

Leeds United Supporters' Trust Newsletter April 2005

Welcome to New LUST. Since the launch of the trust football at Elland Road has entered a new era. Players, managers, directors, and chairmen have come and gone and the only constant has been the fans.

We are almost at the close of our first season in the Championship League with new players, new directors and a new chairman in Ken Bates. What is not new is the loyalty of Leeds fans who have continued to turn out in droves, young and old, from all sections of the Leeds community and many travelling great distances.

We are about to kick off a new era for both LUST and Leeds United. We want to expand the number of people involved in running the Trust, and get more hands on deck to carry out practical work.

Michael McGowan is now the Chair of LUST and Paul Fallon, the Vice Chair. Both are founder directors of LUST and long term season tickets holders. Michael has been active in the campaign to "Kick Racism out of Sport" and is a former sponsor of Leeds United players. Paul is a consultant with experience of establishing and managing not-for-profit business ventures.

LUST is a cooperative and is committed to a policy of equality in terms of race, religion, sex, age, and disability and is opposed to any violent or abusive behaviour which may bring the game into disrepute.

We are committed to working for the interests of the most vulnerable and deprived sections of the community, and it is a privilege to work with both the young and older supporters and members of our community.

One of the first successful LUST campaigns was to protect the 500 concessionary tickets allocated to young people in the city by Leeds City Council.

LUST was successful in rebuffing the attempt by the then Chair of Leeds United, Peter Ridsdale, to take back most of these tickets as a cost cutting exercise which would have deprived many of our young people from being able to watch football at Leeds United.

LUST has welcomed the decision of Ken Bates to honour that long standing commitment to our young people despite his initial statement that all concessionary tickets would be cancelled apart from those which were of commercial advantage to the club.

LUST deplores the reality that generations of fans who have built up the strength and world reputation of Leeds have been ripped off by previous administrations at the club. We are equally concerned that, today, far too many of our young people, as well as those on low pay or without work, can not afford to watch football at Elland Road.

We owe a great debt to our older fans who themselves, their children, and grand children have been Leeds fans for the generations that have built up the strength and reputation of Leeds United and we welcome the initiative of the new management at Leeds United to launch the Over 50's lunch time events which we will be pleased to support and publicise through the trust..

Television money and Rupert Murdoch have put barriers between the game and our fans as well as the local community. LUST is determined to work to claim the game and develop alliances with everyone who is serious about football in Leeds.

As Leeds United has changed, so has LUST. We are determined to work for a fair deal and influence for loyal fans of Leeds United. We aim to work with all groups of fans and to have positive if sometimes critical relations with the club.

We believe that Elland Road should be accessible at a reasonable price for all serious fans.

Whilst we recognise the need to increase revenue, we are concerned that the ground should not increasingly become a venue for hospitality for those not interested in football.

The new LUST is determined to maintain its co-operative and community basis and we are delighted that Leeds Co-operative Society has decided to support our work.

Our new address for LUST is at Leeds Co-op Travel in Town Street, Beeston, just up the road from Elland Road. Our new Secretary is Chris Maynard, the General Manager and Secretary of Leeds Cooperative Society.

We are particularly delighted that the Chief Executive of Leeds Co-operative Society, has agreed to become a director LUST and we now have the opportunity to benefit from his professional and business expertise.

The board room and meeting rooms of Leeds Co-op at their headquarters at Benyon house in Middleton have been made available for future meetings of the board of LUST and for other activities.

LUST welcomes decision to appoint John Hemmingham as Head of Member Development. His experience of and commitment to the game, as well as his background in the Supporters Trust movement will be an asset to the club and the city and we wish him well in his determination to work with all sections of Leeds fans.

We also welcome the decision to make available 500 tickets for Leeds young people and would expect that this will give young people in the city a chance to watch football at Elland Road which may otherwise not be possible.

We are aware of the financial situation at Leeds United but are concerned at the price increase fans now have to face for next season. We welcome, however the decision to allow some payment by instalments instead of having to pay everything up front for next year.

We have kept closely in touch with Supporters Direct since its launch, have attended regular meetings and conferences in London, the North of England, and Scotland and both Brian Lomax and Dave Boyle have addressed meetings in Leeds.

We have held meetings with Members of Parliament both in Leeds and at the House of Commons and have built strong links with Leeds City Council.

We wish to increase co-operation and keep in touch with all groups of fans who are committed to the game and the club including the long serving and respected Leeds United Supporters Club and the wide range of more recently established fans groups.

We are currently looking at the issue of safe standing, the ownership of the pitch and the ground, the increase cost of tickets for next season and future credit arrangements for season tickets, and, finally, concessionary tickets for the community.

We will continue to keep links with other sports including rugby league and to develop international sporting links.