

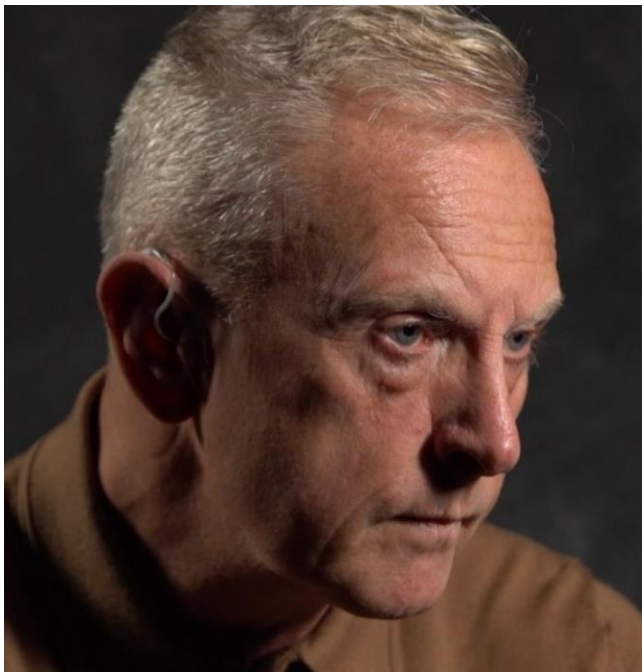
SPIRIT OF SHANKLY

NEWSLETTER TO MEMBERS

MARCH 2023



Update from SOS Chair Joe Blott



February and March were busy months again. We had the Independent Inquiry report (our special newsletter in February covered this), the UEFA announcement that they are to refund fans who bought tickets for the UCL final in Paris from LFC, and the Government White Paper setting out football governance.

Regarding refunds from UEFA, we have stated this is a positive gesture, but it is not the answer.

The Inquiry found UEFA to have institutional defensiveness, putting reputation and self-interest above truth and responsibility. We will not rest until all 21 recommendations from the inquiry are carried out. Refunds are fine, reforms are the key.

For some I know, sitting in the room with UEFA can seem too cosy. But I can assure you, these are not chummy talks, but discussions that make UEFA incredibly uncomfortable.

Being in that room is far more powerful than being outside, looking in.

It is also a measure of how far SOS have come as a union. No other single body has had this access before – previously only Football Supporters Europe (FSE) have represented fans at UEFA.

Update from SOS Chair Joe Blott (continued)

In terms of the Government White Paper, members will recall we had significant input into the Crouch Review that preceded this and built on our development of the Supporters Board. As I write, the Premier League are about to set out their response by creating Fan Engagement Standards.

We anticipate our engagement with LFC will be viewed as meeting those standards, but it is my intention to ensure we exceed them and create an even stronger model for other supporters to follow.

We have set up Supporters Board links, which will be further developed over the coming months. [You can access them here.](#)



[You can access the Government White Paper here.](#)

These three areas of recent activity are significant, but it is also important to reassure members that we continue to hold LFC to account on a daily basis, with issues ranging from individual supporters problems, sanctions, ticketing, European allocations and European collections. Not to mention our community activities which you can read about elsewhere in this newsletter.

All of the work we do is about long-term, structural change both at LFC and football in general.

SOS are in great shape and our reputation for achievement is growing nationally and internationally.

As Kevin Miles, CEO of the FSA says: "Both Spirit of Shankly and the Liverpool Disabled Supporters' Association deserve enormous credit for the way that they have pressed the case of Liverpool fans affected by the events in Paris. Every football fan who has travelled to support a team abroad will know that, while it may have been Liverpool fans who suffered last year, these events or something similar could have happened to any of us. What these groups have achieved, supported by the FSA and Football Supporters Europe, represents a significant achievement for football fans everywhere."

Joe Blott

FA Silence

On 20 March, SOS committee members met with Debbie Hewitt, Chair of the FA, who wanted to explain the FA's public silence following the events in Paris last year. She told us she was in Paris, in the same area of Stade de France as Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham, saw how distressed he was and vociferously let people know what was happening outside and tried to get help.

The FA were in regular contact with LFC behind the scenes, but as a governing body they know public statements can prejudice inquiries and wanted to ensure that didn't happen. On reflection, Debbie admitted they should have reached out to us directly to explain that and to see how they could support us, even privately. She apologised that they hadn't.

She also told us that in understanding the impact Paris would have on Hillsborough Survivors, the FA have made a donation to the LFC Foundation to enable the Centre for Collective Trauma to deliver a specific programme of support for Hillsborough survivors referred from the [Hillsborough Survivors Support Alliance](#). She said our feedback had made them think more about how they engage with fans and asked us to convey to LFC supporters how sorry they are for what they experienced in Paris.

From a fan perspective, the lack of support/communication from the FA was frustrating, but it is positive that dialogue has been opened and there is a commitment to work together to ensure UEFA are held to account and the English game can improve for the greater good of supporters.

SOS Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2023

This will take place on 22 April 2023. The time and venue are still to be confirmed, but it will be in the morning before the home fixture against Nottingham Forest (kick-off 3pm).

The meeting will cover co-opted appointments to the Management Committee, the union accounts, a report on our activities since the last AGM and motions from members. [You can find more details here.](#)

We encourage all members, and supporters, to attend the AGM to enable a full discussion on important supporter issues. For those who can't be there in person, we hope to stream the meeting live.

The Greenhouse Project

The Alcantara and LFC foundations, plus support from local entrepreneurs, including a substantial donation from a member of SOS, have joined together to fund a new education space for children at the Greenhouse Project in Toxteth.

The facility was opened this month by Thiago's wife, Julia. It's a brilliant initiative that will help local children who need it most.

SOS management committee member Paul Khan has been at the forefront of this brilliant drive and continues to work with all those involved.

[You can find out more about The Greenhouse Project here.](#)



Community Update

Art Workshops

The Creative Balance Art workshops taking place weekly at [The Church](#) on Oakfield Road have been a great success, with the children producing some wonderful work. Recently the group studied French artist Henri Matisse, which inspired the artwork to the right and below.



Welfare Rights sessions

The Welfare Rights sessions are continuing every Monday from 10am - 12noon at [Homebaked](#) on Oakfield Road.

Guitar workshops and drama sessions

We are also in discussions with LIPA to restart guitar workshops and begin drama sessions after Easter.