

**1. What do you see as a major opportunity and a major challenge for the Trust with respect to the integration of the stellar Women's Team into the Club?**

**Latoyah**

I'm passionate about the women's team and have witnessed their remarkable growth firsthand, and follow them both home and away, and have volunteered providing commentary on Grecian+. Bringing the women's team under the club's umbrella is a fantastic decision. While there's some overlap in fanbases, the women's team attracts a unique demographic, particularly women and girls. This presents a golden opportunity for the Trust to engage with a diverse group of supporters, grow its membership, and enhance the club's community impact. The women's team serves as inspiring role models, encouraging young girls to participate in sports.

In terms of challenges, it's crucial to ensure the long-term sustainability and profitability of the women's team. The Trust can support this by fostering a supportive environment and structure that allows the women's team to thrive. By carefully allocating resources and focusing on fan engagement, we can build a strong foundation for the future of women's football at Exeter City.

**Nick E**

One of the major challenges is for the football club to recognise the status of the women's team inasmuch as their league standing and their potential. ECWFC should not be seen as an add-on but an integral part of the whole club. They should be afforded the same support and status as the men's team and have access to the same facilities. The biggest challenge is to give them a steady home ie SJP. This will be a significant signal to address the whole club approach.

**Pete F**

Opportunities.

1. Greater engagement with female fans of all ages and with families.
2. Having a successful women's team will give the whole club better visibility.
3. Commercial benefit from attendance at SJP & team wear sales.
4. Hopefully a successful women's team will get more young girls into football.
5. To get more sponsors for the women's team and development centre.

Challenges.

1. Staying in the league.
2. Generating enough income to pay for it all. (see PT 5 above )
3. Playing at Coach Rd. Need to discuss how we make it attractive to get our fans out there and implement an action plan to make it happen.

## **Julen**

The biggest opportunity that integrating the Women's team brings is the opportunity to expand the Trust into demographics that wouldn't necessarily engage with Men's football.

I have been going to Exeter City Women's games for over a decade and, whilst there is an increasing overlap of people who also go to Men's games, there is a considerable number who are fans of just the Women's team.

Being able to attract people who, for whatever reason, aren't inclined to engage with Men's football allows the Exeter City family reach more of our community and, as a result, grow the Club further.

The biggest challenge will undoubtedly be the change in culture, for both sides.

The Trust, and the Club as a whole, now has to operate as having two senior teams, a major strategic shift from the previous 120 years of only focusing on the Men's side.

The Women's side will also have to adjust to rapid professionalisation having previously operated in an entirely amateur environment.

These will resolve over time, and I am confident that we have the right people in place in Joe Gorman and Jen Dixon to oversee this transition. I also look forward to supporting Jen during this transition period and beyond, as I have done on occasion this season.

### **2. A lot of people mention about taking Exeter City to the next level. In terms of the match day experience, what would you change to take the club to the next level?**

## **Latoyah**

To enhance the matchday experience, actively seeking fan feedback is crucial. The supporter engagement roundtable is a valuable tool, which I have had the pleasure of being part of, and we should carefully consider both positive and negative feedback. The Club does extremely well in the fan feedback for the EFL, I know that several trustees have contributed greatly in this area, and this is something that needs to be built upon.

The growing attendance highlights the importance of streamlining the matchday experience. From queuing for drinks to finding your seat, every aspect should be as smooth as possible. Football is often a leisure activity, so making the overall experience at St James' Park positive is crucial.

To encourage fans to stay longer at St James' Park, we could improve the post-match experience. The centre spot bar could benefit from more seating, live sports screenings, and perhaps even live music. This would create a more welcoming environment and generate additional revenue for the club.

Pre-match build-up is another area where we can help develop. By incorporating music and crowd interaction, we can create a more exciting atmosphere and engage fans of all ages. A lively pre-match atmosphere can significantly contribute to the overall matchday experience.

### **Nick E**

One of the biggest issues I get approached with is the cost of products followed by the time it takes to get served. We need to review match day prices and upgrade our retail facilities. We also must encourage people to come earlier and stay longer on match days by providing extra entertainment and utilise the 'Centre Spot' much better. The club also needs to address how SJP is utilised on non-match days. There is a lot of potential some of which is being used to a lesser extent but we need to make SJP a venue away from football.

### **Pete F**

1. Improve how are F&B provision around the ground, e.g more serving points (these are coming ), have drink pre poured ready to go at half time, use of the app

when its's ready for people to pre order in advance.

2. Second retail unit in the IT Opt' stand.
3. Look at getting the fans into the ground earlier than 2.00pm , so the fans can use those kiosks to relieve the pressure on the other kiosks pre match.
4. Ensure we are selling the product the fans want. Use the supporter engagement process to gain views.

