



Walsall FC Disabled Supporter's Association

Open General Meeting

Priory Lounge, Banks's Stadium, Walsall

7th March 2018 – 7:00pm

Present

Richard Sainsbury (Chair)
Ian Buckingham (Vice Chair & Away Match Experiences)
Joanna Sainsbury (Secretary & Social Media)
Christopher Light - Community Liaison
Lesley Buckingham - Away Match Experience
Daz Anslow - Website
Laura Greenhouse - WFC Disabled Supporters Liaison
Raymond Sims
Keith Fancutt

Apologies

Dan Malin
Neil Malin
Helen Thorpe Wood

1. Welcome & Introductions

The group were welcomed, introductions were made and apologies given.

2. Progress since Last Meeting

- We now have a twitter account up and running which Joanna is managing.
- We now have a poster up in the family stand advertising the DSA. Many thanks to Daz for designing that and Laura for arranging for it to be printed and put up.
- We have been talking to supporters at matches. This has been productive with some people interested in the DSA.
- We now have 16 members (14 adults and 2 children) which is very encouraging. Some members are just interested in getting involved with the social side rather than attending meetings which is ok.
- Joanna has designed a registration form which gives us all the details of the members including an option to describe the nature of their disability and age group.

- Walsall Community have arranged for Walsall College Supported Learning Sports Students to come to the re-arranged Wigan game (Wednesday 21st March) and Joanna and Chris will meet up with them at the game.

There was then a discussion about the flyers that had already been printed to go with disabled season tickets will be sent out in June when they are ready. There was a discussion about the possibility of printing flyers to go with all the season tickets. It was decided that this would be dependent on finding someone to print them at a reduced cost or for free.

3. Website Update

The website has been delayed as Daz has sadly had some of his equipment stolen but he should be up and running by the end of the week. He has been working on the following pages:

Main Page, Photos, Policies, Contact Page and Accessibility Plug in – he has a visual one but is currently searching for an audio plug in as some other DSA sites have.

He then discussed the Away Day information that Lesley and Ian are going to be collating. He suggested that it is done in a blog form and he will send Ian some links to blog sites and if necessary they will meet and Daz will show them how to set up the blog. Daz will then link it to the website.

Joanna will type up the constitution in the next couple of days and once it is agreed by the committee, it will be sent to Daz for the website.

Daz has been looking into sponsorship for the website but the person he contacted who hosts sites as free for non-profitable organisations didn't come back to him. He asked if he could apply for lottery funding and everybody agreed. Meanwhile, he is going to register the name www.walsallfcdsa.co.uk. Joanna asked if there was any cost involved and Daz said only a couple of pounds and he would pay that himself.

Joanna will email the registration form to Daz for him to link to the website.

4. Feedback from Laura Greenhouse (WFC Disabled Supporters Liaison)

AGM

Laura has suggested a date of Wednesday 5th September for the AGM as the stadium will be open that night for another meeting. Joanna will check with Kieran if he can make that date.

Disability Steward and Disabled Car Park

Jim O'Grady the Safety Officer has said he will look into getting Dave a different coloured coat to distinguish him as the disability steward.

Laura does appreciate that it would be ideal if Dave could concentrate on being inside and introduce himself to disabled supporters and sort out any arising problems instead of protecting disabled spaces in the car park. To try and address this, during the close-season, Walsall FC are hoping to paint disabled

logos on all the spaces and put up signage to say that its 'passes only' in this car park.

Laura said that there is now a list for the disabled car park for stewards to try and help with parking issues on match days. They are also hoping in the close-season, to mark out the blue pass reserved parking that is on the front by the ticket office.

Laura was asked if we could have more disabled stewards – one for each stand including the away stand and a reserve steward for Dave as he isn't there on Tuesday evenings. Laura will ask about this.

The outside light isn't working in the disabled car park and Laura said she would follow this up.

Other issues

There was a discussion about problems that occur when away fans are moved into the home section of the family stand. This included disabled fans being moved, reduced access to accessible toilets, and disabled fans having to walk through noisy away fans to get to their seats. Laura was asked if the extra away fans could have been seated in the empty block in the Homeserve stand but she said that this would incur a lot larger policing bill as it would then include another stand to cover.

Laura explained that stewards do have a briefing before the game. Jim O'Grady meets with the senior stewards and then all the stewards. There was then a discussion on the need for training for stewards including awareness of disabilities (especially invisible ones).

It was mentioned that the advert for early bird looks like you can only have a carer free of charge in the family stand. Laura clarified that this was misleading and a disabled supporter can have a carer free anywhere in the ground. Joanna said she would put this out on social media.

There was a discussion on the state of the accessible toilets, taps not turning properly, no seat on one of the toilets and water leaking all over the floor. Laura said she would look into it.

Chris asked Laura for a confirmation of opening times of the Club Shop as his friend had come in the day to find it closed. Laura confirmed it is 9am - 4.30pm Mon – Fri and to go to reception if the shop is shut and someone would open it. Joanna said she would give this information out on social media.

Ray is frustrated that the kiosk nearest to him doesn't open until 2.10pm and the pies are not cooked by that time. This means walking to a kiosk one side of the ground away to get refreshments. Laura said she would look into this.

Chris has not been allowed to bring gluten free food into the ground when the kiosks do not sell anything gluten free. Laura will look into this.

