

CF10 - AGM Open Feedback Themes

March 2017

OVERVIEW

A summary of the themes from our open feedback session. Tables were facilitated by Simon, Fred, Andy, Derek, Sally, Neil, Martin and Lyn. Individual feedback is contained in the attached appendices. The feedback has been distilled into common themes. These themes are to form the basis of a report to members and are to be addressed by the Board.

COMMON THEMES

1. 'Ratification' of the Trust's actions to date and positioning (as a 'critical friend' to the CBs; vehicle for shareholder influence; aspiring to a seat on the Board).
2. Anxiety about the future - WRU takeover rumours; redevelopment uncertainty; protection of the CRFC
3. Protection of the Cardiff name in the pro team - "No Cardiff, no support"
4. Heritage - support for heritage project and need for protection of artefacts. Useful to identify exactly what is at stake rather than talking of heritage in general terms.
5. Redevelopment - the need for CAP to continue as a real rugby venue
6. Politics and structure - educate and inform
7. Lack of engagement from the Club - "meaningful consultation"
8. Facilities and match-day experience - exclusion from the GE is a mistake; poor facilities at CAP; not welcoming to visitors

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

1. Players - CBs should concentrate on Welsh players; CRFC should be the main feeder
2. Trust should develop a set of principles, rather than just ad hoc polling of members
3. We need to make sure we are representing all demographics. Suggestion that younger fans might be put off by overly concentrating on politics and heritage. Not all members care about CBs / CRFC.

4. Conflicts of interest e.g. between appointment of developers and Board's interests

APPENDIX

Group 1 (Simon Baker)

My group are all members of the Trust and clearly passionate about Cardiff Rugby (Blues and RFC) and are very pleased with what we are doing.

They were very focused on the rugby and didn't seem too interested in the "politics". Generally they were ambivalent about the name of the club and its ownership; they just want decent rugby.

Their main focus therefore was on the re-development. They felt the stadium was in need of a re-vamp.

Many of their main points are reflected the first survey.

It must first and foremost be a "rugby" stadium. All other considerations must take second place.

Ideally, a new version of what we have now, with better facilities. i.e. improved food and drink outlets and a better shop. And it must have terracing!

The focus should be on the "match day experience", which they feel is terrible at the moment. The re-development must provide facilities that will bring people in early and get them to stay after the match. Though they did appreciate how difficult this would be given the proximity to town. Many of them have brought friends who didn't particularly enjoy the experience, though they conceded the standard of rugby was the main factor; better facilities would enhance the experience and their friends more likely to come back.

Most of them also felt very strongly that the RFC should be strengthened and be seen as the main feeder team for the Blues. The RFC should be more closely linked to the Blues to help preserve the heritage of Cardiff rugby. But, whatever happens something must be done to improve the RFC.

They were very concerned about the lack of information from the Blues and would like to be kept better informed. "I'd like to hear it from them before I read it in the newspaper!"

Asked us (CF10) to ensure we represent all demographics specifically mentioned "the younger supporters".

And on the Match Day Experience theme -

A member relayed a story he had heard, which he was at pains to say was anecdotal, about the kids that do the "flag bearing" at Blues games. It was said they were treated like cattle and given no special treatment. They even had the flags taken off them as soon as they finished. It seems the Blues could do more to encourage the "future season ticket holders". He cited Pontyclun RFC who make an effort to make the flag bears very welcome. They get very positive feedback from the parents who I think they get free tickets to watch their kids and the game. Something perhaps the Blues could learn from.

Group 2 (Fred Davies):

- 1) Trust formation seen as necessary-with professional gestation to date;
- 2) Aim to be critical friend & meaningful conduit of views with seat on the to Board seen as essential
- 3) With some reluctance, principles of redevelopment supported; in meantime more could, & should, be done to improve customer experience & second rate look to stadium / essential catering etc facilities (as compared to C City!)
- 4) Clear view that there should be no conflict of interest in undertaking appointment of developer(s) with existing Club/Board members and their wider interests
- 5) Cardiff name & current base retention of Blues/CRFC is crucial -No "Cardiff"- no support
- 6) Current Cardiff business model seen as flawed especially with total control of all major aspects of CRFC to its significant detriment;
- 7) By default, WRU increasingly involved with some Regions; Feels like crisis intervention ;WRU Strategic review of Regional & all other level models needed ?-Wales seen as well behind Irish Provinces/English

Franchises

Group 3 (Andy Baker)

My table wanted the trust to:

1. Nail some colours to the mast

Be clear about what we stand for - maybe we're too "nice". Polling members for their thoughts is good, but that needs to be distilled into basic principles which become lines in the sand for the trust. The additional thought was that this would very much help to grow the membership as currently people aren't necessarily clear about what we do stand for.

2. Inform/Educate

The structures at Cardiff Rugby are a tangled web and most people don't understand them. The trust should provide some clarity to all this. Related to this we should fight back against the constant smoke and mirrors in the press and help people have some clarity of what the truth is.