### **Julen**

The reality is that, to take the fan-going experience to the next level would require a purpose-built stadium, either at SJP or elsewhere. Only then would we be able to truly offer an experience that is tailored to different fans' needs and will feel next level for everyone.

In the meantime, we must continue to make significant improvements when finances allow, such as the upcoming fan zone in the Red Square. Fan zones have worked very well to improve matchday experiences at other clubs, and we must continue to look to other EFL clubs and other sports for new ideas and solutions to implement in the limited space we have.

We must also continue to make minor tweaks and changes through supporter feedback that not only improves their experience at matches, but also makes fans feel valued and listened to.

Supporter round tables and the Club's Supporter Experience Committee already do an excellent job, but we must also encourage feedback from fans who may not be able to attend these in person to ensure we have as wide a range of opinions from match-going fans as possible.

- 3. I would like to ask each candidate if they think promotion to the Championship is a realistic aim for the football club - and, if so, how do they believe the Trust can support the club in achieving that goal.**

### **Latoyah**

While promotion to the Championship is a challenging goal, it is certainly achievable with the right strategy and support. The Trust can play a crucial role in achieving this by providing additional financial resources to strengthen the squad and improve infrastructure. In order to do this, we need to ensure that we are optimising every way possible to increase trust membership and explore every avenue that can generate revenue.

By working closely with the club's board and management, the Trust can make a significant contribution to achieving the goal of promotion to the Championship.

### **Nick E**

Of course it's a realistic aim but we must exercise caution and make the move at the right time both on and off the pitch. We are already on our way to having a championship contending team but we also need to be a championship contending club so that everything sustains the ambition. We have to be financially prudent as the money coming into league one is huge but possibly not sustainable. The playing budget has been massively increased in the last three years but still remains small in comparison to other league one clubs. My view is that we can be ambitious but we must remain financially sustainable and viable.

### **Pete F**

I think Championship football is achievable. I believe now is the time for us to start looking at what the next step for the Club & Trust should be. As we become an established League 1 team and club we now need to look forward. We need to carefully manage the business in the Exeter way, including how we can get the best from SJP both on match & non match days.

We need to identify the football talent that will have good sell on value, which would help generate the revenue needed going forward. I would also like to see the Trust begin a dialogue with Exeter City Council addressing improvements to the terms of our lease, to facilitate our growth. There are some big steps ahead for us, but history tells us that the big step we took in 2003 when The Trust became the owners of the club, was a worthy and successful step.

We need to be brave, forward thinking but not reckless going forward.

### **Julen**

The answer depends on what Championship you refer to!

Promotion to the EFL Championship is certainly realistic in the long term, but will require a considerable amount of patience, continual good strategy and a large slice of luck to achieve.

We must first walk before we run. Just because we have a League One team does not mean we are a League One club.

In the last year we have made great strides towards this, most noticeably with very strong additions that have made our footballing backroom staff second to none in the division.

We must continue on this trajectory: making continual improvements to our infrastructure, our staff and our now two playing budgets to give ourselves the best chance for when all of the variables align for us (the slice of luck I alluded to above).

It is entirely conceivable that our Women's team could reach the Women's Championship before the Men's team, especially considering how well they have adjusted to playing Tier 3 football in their first-ever season at this level.

As the side continues to professionalise, the Club allocates the Women's team further resources and commercial income makes the side financially sustainable, then there is no reason why a promotion push in the coming years wouldn't be realistic.

**4. What is your opinion of Sky sports now moving some fixtures in date or time or both without regard to spectators that actually attend games?**

**Latoyah**

Sky Sports' decision to move fixtures without considering fans' needs is frustrating and detrimental to the matchday experience. While these decisions are outside of our control, The Trust should continue to advocate for fans' interests and provide feedback through the appropriate channels and assist the Club with its representations to the EFL to ensure that fixture changes are made with fan attendance in mind.

**Nick E**

Of course not over pleased with the chopping and changing but that is the price you pay in an increasingly money driven sport. Its somewhat out of our control though. What we can do though is to maximise opportunities at SJP when away games are rescheduled such as showing games in the Centre Spot with special offers on.

**Pete F**

My opinion is that it's rubbish! Only the Premier League and Sky Sports have benefitted from it. We were a lone wolf arguing against it. But it's reality now and we have to make the best of it. The club will need to analyse the true effect on how the different kick off times this season affect attendances , so for next season we can use that data to help the club come up with ways of get fans to attend, especially for those young fans who play JNR football on a Saturday morning , we can't afford to lose them .

**Julen**

As always with football on television, match-going fans come last on the list of priorities, and the latest changes are a direct result of the financial mismanagement and lack of self-regulation across the sport in this country.

