement on the previous year. Although still showing a loss in the period, the deficit has reduced by 62% on the prior year.

Income for the period was £1975 and when netted against operating expenditure of £2572 produced a loss in the year of £597. The Income of the Trust consists primarily of membership fees, although donations of £475 were gratefully received. Expenditure in the year did rise in comparison to the prior period due primarily to increased investment in web activity, purchase of the Darren Alexander Trophy, and a contribution to the Bill Nicholson banner on the Paxton Road stand at White Hart Lane.

The balance sheet of the Trust (the gauge of financial health) remains strong with Net Assets of £9434.

Overall, with the membership issues that plagued the early part of the financial year now resolved, we stand in a great place to be in a surplus position in the year to August 2015.

Communication

Communication is absolutely key to what we do and how we've grown.

- We send out a monthly newsletter to all members detailing the work we do, and those newsletters are posted on our website once members have received them.
- We maintain an active and responsive official Twitter account.

- We send a regular newsletter to overseas supporters clubs as we explore ways to develop this relationship and promote contact between Spurs fans worldwide.
- We contribute a regular column to the North London Independent series of newspapers' website, a column we are told draws some of the highest traffic across the series.
- We maintain and cultivate a network of contacts across the national media, with board members regularly available for comment on issues relating to the club and fans. This has helped establish THST as one of the go-to places for comment and information on fan issues.
- We have redesigned the Trust website, building on improvements to usability and reinforcing the Trust's core identity and messages.
- We contribute regularly to blogs and discussion groups run by the Football Supporters Federation and Supporters Direct, sharing experience and gaining knowledge as well as contributing to national campaigns.
- When possible, we attend meetings and conferences on subjects affecting football supporters, again sharing experience and gaining knowledge.
- We ensure that discussions with the THFC board are fully reported back to the membership within days, and have established the principle that we should be free to report back independently.

All of this takes a considerable amount of time and effort, and we are always looking for members who can help with communication. We believe it is vital to communicate a clear and consistent message, and that Trust communication should be focused and well-thought through, rather than simply reactive and piecemeal. The feedback we've had from members shows that this approach works, but we are never complacent enough to feel improvements cannot be made.

Overseas Supporters Clubs

We made a decision to offer membership to Overseas Supporters Clubs and to explore ways in which those clubs could work as an integrated part of THST. We send a tailored monthly newsletter to OSCs which publicises OSC success stories and encourages the sharing of information between fans across the world who want to set up a Supporters Club. This newsletter also provides information on the Spurs supporter community, something OSCs have told us they want more of.

We've worked with a number of OSCs and THFC to display banners from clubs around the world at White Hart Lane. It was particularly pleasing that the fantastic atmosphere at the recent NLD occurred against a backdrop of a number of prominently displayed banners from OSCs. We'll continue to help promote this initiative.

We also help OSCs wishing to visit White Hart Lane by putting

them in touch with relevant club officials and offering advice for the visit.

We're conscious that we need to strengthen our offer to OSCs, but that the way we do this needs to be shaped by what OSCs themselves want. We've started discussions with a number of clubs about exactly how we can do this, and hope to use this to launch a wider consultation on the back of some specific ideas.

Expert working groups

We're conscious of the wide variety of skills held by our members, and so we have appealed for members with skills in particular areas to contact us as we set up a series of expert working groups. These groups would link members with particular skills and allow the Trust to draw on their knowledge. So far we have established expert working groups in the fields of law and finance.

We've also had contact from members with expertise in construction, lobbying and communications/PR. We'd like to hear from more members with experience in these areas so we can get those groups up and running. And we'd also like to hear from members with expertise in other areas, particularly architecture and town planning.

Campaigns

Ticketing

Ticketing remains one of our busiest areas of work, taking up significant amounts of time on an almost daily basis. This has firmly positioned THST as the go-to body for fans with ticketing problems, and we are slowly convincing the Club that it is in its interest to work more closely with us on this area.

We have achieved some major successes.

- The Season Ticket price freeze came after strong lobbying by the Trust.
- And so did the match day ticket price freeze.
- We also secured the introduction of new Young Adult concessionary rate of 16 – 18, an important step in our work to ensure the next generation of fans have a chance to see the team play.

We continue to impress on the Club the difficulties high prices pose for many fans, and maintain the view that prices are too expensive across the board.

