

# **John Bell - Election statement**

## **DFCSG - 2017 AGM Board Elections**

I have served on the Darlington Football Club Supporters Group (DFCSG) board for the last two years. During that time, under the leadership of Wayne, we have made excellent progress in many areas. Membership has risen to around the 1000 mark and we have substantially increased our shareholding in Darlington Football Club (DFC).

Through our successful Community Share offers, we have raised vital funds for essential development at Blackwell Meadows to enable us to move back to Darlington, and to position the club for future progress. We also launched the “Boost the Budget” initiative and have substantially increased the money raised through the club lottery. Wayne also spearheaded the development of the online platform.

Personally, I was involved in developing the various Community Share offers and the initiative to issue Community Shares in exchange for Darlington 1883 Ltd. equity. This has enabled the DFCSG’s share holding in DFC 1883 Ltd to increase to the point where today we hold over 77% of the share capital and over 80% of the voting rights, giving DFCSG a controlling interest in Darlington Football Club. This means that we are now a democratic, one member–one vote vehicle for members to control the running and future of our football club.

However, for the controlling interest to mean anything, the DFCSG must establish an engagement framework with DFC that will allow the DFCSG an appropriate level of involvement in 3 key areas.

Firstly Strategy and Planning. We must be clear to our members and fans about who DFC and DFCSG are, what we do, and how we plan to do it. We must have a strategy and supporting plan to continually develop and improve the DFC Business and infrastructure to increase operational income and qualify the club to play at higher levels in the football pyramid.

Secondly, Operations. We need to clarify DFC and DFCSG roles and responsibilities. We need to empower the DFC Board to operate the club on a day to day basis in the best interests of, and in accordance with the wishes of, the DFCSG members.

Thirdly, Finance. We need to ensure that DFC operations are financially sustainable, and we need to continue to invest responsibly in the ongoing development of the DFC business, in line with the strategy.

Over the last two years I have put substantial effort into developing this engagement framework and it is my biggest frustration that we have yet to get it agreed with the club board and implemented. This is partly due to the DFC boardroom revolving door and the resulting lack of continuity of boardroom personnel, as well as the seemingly endless fire fighting of short term issues.

It also has to be said that there has been certain ambivalence toward the fan ownership model, from people in key positions within the club, that hasn't helped progress in this matter.

However, with the recent changes in club personnel I am hopeful that this will lead to greater stability and that progress in this matter can now be achieved.

So why have I chosen to resign and seek re-election to the board at this time?

I strongly believe in, and am resolutely committed to the fans’ ownership model. Therefore, I am troubled by talk of private investors. We have worked hard to gain control of our own club, and it has made substantial progress under our ownership. I think it would be the greatest folly to relinquish our controlling interest in favour of a private investor. To do so may jeopardise the very existence of our club at sometime in the future, a lesson that we should all be familiar with from our own, not too distant, history. I believe that we as fans and members of the DFCSG have a duty keep the destiny of the club in our own hands for the benefit of current and future generations of supporters and the Darlington community in general.

I believe fan ownership should be at the heart of everything the club does. It should be reflected in the clubs vision and mission. It should be reflected in the clubs long-term strategy and planning. It should be reflected in the club's culture. It should be reflected in the club's values. It should be reflected in all external and media communications. It should be bought into, and acted upon by every officer and employee of the club. And it all starts with getting a proper engagement framework in place to ensure that everyone involved with Darlington Football Club are pulling together toward the same goals.

I am seeking re-election to obtain a mandate from you the members, for myself and the whole DFCSG board, to develop a stronger relationship between the DFCSG and the club through the implementation of an engagement framework, and to press on with the development of Darlington Football Club as a friendly community-based fan owned football club and to resist any attempts to move away from that model.

If you agree with me then please support my re-election to the DFCSG Board.

Thank You

John Bell

# Personal Statement from David Collinge

## BACKGROUND

- Supporter of Darlington football club since I moved to the town in 1998 although I'm a Blackburn Rovers fan, generationally;
- Extensive involvement in local football – player, team manager and later a member of the league executive committee where I dealt with disciplinary issues.