Clubs allow themselves to get into terrible financial positions, get saved by the latest TV/Premier League deal with little to no consideration for match-going fans, and then repeat the process five or so years later.

We are already seeing the impacts of this new TV deal on attendances and I have seen plenty of our own season ticket holders say they have missed a number of games due to scheduling changes. I anticipate this will have an effect on season ticket sales going forward and the Club will have to look at initiatives that work around this, such as potentially expanding flexi tickets to all age groups and/or allowing season ticket holders to sell certain match tickets back to the Club, to mitigate this.

I am not against the idea of having more games televised, there are certainly plenty of commercial incentives for doing so, but football without fans is nothing and we need greater protections against predatory practices.

**5. Having personally contacted the Trust on two occasions and not having received an acknowledgment or reply, what would you do to improve communication with Trust members?**

**Latoyah**

It's disappointing to hear that your previous attempts to contact the Trust were not acknowledged. Effective communication is vital for building trust and ensuring that members feel valued.

To improve communication, I would help to implement a few key strategies. Firstly, I would ensure that all inquiries and feedback are acknowledged promptly, even if a full response is not immediately available. Secondly, I would work to establish clear communication channels, such as a dedicated email address, and encourage better use of the members' portal, to facilitate easier contact.

Regular newsletters and updates on the club's activities would also keep members informed and engaged. Additionally, organising regular Q&A sessions would provide opportunities for direct interaction and feedback in addition to the current forums.

By prioritising open and transparent communication, we can build a stronger connection with Trust members and foster a sense of community.

**Nick E**

An area for improvement of course. We must recognise that if members raise issues they are of concern and should be acknowledged in a timely manner. We also mustn't rely on online responses. We must acknowledge that some people would just like a phone call.

**Pete F**

We need to get better at communicating to our members and fans in general. Now we are over 4200 members, (and nearly approaching 4300) we need to have a complete review of how we do it & produce a robust plan.

I think it's time for the Trust to look at the possibility of employing a part time media officer, whose role would be obviously to make sure that members questions are answered promptly, promote & support the club marketing, but to look at promoting The Trust to new members and sponsors in order to gain additional income to support the club even further.

I also think we need to make it crystal clear to our members who they need to contact and how, it is a bit confusing at the moment.

Members should not be ignored or acknowledged.

### **Julen**

I can certainly understand the frustration behind this sentiment. In an effort to improve its digital communications, the Trust has spread its resources too thin across too many methods of communicating with members, which has led to situations such as this.

There are two things I would like to see implemented going forward:

#### Streamlining direct communications

There are too many different ways to communicate with the Trust, be that email addresses, forms or platforms.

I want to see this narrowed down as much as possible to make it simple for everyone to be able to contact the Trust. This will also help the limited resources the Trust has to be focused on a more streamlined process, rather than inefficiently trying to cover as many methods of communication as possible.

#### Professionalisation

Communicating effectively is a full-time job. I should know as it is mine!

I think we have reached the point where, if we want to communicate in a manner befitting our membership and encourage membership growth, the Trust must appoint a full-time Communications Officer.

This would allow for better and more consistent communication with our members, consistent implementation of the Trust's Communications Strategy, and improved collaboration with the Club's full-time media team. The role could even be a joint Trust-Club role to help reduce the overall cost to the Trust.

### **6. At a Trust Board meeting you realise that the majority of Trustees are minded to make a decision clearly against a written Trust Policy - What would you do and why?**

#### **Latoyah**

If I were to find myself in a situation where the majority of Trustees were considering a decision that conflicted with Trust policy, I would raise my concerns, seek clarification, propose alternative solutions, and if necessary, escalate the issue to a higher authority to uphold the Trust's principles.

By taking these steps, I would strive to maintain the integrity of the Trust and its policies, safeguarding the interests of its members and the community it serves.

#### **Nick E**

I would not vote against Trust policy however if others were minded to then I would want to know why. It maybe that the policy is no longer relevant however we must follow process to challenge and change policies not ignore them. Significant changes should always be subject to members approval as well.

**Pete F**

If something didn't feel right, then I would speak up and make sure there was a debate around the issue, check the policy and if necessary, ask for the matter to be deferred, so further debate can happen to ensure a correct decision is made.

**Julen**

On an occasion during my time on the Trust Board when a course of action would have, unintentionally, acted against the Club Trust Agreement (CTA), I was the Trustee who raised concerns which ultimately ensured we corrected our course and did not breach the CTA.

For this reason, it is vital that all Trustees are well-versed in all of the Trust's policies.

My position as a Trustee has always been to follow Trust policy and any legal advice that is guided by these policies.