We expressed our disappointment with the rise in cup pricing from £20 to £25. The fact that 10,000 fewer seats were sold in the UEL group stage comparatively this season tells its own story.

But we lobbied successfully for the Burnley replay and

Leicester at home in the FA Cup to be priced back at £20. We have also asked the Club to reverse its decision to bring next year's ST renewal date forward, and submitted a number of options for staged payment.

Loyalty Points

- We reviewed the loyalty point system with the Club last season and jointly agreed to the new structure for this season onwards.
- The premise behind this was to make the allocation of Away points fairer in terms of reflecting the location, time of kick off, quality of opposition and whether it's televised rather than simply allocating 1 point for a Cat A game, 3 points for a Cat B game and 5 points for a Cat C game.
- It was agreed that no domestic away game would be 5 points – this would be reserved for European Aways only and home cup games where an incentive is needed to fill the stadium.
- It was agreed to bring 2 and 4 points into play, previously redundant.
- THFC check their proposed loyalty points for each away game with THST and have, on 2 occasions, upped their suggested points on our recommendation.

Booking fees

- We lobbied for all members to only pay a members rate in any booking window – so £1.75 online, £2.25 on the phone, as opposed to paying the non-members' rate of £3.50 during the general sale window.
- We have successfully obtained refunds for numerous members who were overcharged in the first part of the season.

Allocations

- We pushed for maximum away allocations for all cup games (10% league cup, 15% FA Cup, 5% UEL) and achieved over and above for BFC and SUFC – the latter including an additional 1,500 tickets on top of the original 4,000 after requests from THST to ask for more tickets.
- We spoke on behalf of Manchester United Supporters' Trust to THFC and Haringey Council regarding increasing their allocation at WHL after four years of a reduction. We helped to obtain an 850 extra tickets for their fans for the match on 28 Dec

and thus returned block 35 back to home fans. We strongly maintain the view that ALL fans deserve fair treatment on allocations, and continue to work with other Trusts to establish standard practice across the game.

National campaigns

- We participated in the FSF's Affordable Football campaign in August and one THST Board Member was part of a fans' delegation at a meeting with Premier League executives on the day of the march. Key messages were calling for an end to away match categorisation and the reduction of ticket prices generally across the board.
- A further meeting took place with the PL on 23 Jan as a follow-up to the August meeting, and we will report back on that as soon as we can.
- Much work has been done by the FSF to promote reciprocal pricing – something THFC has not yet participated in. We continue to lobby on this.

Other

- We worked with fans facing banning orders after incidents at Swansea, successfully reducing bans to three matches in the worst case scenarios, and securing the immediate reinstatement of memberships in other cases.
- We handle daily queries regarding away allocations, loyalty point cut offs, overcharges and general information on strands of THFC membership.

Stop StubHub

We have continued to campaign, as part of the Stop StubHub alliance of fan groups and bloggers, against the Club's deal with StubHub. A significant victory was achieved when we persuaded the Club to end the practice of 'flipping' – resale of tickets already traded on StubHub – and to impose a price cap of £200 per transaction.

While we continue to make clear we want to see the deal ended, the significance of achieving changes to key parts of the business model should not be underestimated, and nor should the benefit to fans. Incentivising fans to exploit fellow fans was one of the most distasteful aspects of the deal, and the changes secured significantly limit that incentivisation. Our position has been clear. Ticket exchange schemes should be a service to fans, not a device to draw additional income from fans already paying some of the highest prices in the country. We also stand by the long-established

principle that fans should sell tickets to fellow fans at face value.

We have continued to argue this case to the Club, and worked with ticketing industry experts within our membership to push the case for a more ethical scheme that also offers the necessary security to fans exchanging tickets. We have maintained contact with a number of companies developing ethical exchange platforms.

We have also kept the issues raised by the involvement of so-called secondary ticketing agencies in the national spotlight. We've written for the FSF blog on the subject, worked alongside fan groups at Chelsea and Everton as they opposed their own club's deals, and consulted with and advised MPs seeking to reform the market. THST was invited to present its case to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ticketing, and we took up that invitation.

We were disappointed that not a single voice from football signed a letter from leading figures in music, theatre, rugby, cricket and tennis calling for reform in this area ahead of the Parliamentary vote on a clause in the Consumer Protection Bill in January, and even more disappointed that the government once again voted against providing protection for consumers in this area.