3. Engage CAC rugby section

We should endeavour to target the CAC rugby section to get more of them onside.

Group 4 (Derek Redwood)

Main issues on my table ;

1. Definitely want just minimum involvement of WRU in the Blues
2. All in favour of the redevelopment with “ proper “ terracing to retain the feel of a rugby ground
3. All in agreement that the fan engagement by the Blues is almost non-existent so were grateful for being given the chance to have a say on anything at all really
4. All were in favour of protecting CRFC as far as is possible
5. Full backing for the heritage project
6. Main concern was the role of CAC in the wider scheme of things - one contributor was adamant that the sacrificing of Heritage shares was a potentially bad decision . There was confusion over the motives of CAC in relation to the proposed development and concern over the influence wielded by the non-rugby sections. It was stated that the total membership was about 900 and that the majority (600) were from the rugby section. Is it our role to encourage involvement with CAC and campaign for our members to join ? Even to the extent of the Trust seeking elected representation on the committee - although it may be too late for that?
7. All this revolves around the muddled structure of CAC / CRFC / Blues and both Supporters Clubs. We have been at pains to distinguish ourselves from the Supporters Clubs but there may be a danger that we inadvertently add to the confusion by having another organisation in the maze. My own thought was that one of us with a good knowledge of the structure explains the set up and the interaction in more detail - perhaps in an e-mail newsletter. Do it as a quiz to show just how complex it is ? I guess that is a repeat of the Janet and John theme
8. Desire expressed for club to be more welcoming to visitors
9. Encouragement given on our aim to raise more support in the form of proxy votes

Group 5 (Sally Carter)

Feedback from round-table session (Sally Carter)

General

Governance - Everyone wanted to congratulate the Trust on what has been achieved so far and they were particularly impressed by the professional approach to governance. They all felt that this gave the Trust real credibility and showed a clear demarcation between the Trust and the Supporters club.

Shares - all agreed that it was very important to continue the work toward getting proxy votes from small shareholders. This was seen as a real and tangible way of putting pressure on the Board.

Redevelopment

- Everyone agreed that the ground needs to be redeveloped but it mustn't be another fait accompli like the move to the Cardiff City stadium. The fans must be on board with the proposed changes or it will not work.
- There must be opportunities for us to have input into the redevelopment "to contribute and enrich" the options given.
- There needs to be more openness about the plans. Whilst understanding that there will be a need for some things to be confidential the broad plans should be open to all.
- There was a strong feeling that being excluded from the Club House was a mistake. The Gareth Edwards lounge was the perfect place to socialise before and after matches, and helped attract people to spend more time at the ground. Any redevelopment must take this into account.

Identity

- There's a great deal of confusion about the set-up and management of Cardiff Blues and the need for a 'Janet and John' guide!
- There was also a feeling that a lot of people don't care about the politics and are actually turned off by it, particularly younger supporters and those that have only

ever known Regional rugby. It was agreed that the Trust has to be involved in the politics in order to have any influence but this needs to be balanced.

- There was a real split on our table between people who really cared about the Cardiff name and history and others who were not concerned about Cardiff RFC. It was agreed that we need to be inclusive of all and we have to be careful not to alienate anyone.

Heritage

- Everyone agreed that it was important to look after the heritage of the club and to make sure the Blues were also represented in this and not just the RFC side.
- One of the people on the table was very negative about the heritage aspect and felt younger supporters would be put off by it – but then he was appalled when he discovered that the objects were decaying because of the conditions they were being kept in. This made me realise we need to separate out the tangible object heritage from the far less tangible general heritage of Cardiff rugby.

In Summary

The Trust needs to

- Continue to be open and inclusive whilst maintaining the professional nature of the Governance of the Trust
- Continue to put pressure on the Board to be open about their plans for redevelopment
- Try and arrange regular contact with the Board and feedback to members
- Support the need for redevelopment, but not at any cost
- Continue to control as many shares as possible to give us more influence
- Protect the rugby memorabilia for the future and make it accessible to all

Group 6 (Neil Harries)

Matters that the Trust should pursue -

Short term:

- Now that the artifacts are catalogued, the Trust should urge the need for the collection to be properly insured against fire
- Active growth of the membership.
- The fact that the allocation of the upstairs lounge to 'Premium' customers for Blues matches, precludes visiting supporters from enjoying a drink in the CAC clubhouse after games. The Members' lounge is too full to accommodate them.

Long term:

- Seek proper consultation and proper provision for the display of the Cardiff rugby heritage in any new development.
- Seek proper 'club' facilities in any new development.

Group 7 (Martin Hughes)

Main issues were:

Concerned about heritage of brand & erosion of Cardiff from name.

This was the overriding theme from chairs in the downstairs bar to ubiquitous Blues in some media.

The table wanted Trust to keep hammering the heritage nail.