## PHILOSOPHY

The recent administration under Singh was a watershed for me. I sold t shirts at the Arena and supported the club through shareholdings, I then joined the Darlington Trust later as acting Chairman at an important time as the new Trust board sought to release the 40k of funds that had been collected previously.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- Programme seller, steward and latterly grounds maintenance support at HP (latterly at Blackwell) for over 5 years. I understand the challenges the club faces in providing a match-day experience on a limited budget. I also got to hear the views of young volunteers about the club.
- Produced Community report on behalf of the CIC

## SKILLS

- Government Data analyst - data strategy, governance, working with stakeholders
- Volunteer grounds operative, programme seller, steward has given me insight into the match-day experience and working with our rugby partners.

## POLICIES

- Passionate about fans input to protect club identity. Commercial/3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations are an integral part of our fan base too so I support minor corporate shareholdings up to 15%;
- Assist with a **5-year strategy plan** for the club. The fans forum made it clear we need a common vision to move forward as an ORGANISATION and avoid short-termism
- **Improve match-day experience** – continue managing the appearance of the ground clean-up, support new ideas on catering and work closely in resolving ground issues with our rugby club partners. We need to make Blackwell meadows work and improve recycling.
- **Run data surveys** to secure fan views. Quantitative evidence is more important than anecdotal comments from social media;
- **Volunteer benefits.** Support DFCSG efforts to improve volunteer benefits that are costs free to the club i.e. away day passes, unused coach seats where possible;
- **young people influence.** Pursue a non-executive “youth role” on the board for a responsible individual;
- **Group board structure**– the board do a great job but there is scope to communicate roles better and establish functionality. My core role, if elected, ito manage match-day facilities (littering, cleanliness);
- Mobilise the **500 club** brand to see what we can do about additional financial schemes; and
- Utilise the expertise of SD and other clubs.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

I developed my views from working voluntarily at the club over 6-7 years. I work hard and am professional about my volunteer role.

## **Personal Statement from Paul Colman**

I wish to stand to be a board member of the Supporters Group, as a previous board member I feel I have valuable experience that I can bring to the role from my time on the football club board back in 2012-2013. I have a passion for Darlington Football Club and want to see the club grow as a sustainable model.

I have experience of working with Supporters Direct and helped shape the fan owned model we have today. Outside of Darlington FC the skills that I can bring owe much to my working experience running a highly successful manufacturing plant for the last 6 years for one of the largest kitchen manufacturers in Europe. The key skills that I can bring are:-

- Strategic Planning
- Continuous Improvement Techniques
- Project Planning & Execution
- Financial Costing
- Budget Control
- Key Performance Indicator creation
- Data Analysis
- Leadership skills

If I was successful I would be putting my heart and soul in to helping support the Supporters Group drive Darlington FC forward.

Regards

Paul Colman

# **DARLINGTON FOOTBALL CLUB SUPPORTERS GROUP**

## **DIRECTOR NOMINATION**

### **STATEMENT BY MALCOLM R. CUNDICK**

**I moved to Darlington in 1979 and immediately adopted the Quakers as my Club, and have since been a regular supporter, season ticket holder and now a member of the 500 Club. I have followed the team to a number of away games including two trips to Wembley.**

**I have a keen interest in a wide range of sports having played Football to age 18, Rugby Union to County Schoolboy and University level, Cricket as my University Captain and for Cockerton Cricket Club, plus field Hockey. I am currently Secretary of two Bowls Leagues in Darlington and led the rescue of public bowling greens in the town which the Council planned to close. I am additionally a member of a Community Choir. I also have a varied range of contacts within the Darlington Community through my various professional and other activities within the town.**

**I am a Chartered Architect and am currently winding down from some 47 years in Private Practice providing me the opportunity to devote more of my time to extra-curricular activities.**

**In December 2012 I offered my professional services to John Tempest and Ian Wilkinson in their leading pursuit of a means to return the Club to a Darlington home base. I was then subsequently appointed jointly by Darlington 1883 Ltd and Darlington RFC to co-ordinate the Blackwell Meadows Project. This involved pursuit of Planning Permission including resolution of the multiple related Conditions, Building Regulations approval, project management of construction of the new Car Park, Changing Rooms and Stadium Works including recovery and reconstruction of the Tin Shed plus the Seated Stand, perimeter fencing, pitch upgrade etc., oversight of F A Ground Grading Certification, completion of successful applications for Football Stadia Improvement Funds and grant of the Ground Safety Certificate. I also oversaw the additional works carried out during the Summer months, and am currently co-ordinating the works to provide the required 500 minimum covered seats.**

**I have then been party to the many ups and downs of the last near 5 years in particular through the various changes of Directors of Darlington 1883 Limited, interaction with Directors of Darlington RFC, various Departments within Darlington Borough Council, officials from the Football Association and the Northern League, plus the Football Stadia Improvement Fund, contractors, subcontractors and multiple agencies involved in the development process.**