However, informal soundings from inside football suggest the sport is conscious of the damage to its reputation the association with so-called secondary ticketing agencies brings, and we will continue to make our case.

Safe Standing

Following a detailed presentation of the current case for safe standing by THST, the Club has taken a position that it has no objection in principle to the introduction of a safe standing area at the new stadium. Until progress is made on the stadium, there would appear to be little further work we can do. Once discussion does resume, we will be pressing the case for reasonable pricing in any safe standing area.

Stadium

Our work around the proposed new stadium projects has proved to be the most challenging of all our areas of work. It is, we acknowledge, an incredibly complex project with many commercial sensitivities. But the Club's attitude to meaningful discussion on the project has proved one of a number of significant barriers to progress. Encouragingly, the last board-to-board meeting in November 2014 did feature one of the most productive discussions to date. There is still a long way to go before fans are properly informed and engaged in the process of securing and delivering a new stadium. We are aware of the Club's view that detailed public discussion of issues around the scheme could put some of the necessary funding arrangements at risk. And we are conscious of the sensitive commercial and political balances that projects of this kind require. However, these potential risks should not be used to prevent

discussion with the Club's fans, or to prevent information being shared. We will focus on the small improvements that have recently become evident in discussions and try to build on them.

Our position is clear. We want to see a bigger stadium so that more fans can get to see games. And we would like that stadium to be as accessible as possible, and as closely integrated with the community in which it is situated as possible.

We recognise that the interests of the Spurs fan community, the local business and residential communities, and the Club itself may not always align. But we continue to work to achieve the best possible solutions for all parties, while remembering our core commitment to Spurs fans. (There's more about our community work under the 'Community' heading.)

We also recognise that the size of the project means that, realistically, an organisation of our size is going to be able to make only a limited commercial input to any scheme. But we continue to work alongside football industry experts to examine ways in which fans could develop a meaningful stake in a new stadium. We also continue to point out to the Club that the supporter base contains many people with skills that could be useful in this project, and we remain hopeful that the Club will recognise the benefits of a more collegiate approach.

At the time of writing this report, outstanding legal proceedings meant that it was difficult to have any firm idea of timescale. We are aware, however, that the Club has been conducting market research sessions among selected fans about what could be offered to fans in the new stadium. We have expressed our dissatisfaction at not being involved in this process, especially as reports we have received from those present indicate that the general thrust seems to be how to maximise income from fans by offering a variety of executive packages. The Club tells us these are merely "initial soundings" and that full consultation will occur later. Having had previous experience of consultation being defined as asking us to agree to decisions already made, we continue to push for full fan involvement in the scheme. The key areas we continue to push for input into are pricing, the safe standing area, and the much-needed improvement that needs to be made in what the Club offers disabled supporters.

We have also expressed opposition to the possibility of the Club playing games at Milton Keynes for at least a season. It is not clear to us why financing for the scheme to build the new stadium alongside the current one is so much harder to secure now than it was, and we are not convinced every opportunity has been explored to secure an alternative venue within the London area should a move genuinely be necessary. Our opposition to a move to MK has been clearly outlined on the Trust website.

In the coming year, work in this area will inevitably increase, and we would like to hear from any members who can make a practical contribution.

Stadium atmosphere

Declining atmospheres continue to be an issue throughout the Premier League and White Hart Lane isn't immune to this. Whilst our away following are amongst the loudest and passionate in the division, home games are generally more sedate affairs.

There are numerous reasons for this: the change in demographic as a result of rising prices, the inability to sit in large groups with friends or like-minded fans thus diluting the atmosphere further. And, crucially, the quality of football on show.

'Atmosphere' can be a loaded word. Anything too 'artificial' is generally to be avoided so THST works to facilitate fan-driven initiatives here. Occasionally, we need to take a proactive approach, however.

We are in constant dialogue with the 1882 group and assist in securing Park Lane lower blocks for UEL and domestic cup games, where possible.

We also led the project to fan fund a banner in tribute to Bill Nicholson, which is in place on the Paxton balcony at every game.

In August, we held a competition to design the next surfing flag with the winning image, 'The Game is About Glory', now emblazoned on a 12m x 10m flag which will be making its debut in the next few weeks. We thank THFC for paying in excess of £2,000 for this flag.

We also work with the Overseas Supporters Clubs to encourage and facilitate the displaying of their flags in White Hart Lane.

