



Candidate Statement



Simon Colebrook

As I put myself forward for re-election to the PST Board this year, I find myself looking that the changing landscape for both Pompey and the wider football world.

Three years ago, there was an atmosphere of hopeful optimism following the sale of the club to Tornante. Within the PST, we were grappling with the transition from part owners to fan representatives. Plus, we were still in the process of repaying the generosity of our Community Shareholders who had saved our great club.

Now, in 2021, it is safe to say that a lot has changed.

We emerge from several seasons that have failed to live up to the hopes of many Pompey fans. In many ways the club stands at a crossroads – fans are desperate for improvement in performance on the pitch, to see tangible progress on the stadium, and to see the fruits of the investment and focus on the Academy that was promised 4 years ago in the Guildhall. And we start with a new manager and a new CEO.

Likewise, the PST also has tough decisions to make. How do we best represent all Pompey fans and hold the club and Tornante accountable for delivering these things? Do we maintain our approach of acting as a critical friend or act more publicly as the frustrations of more and more fans become visible to all?

I believe that, for the time being at least, we achieve more by working with the club and owners than against them. Whilst we all want to see more progress on the topics that I have mentioned we are still nowhere near the dark days of the past, or the situations in other clubs where their Supporter Trusts have been forced to publicly criticise their owners.

If re-elected, my first aim will be for the PST to work through the dual channels of the Heritage and Advisory Board and the Tony Goodall Fans Conference to

- Get a meaningful statement of Tornante's vision for the future of Portsmouth Football Club. The fans bought into the personal appeal to them from Michael Eisner 4 years ago. With belief starting to fade for many fans it is vital that we get a restatement of where we are going as a club direct from the Owners.
- Foster a strong relationship with the new CEO Andrew Cullen. The fans have been used to the strong engagement and interaction with Mark Catlin. Andrew will have his own style, and the signs from his previous club look promising. We need to find out what his personal vision for the club is, and how we can work together for the success of the club.
- See tangible progress on the stadium. We see and hear lots of reasons why developments cannot happen but have little vision of what is being aimed for. It's time to hear what can happen, what we are working toward – to energise the fans and give all of us something to rally behind.
- See the promised future of the Academy being delivered. If the Academy is going to be the bedrock of the club with young future stars driving forward success – and providing a useful income stream from player sales – then there will need to be a period where the Academy is costing more than it brings in while young players are being developed. This was a key part of the compact that was formed between Tornante and the fans 4 years ago.

And, more urgently, to see the end of Disabled Supporters sitting in the rain. This shames our club. For its successes, the fact that the provision for our fans in wheelchairs was largely unchanged is the biggest single blot on the record of fan ownership. This must be addressed with urgency.

I've mentioned that I want the PST to work through the Heritage & Advisory Board and Tony Goodall Fans Conference. This is because the first of those bodies gives the PST direct access to the owners to hear what is being done, to challenge them on progress and deliver the message on behalf of fans.

The second of those bodies is equally important. Having all of the fan groups working together ensures that consultation on matters that affect fans get the widest possible consideration. It also ensures that the club hears the message from as wide a cross-section of fans as possible on those key matters mentioned above.

Beyond the topics that directly affect the football club, I am also keen to continue work on two other areas.

- The PST contribution to the John Jenkins Stadium
- Reforms to the structure and governance of football in England

The John Jenkins Stadium will be a lasting legacy from the rescue of Pompey by the fans. The PST contribution to this will help to ensure that Pompey in the Community reaches people all over the city and provide a community sports facility that will benefit everyone.

In recent weeks we have seen the failings of the way in which football is structured in England. These problems are deep seated with roots that stretch back decades. The failures of the system have impacted so many clubs, including Pompey as we know all too well.

The review of football governance that the Government has commissioned offers the best chance for many years to achieve real change in the way football is run. Portsmouth has a story and experience that few other clubs can match – bad ownership, run into the ground, the fight to get the club back, the rescue, fan ownership, and moving back to private ownership.

I believe that we should play a full part in the review and help it to take lessons from our experience to put fans and the long-term wellbeing of their clubs at the heart of the sport.

Serving the members for six years has been a privilege. It will be an honour to continue for another three and to deliver on the priorities I have set out in this statement.

Simon Colebrook

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