**I have then a wealth of knowledge of the complex process that has brought the Club this far in the development of Blackwell Meadows and the additional works that are required to move us to the next levels.**

**I am also conscious of the parallel requirement for further investment in the Club, renewed success on the pitch and the related ambitions of the Supporters Group in this respect.**

**I am anxious then to continue my involvement in the further developments required to accommodate future promotion potential, and believe that I can more effectively assist in that process as a Director of DFCSG.**

**Sincerely**

**Malcolm R Cundick**

## **DFCSG Director Nomination – Election Statement**

My name is Stuart Ford and I have supported Darlington FC for nearly 60 years and have been a season ticket holder for a number of those years. During this period I have witnessed most of the events that make up the rollercoaster ride that is Darlington FC.

My own background is that I was born in Darlington, worked in the South East for 20 years before coming back to the North East in 1990. I am now retired, and in my working life I was employed by HMRC in their Corporate Sector, mainly in the Finance and Real Estate Divisions at Leeds, before taking early retirement in 2009.

Since then I have been doing, and still do, volunteer work at two wildlife reserves in Middlesbrough and Washington, and was elected as a Parish Councillor for my village for five years. I have also been the Membership Secretary for the Supporters Group between 2013 and 2016.

The skills acquired over the years that I can bring to the benefit of the Group are those of organisation, teamwork, communication, projects, and computer work, plus, having worked with the DFCSG Board as Membership Secretary, I am familiar with the requirements and workings of being a DFCSG Director.

These skills have enabled me to work with a wide range of people where it has been necessary to help devise strategies and reach successful outcomes by consultation and decision making.

As we are a fan owned club it is very important to me that the fan's voice is always heard and fed back to the Board and onwards to the football club. I will always listen to what the fans have to say, and to further their ideas and views for the benefit of our football club's onward, and hopefully, upward progress.

At the end of the day the DFCSG is there to represent the fans.

We are probably going through one of the most challenging periods since we were brought back from the brink in 2012. In my view it is essential to continue working towards improving the matchday experience at Blackwell Meadows, as well continuing with all the fundraising initiatives to ensure that the club's infrastructure is on a sound footing going forward.

I am very confident that the skills that I have mentioned above will be of benefit to the Supporters Group Board, and I look forward to playing a part in the ongoing progress of our football club.

Stuart Ford



# DARLINGTON FOOTBALL CLUB SUPPORTERS GROUP DIRECTOR NOMINATION

You may write a minimum of 400 and a maximum of 1000 words either in the box below or as an attachment. This will be published as your Candidate Manifesto and be circulated to members in advance of the AGM, which is targeted for **Thursday 16 November 2017** (formal notice to follow). Please include any key skills which you consider a benefit to the role.

Election Statement:

My name is Geoffrey Gale. I am married with 5 children. I currently live in Newton Aycliffe but born + bred in Darlington. I am a life long fan and currently work as a volunteer within the club. Looking after the main entrance for players of both teams, directors + guests of the club. On a side off I am in the board room with the directors establishing relationships + have worked most of my life in a sales background gathering experience and good knowledge of the requirements for gaining, developing, growing and establishing a good customer base. I identify needs from both parties to develop targets. I have been working alongside DFC in selling advertising boards. I have worked at Mangerial and Breakfast clubs.

My aims are to help develop the off field revenue to help with the infrastructure and running cost for DFC. To work with the board to develop a good working practice to improve not only increased revenue but make potential customers "who we are". What we have achieved and set "future aims". Developing enquiries to cold calls within our area.

I am currently on a 2 year leave from my position as Interim + v/s Sales director due to health reasons. This is allowing me to apply for a position on the board.

## Personal Statement from Lee Kilcran

Over the past 6 months, an increasing number of supporters have grown disillusioned with the fan ownership model. I believe that the main reasons for this are:

1. Disappointment at not being able to compete in the play-offs last season, highlighting that the club is still some way off having the infrastructure and finances required to compete in the Football League;
2. Unhelpful interventions from former employees, blaming the ownership structure for all of the club's problems without acknowledging the success it's delivered since 2012;
3. 'Fundraising fatigue' (though the fans' record of meeting targets is impressive, a rough calculation based on this season's average league attendance gives a figure of about £500 per supporter since 2012, a level which may prove unsustainable);
4. Frustration at the slow rate of attendance increases and a perceived lack of atmosphere since moving back to Darlington, which some have attributed to the facilities at Blackwell Meadows.

