



West Ham United Disabled Supporters' Board meeting

Date: Wednesday 10 April 2019

Time: 6pm – 7.30pm

Location: Stadium Store Coffee Shop, London Stadium

Key personnel

West Ham United and London Stadium

- Ben Illingworth, Head of Matchday Operations
- Jake Heath, Supporter Services Manager
- Nicola Keye, Head of Ticketing
- Julie Pidgeon, Disability Access Officer
- James Datson, Matchday commentator for blind and partially sighted supporters
- Michael Larkin, Matchday co-commentator for blind and partially sighted supporters
- Graham Harris, Deputy Safety Officer, London Stadium 185
- Andy Sheldon, Dedicated Football Officer, Metropolitan Police
- Austin Hughes, Community Manager, West Ham United Foundation
- Megan Clarkson, Supporter Services Executive
- Chelsea Samson, Supporter Services Executive

Disabled Supporters' Board members

- Cathy Bayford
- Trevor Bright
- Sanjay Chadha
- Neal Crowley
- Bradley Donovan
- Helena Foreman
- Jeremy Gibson
- David Griffith
- Tracy Higgins
- David Puckett
- Kevin Wotton
- Joe Seigel
- Robbie Cahill
- Pauline Tanner

Apologies

- Karren Brady, Vice-Chairman
- Tara Warren, Executive Director
- Philippa Cartwright, Projects and Stadium Director
- Gill Fowler, DSB member
- Richard Pullen, DSB member
- Steve Lowe, DSB member

Agenda

1. Welcome and aims for the meeting	18:00
2. Updates on actions	18:10
3. DSB – Terms of Reference	18:20
4. Update from Cathy and Trevor	18:25
5. Working together	18:35
6. DSB members – Topics for discussion	18:40
7. AOB	19:15
8. Meeting closed	19:30

1. Welcome, introductions and purpose of meeting

Jake Heath (JH) started by welcoming everyone to the third and final Disabled Supporters' Board meeting of the season.

He said that the DSB is a group that the Club is incredibly proud of and he said that he felt sure that the DSB was already aware of some of the work everyone in the room had worked so hard to achieve and long may that continue. He then said that we'll go around the room to introduce ourselves shortly.

Jerry Gibson (JG) added that he felt the DSB can agree that we're all very proud of what we've achieved.

JH said the Club has crafted the agenda for this evening working as it always does with Cathy and Trevor. There are also some important updates from the Club that we hope will benefit the DSB, celebrating its achievements and also helping to communicate the good work of the group to the wider fanbase. The DSB is two years old on the 19th April, when we had our first meeting here in 2017. We need to continue to spread the word and our message - that we are here to help all supporters.

JH said that as always, we will discuss the topics raised by DSB members this evening and will also touch upon the future structure of the DSB. Our aim is to strengthen the commitments of the DSB and the Clubs equalities objectives and to ensure equal access, representation and transparency across all supporter consultation forums.

JH then took the members through the meeting's agenda.

- JH to provide updates on the actions since the previous meeting
- JH to explain key points of the new Terms of Reference
- Cathy and Trevor will then provide an update to all DSB members on Premier League Disability Advisory Group, good news stories and achievements
- JH to read out the topics for discussion submitted by DSB members

All attendees then introduced themselves.

JH concluded that our content team are also here this evening who will be covering the meeting so that we can spread the great work of the DSB across our channels.

Actions from last meeting

- Contact TfL to enquire about ramp access

JH: All surrounding stations are fully accessible for wheelchair users and it is noted that portable ramps are available on the station platform. The ramps should be in use as part of TfL's Turn up and Go initiative and we have contacted the Stratford Station Manager to raise the queries and concerns of DSB members. We also invited him to the DSB meeting, but we're yet to receive a response. Cathy and Trevor will be sending a letter to TfL requesting a meeting with TfL representatives and the Club. The aim is to ensure that TfL are aware of the experiences of supporters with disabilities on matchday and can help us in improving service.