Each week, we receive numerous queries from supporters wanting to bring in flags to home games and always provide the advice needed to minimise any issues at the turnstiles. We would encourage more fans to bring in flags to games for the remainder of this season.

Community

THST has met with members of the Our Tottenham group to discuss issues around the stadium development and wider regeneration of Tottenham and their impact on the local community.

Concern was shared between the groups on a number of issues around the regeneration plans, in particular the construction of the walkway from WHL station and the associated demolition of local homes and shops. THST will continue to call on the Club and Haringey Council to ensure that the stadium development and wider regeneration benefit the local community and that the local community is properly consulted on and involved in major decisions about the future of the area.

THST submitted ideas for the proposed new layout of White

Hart Lane station to Haringey Council's consultation process, and were invited to discuss further. We will be meeting with the Council, TfL and the architects to discuss the proposals in more detail shortly.

Credit Union

We've been working hard with the North London Credit Union to explore the possibility of setting up a Credit Union for supporters. Progress has been slower than we would have liked, but we're now at a stage where NLCU has given us a firm outline of what kind of scheme could be established.

Credit Unions aim to offer savings and loan facilities to fans who would otherwise not be able to use them, as well as potentially favourable interest rates on credit. Our main interest in setting up such a scheme would be to ease the financial burden on fans purchasing season tickets. But there are also a number of potential community benefits in developing a credit union of significant size.

Having obtained the information about how such a scheme would work, we are now examining the legal requirements around a community benefit organisation promoting it. We hope to report some conclusions within the next few weeks.

Antwerp Arms

We helped promote the community buyout of the Antwerp Arms pub, and continue to work closely with the management committee there. Many of our members committed to a shareholding and we hope to develop and strengthen the relationship with the Antwerp in the coming months and years.

Tottenham Hotspur Foundation

The Trust is keen to work with the Foundation and help build on the excellent community work that they carry out. This month, we were invited to join them on the judging panel for the Premier League Enterprise Challenge, which encourages young people to look for answers to a problem set by the league. This year the challenge is around how to get more families to attend football. The winner will represent Spurs in the final round.

Small Shareholders Association

We have been working with the Tottenham Hotspur Small Shareholders Association as they make efforts to organise the Club's small shareholders. The organisation aims to provide information to the small shareholders who own 15% of the Club on what their rights are, and to explore the benefits of small shareholders operating in a block.

THFCSSA is a separate organisation to THST, but one that has our full support. At the time of writing, THFCSSA was preparing to send its first newsletter to those who have signed up.

Policing and safety

We have made significant advances in establishing this area of our work, and are beginning to see an encouraging change in attitude from THFC in some areas. Our approach in this area has been to put the view that fans, and particularly away fans, should not be treated primarily as a problem to be managed.

We have asked for fans to be more formally involved in the safety planning of matches. Currently fans are the only key group not represented on the Safety Advisory Groups that meet to discuss safety planning – a situation that applies throughout the country. Both THFC and Haringey Council have agreed fan reps should be able to attend, and we await our first invitation. THFC have also invited us to observe a matchday operation with the stadium security team, and we await our first invitation. We are also starting to discuss, with FSF involvement, potential training schemes for fan reps wishing to contribute to these meetings.

- Alongside the FSF, we met with reps from West Ham United fan organisations and east London police before the opening game of the season at Upton Park. The aim was to ensure the policing at a potentially high-profile game did not increase tension, and police agreed to implement a 'shirtsleeves and smiles' approach. This approach was successful, and the day passed off largely without incident. We followed up complaints about one group of supporters being heavily policed and escorted from Liverpool Street, therefore missing the start of the game. We had to agree to differ with the police about the interpretation of events, but we believe the points we made did register, so will be watching future games at Upton Park to see if this is the case.
- We received a large number of complaints about significant problems experienced by Spurs fans trying to get into Stamford Bridge for the league game in December. We compiled a dossier of these complaints and sent them to Chelsea FC, the FA and the local council. We received an unacceptably complacent and dismissive response from Chelsea and the FA, so with the help of the FSF, we will continue to pursue this case.
- We also helped set up a meeting with THFC and the FSF to discuss serious problems Newcastle United fans experienced gaining entry to White Hart Lane before the League Cup quarter-final. We compiled a dossier of NUFC fan complaints and, working with the FSF caseworker, made a series of recommendations about how things could be improved in future. This led to an extremely productive meeting at which the Club agreed to take on board most of the recommendations, some of which we had been making for some years.
- We have also contacted the safety officer at Crystal Palace

FC after some feedback from Spurs fans about entering Selhurst Park and the organisation of the concourse during our league game in January.