I for one still believe that the fan ownership model is the best way to deliver a successful and sustainable future for this football club, but in order to achieve this we need to address some of the issues highlighted above, all of which are intertwined.

We're all aware of the current initiatives to provide additional covered seating at Blackwell Meadows, allowing us to compete in the National League North play-offs. However, this will not be the last of the work required and improving the facilities at Blackwell Meadows will be a continuous process. This is one area where I feel I can contribute technical expertise through my experience working as an environmental scientist/geotechnical engineer for a civil and environmental engineering consultancy, which has equipped me with a good working knowledge of the planning system and construction industry. Ground grading requirements are clearly the priority in this area, but I'd also like to see a renewed focus on smaller changes that will improve the atmosphere and overall match day experience, hopefully leading to increased attendances and reducing the reliance on fundraising initiatives such as Boost the Budget.

In a further attempt to boost attendances, I'd also like to see a community engagement drive, particularly aimed at young supporters. This would involve a variety of initiatives such as competitions and ticket discounts (perhaps even giveaways) for schools and clubs and is likely to benefit the club both in terms of its future support base and in terms of immediate benefits, such as children being accompanied by paying adults and purchasing tickets for subsequent games.

Finally, I'd like to see the Supporters Group look at developing alternative sources of income which can remove some of the burden on supporters. This would include obvious ideas such as maximising advertising revenue, but should also explore other possibilities such as acquiring assets which generate an income or are likely to appreciate in value for the benefit of the Supporters Group and club.

We've come a long way since 2012 and there's plenty more to achieve. I look forward to being a part of it, whether that's as a director or from my usual spot in the Tin Shed.

## **Personal Statement of Andrew Matthews**

I was fortunate to be elected to the DFCSG Board in November 2015.

The following year in the summer of 2016, I was appointed Treasurer for the group.

I believe I have approached my duties with enthusiasm and a great degree of diligence.

My background is in financial services, 20 years working in a bank, 8 years as an independent mortgage advisor and more recently 9 years with the Student Loans Company.

My first game was way back in 1968 as a small lad, however I was hooked.

Many people will know me as I have attended the majority of home and away games, and am a regular on the away coaches.

My volunteer duties have included: Organising the bucket collections over the last few seasons; selling programmes at home games; and more recently selling 50:50 tickets.

I am a regular co-commentator on the Darlo Fans Radio at away games.

I am a long-standing, passionate supporter, who wishes to continue helping our club moving forward.

## **Personal Statement from Michael Price**

My name is Michael Price, I am a 35 year old father of two from Darlington. I have been a supporter of Darlington Football Club all my life, always keeping an eye on the club through local media and friends at school, finally becoming a regular attendee and season ticket holder during the Arena days.

The last ten to fifteen years have ensured the club is in my blood. We have survived three administrations, a four division drop and a number of critical financial situations over that time, and always come out fighting, and stronger. The amounts we continue to raise - first to get back to Darlington, and now to improve our home - are an inspiration.

I couldn't go to the game at Barrow that many people thought was our last, as my daughter had just been born. I sat and listened to it on the radio, and as You'll Never Walk Alone played after the final whistle I broke down for fear our club was lost. The events that followed proved to me that our club will never die.

While I am unable to donate financially, I have never had a problem with donating time. Four years ago I became a member of the Fundraising Group in order to try and play my part in keeping the new fan owned model afloat. During that time I played target to sponges at community days, and took over the running of the monthly quiz for around three years, before stepping down after the birth of my son.

Additional to this, I have also helped the club with a number of website issues - I hosted the original official website, I continue to host the Uncovered message board (and have done for around eight years now) and I assisted the supporters group with the build of the fundraising website, through which we have raised almost £300,000.

These days I am perhaps more familiar to a lot of you for my voice rather than my face. I am one of four commentators on Darlo Fans Radio, covering our home games with Stuart Armstrong, Michael Cansfield and Andrew Simpson.

A nomination to the board would be a great honour for me and a chance to continue the good work I feel I have done with the club over the last five years. I believe I would bring an increased level of technical expertise to the Supporters Group. As a full time web developer I work on a number of challenging projects at the office, and I have already undertaken one highly successful project for the Supporters Group with more in the pipeline. I have ideas on ways the club can exploit the internet and social media to increase engagement with fans, and increase revenues and sales.