JH asked for feedback from DSB members, particularly wheelchair users travelling via Stratford Station. The Club had offered to meet a DSB member to review their journey on arrival at Stratford Station, but this hasn't been possible since our last meeting. All feedback will be provided directly to TfL and the Club will request a meeting with TfL, Cathy and Trevor.

Cathy Bayford (CB) said that both her and Trevor have tried to find people who have experienced issues coming in on the train, so that we have specific examples. CB asked that the DSB members ask around and speak to their contacts on this.

Multiple members said that the biggest problem was Greater Anglia and TfL – when you got to Stratford, there was no one to help you off the train. Ben Illingworth (BI) said that we would invite TfL in to the next DSB meeting so that we can have that conversation.

JH said that TfL had been very helpful in the past and had met with the Club to discuss access routes through the station. Previously the Club, Cathy and Trevor had met with Westfield on several occasions which resulted in the trial of dedicated accessibility routes through the Westfield shopping centre. Helena Foreman (HF) raised that for matches with a 5.30pm kick-off, fans using the accessibility route through Westfield were being directed via an alternative route once inside the shopping centre, and that this was proving difficult for her and those with accessibility needs. JH said he will raise this with Westfield directly and that they had recently been trialling a new accessibility route similar to the one we used last season at Jamie's Passage (by Jamie's Italian). An alternative route has been used this season due to the construction of the new building between Jamie's Passage and Chestnut Plaza. JH

said he will seek an update as to how the new trial is working and whether there is an opportunity for our supporters to use this route again next season.

Neal Crowley (NC) offered an opinion that he has previously been in touch with TfL and has found Esther Johnson to be very helpful in the past. JH thanked Neal and noted Esther as a potential contact if required.

- Shadow DSB member using trains into Stratford

JH offered to meet any wheelchair users using trains into Stratford Station on matchday at both the Leicester City and Southampton matches. JH also said he will contact Greater Anglia to understand how the portable ramp operation works and how it compares to TfL's Turn up and Go initiative.

- Creation of DSB newsletter

JH explained that Megan Clarkson (MC) had been working on the design of the first edition of the DSB newsletter and that MC had used the information provided by CB and TB to produce this. Following the meeting, MC will use the feedback from DSB members to produce the final version. The newsletter will be published and in circulation to all accessibility Season Ticket holders and Claret members before the end of the 2018/19 season.

It was suggested by David Griffith (DG) that we perhaps we do a profile of one member of the board in the newsletter.

JH said that MC had suggested that. His opinion was that first we profile all the members, and then the Club will leave it to the DSB to decide who is profiled in future.

NC asked if the newsletter could champion the planned introduction of the sensory room at London Stadium. JH said that this is something that we will discuss later on in the meeting, but that it could be included in the next edition of the newsletter if DSB members chose to put it in there.

- PLDAG survey to be sent out with away tickets

Julie Pidgeon (JP) said that the Club will be doing this for the Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur and Watford games. There will be slips advertising the PLDAG and their Away Fan Survey will be included in the envelopes sent to any accessibility supporters who have purchased tickets. The survey will also be advertised in the DSB newsletter to be sent to all accessibility Season Ticket holders and Claret members.

- Review lift steward role

GH confirmed that he briefed the senior stewards that staff are not to use chairs in the lifts to ensure maximum space for supporters, especially wheelchair users and fans with mobility aids. GH updated that there was one instance since the last DSB meeting of a steward using a chair in the lift. The steward concerned was spoken to and staff were briefed again. GH confirmed that this is no longer an issue but one that we continue to monitor. He added that

people should speak to JH if they see any stewards sitting in the lifts. Or you can use the anti-social texting system. MC confirmed the anti-social text service number, which was given to the room – 07860 404069. TB said the posters advertising the reporting process were welcomed and it was noticeable that they were around the stadium. JH confirmed that posters were placed in every gangway of the upper and lower tier and on the concourse. TB asked if the Club can position anymore posters around the stadium. BI set an action for more posters to be placed around the stadium.