- We contacted East Lancashire police to find out what the “police and stewarding issues” were that both Burnley and THFC said meant the FA Cup third round tie had to be played on the first working Monday evening of 2015. Full information about what we found can be read on the THST website. We have let THFC know that we would prefer them not to issue such misleading information in future, and pointed out the potential damage blaming the police for their own decision could do.
- We contacted South Yorkshire police to set up discussions about how the 5,500 Spurs fans travelling to Sheffield for the League Cup semi-final would be policed, and what they could expect to find when they reach the ground. THFC had also agreed to work with us, SYP and SUFC to ensure that travelling fans had as much information as possible to make their visit a pleasant one. The result was both the Club and the Trust publishing complimentary information online for travelling supporters.

Relations with other organisations

We maintain a close and active relationship with Supporters Direct, who has provided invaluable help on numerous issues. We also work closely with the Football Supporters Federation, and want to put on record particular thanks to the FSF’s caseworker Amanda Jacks who has given us unstinting support and regular doses of good advice.

We participate in regular discussions through the Supporters Direct Premier League Trusts network. And we continue to develop productive relationships with Trusts at Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal, Liverpool’s Spirit of Shankly group and Everton’s Blue Union. We have also worked with fan groups and Trusts at Leicester, Burnley and Crystal Palace.

We remain in contact with the Our Tottenham community campaign coalition.

Events attended

- FSF/ PL Supporters Trust network ‘Football without fans is nothing’ march and delegation to PL.
- FSF/Supporters Direct national fan summit.
- Whose game is it anyway? – Loughborough University Conference on fan governance across Europe organised by the Football Research in an Enlarged Europe project. Board member attended as delegate, and contributed to project research.
- Debate on criminalisation of football fans organised by Institute of Ideas. Board member spoke from platform.

- 2 x FSF London area meetings.

Other

Regular press comment to UK national newspapers, TV and radio. Interviews with football publications in Finland, Austria and Denmark.

Thank You

We are sad to announce that two members of the THST Board are stepping down due to pressure of work commitments.

Darren Howlett has been a member of the Trust Board for nine years, and has been Joint Chair and Chair for the last few years as the Trust has been transformed. Darren's involvement in the role at a time of significant and often difficult organisational change in the Trust has been absolutely invaluable in ensuring that change was successful. His support has been greatly appreciated by the current Board, and his diplomatic skills will be sorely missed at Board meetings and in our relationship with THFC.

Ellie Kershaw was one of the new Board members who helped transform the Trust into a modern, active, campaigning organisation. Her knowledge of political lobbying, communication and community legislation has proved particularly valuable, as has her willingness to dedicate many hours to the Trust, and to travel great distances to do so. Ellie's energy and willingness to speak her mind will be greatly missed.

On behalf of all our members, the THST Board would like to thank Darren and Ellie for all their work, and for their friendship. You will be welcome wherever we gather.

Objectives for the coming year

Increasing the number of full members remains our priority for the coming year, but we know we cannot achieve that without continuing to practically demonstrate the purpose and value of the Trust.

We will continue to campaign on ticket prices, both at Club and national level. This includes pressing for further discussion on THFC's proposed price increase for the 2016/17 season.

We will remain vigilant on matters relating to the proposed new stadium, seeking to ensure the fullest possible information for supporters and working to promote the broadest possible agreement about how to progress. We will continue to press for genuine fan involvement in the development of the stadium, and for full and credible explanations of decisions the Club makes.

We will continue to develop our police and safety work,

seeking more regular involvement in matchday planning and working to train supporter reps to make meaningful input.

We will continue working to improve the links between the fans, the Club and the community it serves.

We will work with Overseas Supporters Clubs to explore how to improve the relationship between them and the Trust, and them and the Club.

We will, alongside colleagues from other organisations, develop our work around football governance and legislation as the debate about the regulation of clubs gathers pace.

We will seek to improve our working practices with our new, expanded board.

We will seek to develop our network of expert working groups and apply their knowledge.

We will improve our branding and communication.

Thank you for your continued support.

THST Board
16 February 2015