



Candidate Statement

DONALD VASS



The PST was set up to safeguard the future of the club. After four successful years of fan ownership, it's fair to say the club isn't just back on a level footing, but absolutely thriving. Playing my own small part in this by buying a share in the PST remains one of things I'm most proud of in life. When the PST first launched its share issue in 2012, I was 21 and in my first year of work after graduating from university. Finding the money was hard, but like many others I made a few sacrifices and paid for my share over the course of a year.

It would be easy to say, as we imminently hand over the reins of the club to Michael Eisner, "job done". But I believe we mustn't let apathy creep in and allow the PST to fall away into irrelevance, with its original aim complete. We have worked too hard to get a voice within the club to let it evaporate. The PST now needs to evolve and change to become a link between fans and our new, potentially distant, foreign owners through the Heritage & Advisory Board. Since 2013, the hierarchy of the club has at last been transparent, approachable, and willing to listen - the PST can help it stay that way. It will be our job to get the voice of fans across to Michael Eisner and his team and to make sure Pompey fans are listened to.

Of particular interest to me is ensuring that younger fans have a voice at the top table. One way we can continue to safeguard the future of the club is to ensure that the next generation of Pompey fans are going to Fratton Park and will be filling the stands in years to come. I made some posters for the club in 2013, which were used in our first season of fan ownership, saying "don't let your kids grow up thinking football is a TV show". This is really important to me - we need to get children, teenagers and students around the city to Fratton Park, taking in the atmosphere, and catching that lifelong addiction with which we can all relate.

I'm a primary school teacher, and so work with young people every day. Through Pompey In The Community, I've organised and run two school trips to Fratton Park which have enabled nearly 100 local children to see Pompey play, many for the first time. I would like to see PITC's role not just protected under new ownership, but widened and improved further, as they play such a valuable role in engaging with the next generation of Pompey fans.

Before becoming a teacher, I was a student at Portsmouth University. During my time there between 2008 and 2011, there appeared to be no engagement at all with the city's 22,000 students. Recently the club have begun to recognise this

potential, with the ticket and travel offer for last season's Grimsby game attracting many to Fratton Park for the first time, but I believe more can still be done to build links with students here, many of whom settle in Portsmouth permanently after they graduate.

I already have some understanding of the demands of being involved in an organisation like this, as I work on my school's governing body helping to set our overall strategic direction. I was also a member of the PST's Youth Committee in 2015, and took minutes at our meetings. The group was set up by the late PST chairman Ken Malley, who recognised the importance of giving younger Pompey fans a say in how the club should be run. I now hope to be elected to the main PST board to continue this ethos, and be a voice for our younger fans as we enter a new chapter of the club's history.