BI introduced Peter Swordy to the room from LS185, Director of Health, Safety and Compliance. Peter thanked Ben for the introduction and said that he looked forward to working with the Group.

- Wider parking spaces are allocated correctly

JP confirmed that all wider parking spaces are allocated to the supporters that require them. JP asked DSB members if they had experienced any issues personally so that we can brief staff accordingly.

JP also said that a full review would take place in the summer and that she would distribute permits marked with either a wider or standard bay depending on the supporter's requirements. This system worked well at the Boleyn Ground.

- Review exit of vehicles post-match at Car Park 1A

Chelsea Samson (CS) reviewed the exit flow of vehicles out of Car Park 1A since the last meeting and reported her findings to BI. BI explained that it is very difficult to enforce any kind of traffic management plan in the car park post-match but our DSAs will kindly ask supporters using Car Park 1A be patient when leaving after the match. Any concerns will be recorded and reported to BI for the last two home matches v Leicester City and Southampton.

NC congratulated the Club on the post-match entertainment. He said it was fantastic and that it was a good reason not to rush off!

- Review shelving outside of accessible toilets

BI confirmed that we had considered introducing shelving outside of the accessible toilets, however, it is likely that they will be misused by supporters on the concourse as pointed out by Tracey Higgins (TH) at the last DSB meeting. We've had issues with supporters misusing certain accessible facilities in the past and the DSB had helped to report such incidents so that the Club could provide a solution. The key reason for producing the DSB Awareness Video was to highlight issues that supporters without disabilities may not be aware of. BI confirmed that we have requested more shelving in the corner of the Sir Trevor Brooking and Billy Bonds Stands and hope this will be installed before the start of the 2019/2020 season.

- Review and update audio commentary devices

BI, JP and MC met with James Datson (JD) earlier this month to discuss the current system used, distribution of devices and any concerns or issues from users of the service. JD agreed

to reach out to three separate companies and test the systems ahead of the Southampton home match. We may need to take a phased approach to implement a new system.

JD explained that the commentary must be live, so it has taken a while to look at research. This is quite a big step forward to get companies in. It needs to be phased and tested. The research means we want to stay at the top end in terms of the service offered, when we are compared to other clubs.

He added that we are hoping to have something new in place for next season.

What is the Terms of Reference?

- Official West Ham United document

JH explained that, much like the OSB, the DSB requires a Terms of Reference (ToR) that is agreed with Co-Chairs, CB and TB. The recently launched JSB has its own ToR and it is an official document, published across Club channels.

- Introduction, DSB aims, application process, expectations

JH went on to explain the areas contained within the ToR, which includes an introduction, history, purpose and aims of the DSB, as well as the application process and expectations of the Club and DSB members to provide transparency and fairness for all, including the wider supporter base.

- Ethos and long-term vision for the DSB

JH explained that CB and TB founded the DSB with the long-term vision of growing the membership base, building relationships with the Club and stadium partners, in order to enhance the experience for all supporters with disabilities or access requirements. The message is that the DSB and the Club are always here to help all supporters.

- Role of the Club and our commitments to you

JH reaffirmed the Club's commitments to the DSB and supporters with disabilities or access requirements and stated how important these are to the Club's values. The commitments are clearly set out within the Terms of Reference for transparency and accountability.

- Guidance for DSB members and wider fanbase

JH explained that, ultimately, the ToR is a public document that provides guidance for DSB members and the wider fanbase on how the Club will consult with supporters with disabilities to ensure we are continuing to provide the best experience for all accessibility supporters.

- Our commitments to access, equality and inclusion

JH said the ToR is another opportunity for the Club and the DSB to celebrate its commitment to access, equality and inclusion. The DSB has achieved a great deal in the past two years and

it is important that this is communicated wherever possible. We are all here to help supporters, both as the Club and the DSB, as CB and TB highlighted earlier in the meeting. CB stated that it's about improving comms around what we do/ who we are, and we would like more people involved.

