

By email

MPs on the Football Governance Bill committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0PA

6 June 2025

Dear FGB committee member,

We, Northampton Town FC Supporters' Trust (NTFCST), are leading a coalition of supporters' trusts across England & Wales, listed below as co-signatories to this submission, in regards to one particular issue which we consider has not been addressed in the Football Governance Bill.

It is perhaps fitting that NTFCST should be leading this group of supporters' trusts since NTFCST was the first supporters' trust to be formed in this country in 1992, under the inspired guidance of the late Brian Lomax, who went on to become a nationally-acclaimed person in the football world with his work and campaigning at Supporters Direct. We continue in his footsteps and are proud to be his successors.

We see the Football Governance Bill (FGB) as a defining moment, not only as it concerns the sustainability and future of professional football in this country, the strength and depth of which is admired throughout the world, but also because it could define the future of supporters' trusts.

The role and purpose of supporters' trusts is often misunderstood. We are all football fans, passionate about the game and all of us are deeply committed to supporting our respective clubs but sight is often lost of the fact that, when necessary, our duty is also to hold to account the owners of the clubs we support, to ask the difficult questions and when replies are not received, evaded or fudged, to respond accordingly.

When matters go badly wrong at clubs supporters trusts have been at the forefront of organising rescues and campaigning to save their clubs from oblivion. The names of long-established football clubs which have endured existential threats and have survived due to the assistance of their supporters' trusts need no mention and include some of the supporters' trusts putting their name this letter in support.

Without the work and involvement of their supporters' trusts, it is fair to comment that some of the clubs which continue to this day would not have survived. It is imperative for the future well-being of the game that the status of supporters' trusts is recognised and safeguarded in the pending legislation.

Against the background and history outlined above our coalition of supporters' trusts are all of one voice in welcoming the FGB and all support its enactment. However, we are also of one voice in expressing our concern and disappointment with the omission from the draft legislation of supporters' trusts as part of the 'fan engagement threshold requirements'. The relevant provisions are set out principally in Schedules 4 & 5 of the FGB.

Our original alliance of supporters' trusts wrote to the Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP, Secretary of State for Culture Media & Sport, on 11 November 2024 and received a response from Stephanie Peacock MP, Minister of State for Sport, Media, Civil Society & Youth by letter dated 10 December 2024. We append to this submission these letters for your consideration. [Not published by Committee]

Since that exchange of correspondence our coalition has grown to reach 22 supporters' trusts as of the date of this submission. This is a reflection of widespread and growing concern about the issue raised in this submission. We are unable to agree with the reasoning put forward by the Minister of State.

There is no need for us to repeat our arguments contained in the letter to the Secretary of State. We consider the points made are compelling reasons for the recognition of the status of supporters' trusts and their inclusion in the fan engagement process extending to the Fans Advisory Boards already established, or to be established, at football clubs.

To leave the "colour and detail" to the IFR is leaving such an important matter to the discretion of the IFR and undrafted secondary legislation, whereas we submit that this should be dealt with in the primary legislation. Not to do would be unnecessarily hazardous.

The Football Supporters Association (FSA) in its initial response to NTFCST's concerns stated that it was happy to leave the matter to the IFR but, perhaps on becoming aware of the strength of feeling in many other supporters' trusts, performed an about-turn in December 2024 and included our issue of concern in its publication "Top Five Amendments" to the FGB with proposed amending wording. We are not aware of any change on the part of the FSA with their position on this matter. Therefore, on this topic we are in agreement with FSA.

We, as supporters' trusts, are not requesting exclusivity in the fans' consultation process but we are seeking legal recognition of our status as independent democratic organisations with full independence from club ownership. There have been instances where club owners exert influence on which individuals sit on FABs and we believe this measure will provide a necessary safeguard for fans.

The FGB presents an opportunity for there to be a recognition of, and the safeguarding of, supporters' trusts after 33 years since first established. If that can be enshrined in the pending legislation there can be certainty that supporters' trusts will thrive and continue to be in place when they are most needed.

John Morgan

Board Secretary
Northampton Town FC Supporters Trust

With support from:-

Barnsley FC Supporters Trust
Birmingham City Supporters Trust (Blues Trust)
Blackburn Rovers Supporters Trust (Rovers Trust)
Bradford City Supporters Trust (Bantams Trust)
Doncaster Rovers Supporters Trust (Vikings Supporters Co-operative)
Exeter City Supporters Trust
Fulham Supporters Trust
Leicester City Supporters Trust (Foxes Trust)
Leyton Orient Supporters Trust (LOFT)
Luton Town Supporters Trust
Manchester United Supporters Trust (MUST)
Morecambe FC Supporters Trust (Shrimps Trust)
Oldham Athletic Supporters Foundation
Plymouth Argyle Supporters Trust (Argyle Fans Trust)
Reading FC Supporters Trust (STAR)
Scunthorpe Utd Supporters Trust (Iron Trust)
Southend Utd Supporters Trust (Shrimpers Trust)
Swansea City Supporters Trust (Swans Trust)
Swindon Town Supporters Trust (TrustSTFC)
Torquay United Supporters Trust (TUST)
Wolverhampton Wanderers Supporters Trust (Wolves1877 Trust)