

# **Cross Party Working Group: The Future of Scottish Football**

**28 October 2021**

**By Zoom Conference Call**

## **Minutes**

**Present:** Fulton MacGregor (Convenor), Jeremy Balfour (MSP), Simon Barrow (SFSA), Calum Beattie (SPFL), Rob Byrne (Fulton MacGregor's Office), Malcolm Dingwall-Smith (SportsScotland), Keith Ferguson (Disability Access Officer), Andy Gould (Scottish FA), Richard McBrearty (Scottish FA Museum Trust), Stuart McCaffrey (Scottish Football Partnership), Duncan Mackay (Scottish Government), Paul McNeill (Scottish FA), Stuart Murphy (SFSA), Ann Quinn (Scottish FA), Cammy Watt (Scottish FA)

**Apologies:** Finlay Carson (MSP)  
Neil Doncaster (SPFL)  
Maurice Golden (MSP)  
Inspector Marion McLean (Police Scotland)  
Craig Peattie (SPFA)

### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

Mr MacGregor opened the meeting at 1.05pm and welcomed those present. Mr MacGregor extended his condolences to the family of Walter Smith, former Scotland International Manager, who had passed away.

Mr Barrow asked if there could be a round of introductions prior to the meeting starting and Mr MacGregor agreed.

### **2. Re-appointment of Positions**

The following roles were agreed:

- Convenor – Fulton MacGregor (MSP) nominated by Simon Barrow and seconded by Stuart McCaffrey;
- Depute Convenor – Jeremy Balfour (MSP), nominated by Fulton MacGregor (MSP) and seconded by Andy Gould.
- Secretary – Ann Quinn (Scottish FA) nominated by Fulton MacGregor (MSP) and seconded by Andy Gould.

Mr MacGregor informed the group that Colin Smyth and Paul McLennon were interested in joining and an invitation will be extended to them.

### 3. Group Update and Way Forward

Mr McNeill presented to the Board the purpose of the group as previously agreed which was:

- To create a platform with key stakeholders, to discuss how football (and community football clubs) can help support the population being more active, linked to the overall National Active Framework.
- To highlight and promote the 'Value of Football' and how local communities using the Scottish FA/UEFA SROI work to help influence Government Policy.
- Affordability – To debate and make recommendations on the issues of affordability for local community clubs accessing facilities.
- Accessibility (Community) – To debate and make recommendations on the issues facing local community clubs in relation to the accessibility of local facilities (for example, Schools lets, Community Asset Transfer).
- Accessibility (National) – To debate the accessibility of all Scottish football stadiums, highlighting best practice and make any suitable recommendations.
- To create, a platform that highlights best practice in Scottish Football, which will enable the game to be driven forward at a national, grassroots and community level

Mr MacGregor informed the group that this meeting was intended as a set up meeting was to re-establish the Cross Party Working Group following the recent election, however he was happy to have a broad discussion around the purpose which he did not believe was very different to what Mr McNeill presented.

Mr Barrow thanked Mr McNeill and said he felt it was important to run through the aims again to refresh the group and to see the bigger picture. He said he was always willing to bring the topic of fan engagement to the group and also how to create a family/friendly atmosphere at games. Mr Barrow also felt that a presentation from the Chief Executive of the Scottish FA on the Association's vision and strategy would be beneficial. Mr Gould and Mr McNeill agreed to get Ian Maxwell, SFA Chief Executive, to attend next CPWG Meeting to present on the Vision and Strategy of the Scottish FA.

Mr Murphy also tabled the topic of the barriers to grassroots clubs for supporters and how we attract supporters back post pandemic.

Mr MacGregor noted that there was a lack of female representation at the meeting. It was agreed that we would reach out to Aileen Campbell (CE, SWF) to join the group. Mr McNeill and Mr MacGregor also agreed to discuss how to attract more female representation.

Mr Beattie considered that the main focus for football was the recovery from the pandemic and that the Cross Party Working Group could play a role in supporting that. Any suggestions would have to take account of the challenges that football has faced during the last 18 months and it was important to have a positive focus on what the group were trying to do. Mr MacGregor agreed but felt that the group could not shy away from reacting to the topical things that came up in football.

Mr Dingwall-Smith raised the issue of a potential further Cross Party Working Group on Football and Racism which was being tabled by Mr Paul McLennon. He wondered whether another CPWG was the answer or whether this issue could be dealt with at this CPWG. He suggested that the group focus on the spectator route, access for fans with disabilities and what opportunities we can deliver to widen football to a wider, diverse audience.

Mr McNeill added that there was a lot of positivity in football despite the pandemic but that volunteers were fatigued in the grassroots game which is predominately run by volunteers, and therefore it was important to support these clubs. Mr McNeill conceded that there had been an impact on the game due to the pandemic and various projects had suffered as a result eg Football Memories project.

Mr Mackay concluded by saying that we would not make concrete decisions today as the meeting was essentially to have the group approved. Going forward Mr Mackay considered that future meetings would be of a hybrid nature with the aim of 3 meetings per annum as a minimum. Mr McNeill confirmed that the next meeting would probably be at the start of 2022.

#### **4. AOCB**

Under AOCB Mr Watt reflected that it was important to address practical issues as we emerge from the pandemic eg the inability for teams to use changing rooms. This will have a bigger impact on the female game where teams changing in car parks etc have become a solution to this issue. Mr Watt asked for support with COSLA to drive conversations around what facilities are like around the country and to push forward on any ideas to improve this situation. Mr MacGregor agreed that this was something that he could indeed progress.

There was no further business and meeting concluded at 13.46pm