JH concluded that the overriding message is we're here to help, and that the Terms of Reference would be circulate to the Group shortly once created with CB and TB.

An update from Cathy and Trevor

CB began by saying that now the DSB are on the Official Supporters' Board and the OSB is using the DSB as best practice, which is great.

TB then updated on engagement with the Premier League and other clubs and said that they plan to share feedback from the surveys that have gone on about disability issues.

CB added that it is interesting that a lot of the clubs have standalone supporters' associations which feel a bit detached compared to what the DSB has at West Ham. Trevor said that some of them aren't even recognised.

CB then went on to take the group through some of the recent activities. She said a focus was getting the word out there that the DSB exists. She said the DSB, it's work, and how to contact CB and TB is being more widely communicated, and they've been picking up complaints and been able to help resolve them which is great.

Trevor said that they've really seen how the Club does a lot for the DSB and it makes our lives better. He said a small thing for people with disabilities is a big thing to get sorted for the individual. Ultimately the DSB is here to make things better for all supporters with disabilities.

CB wanted to raise that one issue for fans was the relocation of seating. CB said that this can be discussed later but engaging with people on the topic has resulted in a lot more followers, because people didn't know the DSB existed. She said that we need to spread the word further.

The group then had a discussion on options for email or twitter forums to help connect with fans across West Ham and other clubs. JH encouraged people to contact @WestHamHelp if they have any queries, who are happy to help.

Working with partners

JH: West Ham United and the DSB are looking to work together with two leading organisations in accessibility. This includes Signature, the awarding body for Club staff British Sign Language qualifications and also the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

- Signature issue Club staff British Sign Language (BSL) qualifications
- Working together to raise awareness during BSL month
- 12 staff trained in British Sign Language
- DSB web accessibility subgroup progress, initial meeting with Guide Dogs Association

Update on Sensory Room

BI confirmed that the Club will have a Sensory Room in place for the start of the 2019/2020 season.

JP added that a lot of her matchday staff teach in schools and work with children and young adults with disabilities. Some of those staff are qualified to work in the sensory room. The Club will ensure that staff are provided up-to-date awareness training, which will be spread out across key members of staff on matchdays and non-matchdays.

A conversation then took place on how many people can be accommodated and what equipment is provided. BI confirmed that there is a license for 20 users in this area, and that the Club took the decision to use a TV studio for this so that there is a view of the pitch. Austin Hughes (AH) explained that the Club's long-term vision for the Sensory Room is to help supporters with sensory needs to eventually transition from using the Room to experiencing sitting in the stands themselves. The pitch view may help them get used to crowd noise and the atmosphere. We respect every individual's needs and that this may not be suitable in all situations. Any times the room is unavailable, the Club will clearly communicate this.

BI concluded that the Club will be going to other clubs to see what does and doesn't work and seek best practice from them and other social areas and sports. The priority for the Club was to locate the right space and now that we've achieved that we are working on the finer details and will consult with DSB members.

The Club also committed to consult with the DSB on the Sensory Room.

Sensory packs

JP confirmed the Club will be providing sensory packs for supporters with sensory needs for the 2019/2020 season. JP will contact supporters who may wish to have a sensory pack during the close season. JP suggested the packs may contain disability awareness card for assistance on matchday, a map, noise-cancelling headphones, a Club branded stress ball amongst other items.

Car parking – empty spaces

CB said the DSB are still being contacted about empty parking spaces in Car Park 1A and wanted to raise it for discussion so that everyone is clear on the process. Car Park 1A is the dedicated car park for supporters with disabilities at London Stadium, but the Club also offer a dedicated shuttle bus service from Stratford and International station which currently facilitates over 400 accessibility supporters each matchday. BI confirmed that the Club allocate above the required accessible spaces in accordance with planning requirements with a total of 49 being allocated on a seasonal basis to our accessibility Season Ticket Holders in Car Park 1A. This does mean a number of marked parking spaces may appear to be unused on matchday although, in reality, they're all allocated to season ticket holders who meet the qualification criteria or offered to the waiting list for each match. NB – The number of accessible parking spaces equates to 21.4% of the overall parking available at London Stadium, one of the highest percentages in the Premier League, and far exceeding the Accessible Stadia Guide

recommendations for recreational venues and leisure events at 6%.