## **Chris Stockdale – Manifesto for election to DFCSG Board of Directors**

Nominated by Wayne Raper and Martin Deans

I was co-opted onto the DFCSG board in June by Wayne Raper & Joanne Cameron and I'm now formally standing for election as I would like the opportunity to continue the work I've started to develop and build on the positive working relationships I've fostered both on the supporters group board & the football club board.

Born in Darlington & raised in the North East, I now live in Durham. I have been a DFC fan for 30 years, a season ticket holder for 20+ years and a shareholder since 2012. I run my own business as an investment manager and fortunately have got to a stage now where I have more time to commit to helping DFCSG & the football club. I would bring to the board my professional financial, business analysis and risk analysis skills alongside my experience of running a business and previously having worked in high pressure environments in the City of London for several hedge funds.

I am a passionate believer in supporter ownership of football clubs, operating a sustainable financial business model and the numerous advantages that being fan owned bring. We face some unique challenges at Darlington FC but ultimately, we are no different to other supporter owned football clubs that have risen back to the Football League. The likes of AFC Wimbledon & Exeter City should provide inspiration for what we can achieve here at Darlington. We are still only part way through the journey we started in 2012 and although each next step gets more difficult, with the right plan, effective execution and lots of hard work there is still so much untapped potential at this football club.

Since I was co-opted onto the board I have assisted Wayne Raper in developing greater oversight of the Football Club finances, held regular meetings with the DFC directors, contributed to the launch of phase 2 & 3 of the fundraising to build the new seated stand and written the recent DFCSG press releases.

If elected to the DFCSG board I pledge over the next twelve months to:

- Work towards putting in place a formal, comprehensive oversight agreement between the DFC board & DFCSG board, which clearly defines the DFC directors roles and how they report to the DFCSG board.
- Work with the Football Club to improve the matchday experience for fans, develop a closer relationship with our core supporters, push forward ideas for more flexible match ticket pricing and introduce initiatives to attract new fans, especially families, to our games.
- Conduct an extensive survey on our member's vision for the future of DFC football club.

I believe in the short time I've been on the DFCSG board I've already made a real positive contribution to both the Supporters Group & our Club. Please vote for me so that I can continue this work.

If you would like to quiz me in more detail about my work for the DFCSG or any other topic, please email me at: [chris@cstockdale.co.uk](mailto:chris@cstockdale.co.uk).

## **PERSONAL STATEMENT – TONY WATERS**

I was originally a member of the DFC Interim Board of Directors in 2012 and was an integral part of the Team which put in place a template for Darlington Football Club to become owned by its biggest asset – the fanbase. At this stage of our development I believe that remains the best model for the simple reason that I am not aware of any other options which allow for structured growth without the risk associated with a single owner.

I am a fervent supporter of the DFCSG and appreciate all they have achieved over recent years and feel I am now in a position to be able to dedicate a considerable amount of time to the cause if you will allow me.

I am a HR manager in my day job and in that role I have some key responsibilities which will be of assistance in any role I may be appointed to.

Relationship management: I manage relationships with internal and external business partners ensuring that both parties gain the best possible value from those relationships. I see this as a key skill which can be used within the football club to ensure we are able to engage with all stakeholders, making them feel valued and ensuring we build on those relationships to form a long-lasting partnership to the benefit of both parties. Amongst other relationships, I would like to work on having a more visible, supportive and co-operative relationship with our landlords, arranging joint fund-raising initiatives and assisting each other to reach planned objectives.

I also create and develop communications plans within my business life; my own experiences in this field have taught me that communications can, in any organization, be improved. Within the Football Club I would like to utilise my communication planning skills to re-engage supporters and investors. I would like to hold more frequent supporter events, taking members of the playing squad and club/DFCSG executives to events in the local area for informal social and fundraising events.

I would also like to see the fanbase raise funds in a more enjoyable way than currently by arranging functions and social events which the membership will help to arrange as well as attending in considerable numbers. If we're going to put our hands in our pockets, let's have some fun doing it.

In summary, I seek to be elected as a director of the DFCSG, supportive of a fan-owned model as there is currently no other model on the table which safeguards the future of the football club. If elected I will offer many hours of my own time to make the club a friendly and enjoyable experience for all supporters, whilst attempting to ensure continuing success on the pitch.

If you feel I have the skills and desire that match your own, please help me to achieve our desires by supporting my election.

Tony Waters