It was discussed that there seems to be a lot more support for disabled supporters in the family stand than in any other. If there is a problem, Laura's advice is to ask the steward to fetch Dave Gollins and if he wasn't available, Jim O'Grady.

It was also suggested that stewards wore name badges or at least a number so that they could be identified and if necessary reported for discriminatory behaviour. It was re-iterated that some stewards are 'ace' and really helpful.

Richard mentioned the DSA scarves that members of Leicester DSA wear to games so that the stewards know who has a disability. It was then discussed that we could have pin badges made for DSA members. Daz will look into this as he has a contact.

Ian asked if we could have future meetings advertised on the big screen at matches and Laura said she would check. Laura said that meetings would be included in the half time script as they were at the Rochdale game.

There was then a discussion about having an event after Open Days for disabled supporters where it would be quieter and give them more opportunity to interact with the players.

It was suggested that maybe Andy Davy from the Community Department could be invited to a meeting to discuss how we could work together. It was decided that this could be something to think about.

It was discussed that it was great to have a small write up on the club news page and an advert in the programme for last night's game and Laura was asked if this could be a regular thing. Laura said she would ask.

Laura was asked if we could have a page on the Walsall FC website. Daz commented that the Supporter's Trust no longer have this but Laura said she would ask.

Away Games

There was a discussion that it was difficult to find out which seats are accessible aisle seats at an away game. Laura was asked if there could be a board outside the ticket office with seating arrangements for the next away game. It was said if this information was available it could be put on our twitter, facebook and website as well. It was also suggested that Ian and Lesley could include accessible aisle seat numbers in their away day blog.

There was then a discussion about how difficult it is to arrange for disabled supporters who travel on the coaches to be dropped off outside the ground. It was discussed how some grounds are better than others. Laura said that she would contact all of the away clubs for the rest of the season and let us know the outcome.

Supporters standing in front of disabled supporters towards the end of the game.

Laura was asked what progress has been made with this. Jim O'Grady is fully aware of the situation. People are frustrated by supporters who walk slowly past, stopping for a while to watch the game whilst blocking the disabled supporter's view and amble out of the last gate just as the game ends.

Warm Room for Disabled Supporters

Laura explained that this room is in the community stand opposite the dug outs. During the close-season there are plans to fix the heating and to have coverage of the games linked onto a TV screen. There was a discussion that we could get a team together to paint the room in colours suitable from a sensory perspective and use this as publicity for the DSA.

Laura was asked if disabled supporters who couldn't cope with the noise of the crowds could sit behind the windows in the stadium suite. Laura then said that there was a room currently used for storage above the Tile Choice sign that had windows and may be suitable for disabled supporters depending on whether it could be cleared out and if it was safe. There couldn't be any alcohol served in there which was agreed wouldn't be a problem. There was then a discussion about possibly turning it into a sensory room. Laura will ask the relevant people.

Laura was asked about the policy for disabled supporters in inclement weather. Laura said it is on the website but will ask for it to be made clearer.

Social Event

Laura was asked if it was possible to have a room at Bank's Stadium for a DSA social event. She said would give us dates when an event was on at the same time as staff would already be there. Laura would swap her day off so she could come as well. Laura was asked if we could have an evening with one or more of the players, she said she would look into it.

Laura was also asked if the DSA could have a trip to the training ground and again Laura said she would ask. Laura suggested that if we did have a special event after an open training session inviting disabled children then we could advertise the social event with players and the trip to the training ground if they were happening.

It was discussed contacting the press to give us publicity if we did something like the above.

5. Registration and new membership

Most things had already been covered in the meeting. Joanna has asked Dan if his printer contact can print us some membership cards for free or at a reduced price.

6. Any other business

Daz said that there is a Supporter's Working Party Meeting with Dan and Stefan the first Monday of every month and they had asked if a representative from the DSA would like to go. It was decided that Richard as Chair would go to the meeting. Laura will pass the message on.

Joanna suggested having a DSA flag to have at matches to promote the club. Ian will bring his camera to the Shrewsbury game to take a picture of members of the DSA that go to the game.

There was a suggestion if we got lots of flyers printed we could ask for them to be given out to schools via the Community Programme. Chris would approach Adam Davy about this if it did happen.

There was a discussion about how it's difficult to buy disabled and carer tickets online. Laura said that this is all sorted now but it was discussed that there still seem to be some problems. Laura said she would look into it and let us know.

Chris asked Laura if tickets could be posted out and Laura said this was no problem. You just need to order by the previous Tuesday for a Sat game and the previous Wed for a Tuesday game.

Joanna suggested that we had another open meeting before the end of the season as people were enthusiastic to join the DSA at the moment. There was then a discussion for a date for this as the first Wednesday in April is in the Easter holidays. Laura was asked if there was anything in week commencing 16th April as this is the first week back after Easter. Laura will let us know. Daz can only make Mondays or Wednesdays. The committee will next meet at Lesley and Ian's before the next open meeting, date to be confirmed.

Richard thanked people for coming out to the meeting, and thanked Laura for giving us her time on her day off.

Photographs of various groups were taken and the meeting closed at 9.35pm.

These notes will be circulated to Attendees, Members of the DSA, Dave Gollins, Laura Greenhouse and Kieran Reynolds (LPF).