BI said that the current parking allocation system and waiting list is in place as it was deemed the fairest process across the board when we moved to London Stadium. The Club are mindful of the need to provide parking to supporters who need it the most, however, clearly demand for parking spaces exceeds supply and we are conscious of individual requirements and the sensitivities involved. BI asked DSB members if they had any thoughts or suggestions as to how the system could be fairer and the Club would gladly consult and listen to them. It was agreed that a review of the parking process will take place as a matter of course during the close season in consultation with CB and TB.

Shuttle Bus – Additional stop

BI, JH and GH, reviewed the feasibility of a new Shuttle Bus stop on Bridge 3, opposite Turnstile A. JH said a new stop at Bridge 3 will have a significant impact on speed of service as it would require supporters to board or alight the Shuttle Bus, adding time on to the journey for those who getting off at the next stop. Club staff are at hand to assist supporters who are boarding or alighting the service, with bus drivers operating the ramp mechanism to assist wheelchair users. We do not want to rush people who may require our support getting on and off the buses.

JH added that, in the summer, Bridge 3 would in theory be a good location for an alternative Shuttle Bus Stop, however, in the winter and in instances of inclement weather, Bridge 3 has no shelter, no toilet facilities and nowhere to purchase refreshments. The service is successful from this location during the athletics as egress is staggered across a longer period and due to the perfect weather, we experience in the summer when the athletics takes place.

CB said that the DSB should note that this is a fantastic service and not every club has this.

JP added that members may have noticed shuttle buses starting 30 mins earlier. Again, this will happen throughout the summer we will look at this and review.

TB said that with the bars and entertainment opening earlier, it makes sense to spread demand.

Austin Hughes (AH) said that, next season, we may decide that the service closes earlier so that we can ensure people can get to the ground on time. This will be communicated to all shuttle bus permit holders in advance to ensure users are aware.

JH confirmed that feedback from the DSB and the wider fanbase strongly suggests that we've taken the Accessible Shuttle Bus service to a really good level of service since it first started in 2016. Many of the improvements made by the Club have been in consultation with the DSB.

Congestion around wheelchair bays

NC raised the issue of supporters congregating behind the wheelchair accessible viewing spaces causing congestion. BI said that this issue was previously raised by NC and that BI and Joe Lyons had personally visited NC on matchday to ensure this was remedied. BI and GH also

instructed the stewards to keep the platforms clear and there was evidence of them doing this as it is monitored by the Quadrant Managers and via the Control Room. BI and GH said they will review in more detail at the Leicester City and Southampton home matches.

Carpenters Road development

GH took DB through LLDC developments so that the members were aware of the building works. It was agreed to circulate the detail to the group outside of the meeting. JH said he has a solution for Sanjay Chadha (SC) to use the drop-off facility at Car Park 1A and will arrange this post-meeting for SC.

Season ticket renewals

CB asked about the process for reallocating seats, where you must renew first before relocating. She said this is causing a few anxieties from senior supporters and fans with disabilities. If they're not assured that they can get to a place suitable for them, then they don't want to renew.

NK stated the only way we can do this is on a priority basis once Season Ticket Holders renew. The Club always offers priority to Season Ticket Holders with disabilities and thereafter will also look to assist supporters with mobility difficulties or medical conditions. NK explained that we are at about 87%-90% renewal rate and people can't be moved to somewhere that is already occupied, however, the Club will always endeavour to help find a place this is suitable, wherever possible. The half-way line is the most popular location. Last year 4,000 fans moved seats, and this year we anticipate that there will be no more than 2,000 fans.

CB noted that this was good to know, and good feedback to have.

TB/PT asked why there was no renewal confirmation email. JH responded that this would be picked up with them individually, and it would be sorted after the meeting.

Celebrating the DSB

JH closed the meeting by thanking DSB members for their valued contributions over the 2018/19 season. JH then spoke about a number of achievements that the DSB had worked hard on for the benefit of fellow supporters and further confirmed the Club's commitment to working with the DSB to provide the best experience for all West Ham United supporters.

DSB awareness video

JH said the DSB and the Club worked together to produce a video that highlights the experiences of some of our accessibility supporters in order to create awareness amongst fans who do not have a disability. Misuse of accessible facilities was a common theme at earlier DSB meetings and direct feedback to the Club and the video featured DSB members and the players visiting various locations around the stadium to discuss these experiences.

DSB Newsletter

JH said that CB and TB will see the first edition of the DSB newsletter launched before the end of the season, which will be directly mailed to accessibility supporters. It's an opportunity for

the DSB to highlight their aims, good work and their overall message, that they and the Club are here to help.

Website subgroup

JH mentioned that David Griffith (DG), DSB member and one of our visually-impaired supporters teamed up with the Club's web development team to audit and test WHUFC.com and Hammers Help using screenreader software. There have been several subgroup meetings, with the Media and Services team visiting DG at home and also using screen sharer software to further understand his experience of the Club website. The subgroup is meeting again on 25th April.

Improving facilities

JH confirmed that more signage has been introduced around the stadium, above lowered counters at food and drink kiosks and for supporters using the Accessible Shuttle Service.

Enhancing services

JH said that JD continues to advise the Club on any feedback from users and advances in technology, as we aim to deliver the best audio commentary service for our supporters.

Building relationships

JH said that CB and TB are receiving positive feedback from supporters both personally and on social media, following the help of the DSB.

Terms of Reference

JH explained the Terms of Reference will reaffirm the commitments of the Club and the DSB to the wider fanbase and ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability, in addition to providing equal access, representation and transparency across all supporter consultation forums.

DSB leaflets

JH said that two editions of the leaflet have now been produced and the latest copy is currently in circulation, further spreading the aims and good work of the DSB to the wider fanbase.

Assisting others

JH highlighted that the creation of a non-visible disability and medication card was a suggestion made by the DSB and created by the Club to assist supporters in gaining access to any facilities or services they require, thus providing a better experience.

Equality and inclusion

JH mentioned that NC was nominated to join the Club's Equality Advisory Group for the season following his work with the West Ham United Foundation in the local community. DSB representation will continue on the Club's EAG as we look to further involve supporters in our equality's objectives.

Improving access

JH said that the continuous feedback from the DSB ensures that the Club can keep track of any matchday concerns or issues such as lift maintenance, steward positions and circulation routes

around the stadium. The Club continues to listen to and act on feedback received from our supporters, and it is important that we are receiving this firsthand.

Accessible Shuttle Bus

JH said that the DSB feedback had helped in delivering a streamlined permit process, more seating while fans wait, more signage and additional support staff on hand to assist on matchday.

JH thanked all for attending and brought the meeting to a close.

Actions to take forward

DSB to write to TfL	CB/TB
DSB to collate feedback on experiences at Stratford Station	CB/TB
Invite TfL to next DSB meeting	BI
Contact Westfield to seek update on access routes	JH
Contact Greater Anglia to discuss accessibility operation	JH
Produce final copy of newsletter for publication	MC
Introduce additional posters around Stadium for reporting abuse/incidents	JH
Distribute parking permits marked with wide or standard bays	JP
Add more shelving in the Billy Bonds and Sir Trevor Brooking Stands	BI
Enhance audio descriptive commentary service	BI/JP/JD
Produce Terms of Reference	JH/CB/TB
Consult with DSB on Sensory Room processes	BI/JP
Review accessible parking process in consultation with DSB	JP/DSB
Further review congestion behind wheelchair accessible viewing spaces	BI/GH
Circulate LLDC building plans	GH
Contact Sanjay Chadha to discuss drop-off/pick-up facility	JH