

QUESTIONS BROUGHT TO CUSG MEETING ON MON 4th NOVEMBER 2019 BY THE USERS OF THECUMBRIANS.NET FORUM

- No Group is made/forced to answer any question and does so at their own behest.
- Some Groups have answered both their own specific questions and the ones that were marked 'All in attendance', others have answered just their own specific questions.
- If a Group hasn't answered their questions, a simple 'No answer received' has been written. This is in the interests of clarity within the CUSG Group.
- TheCumbrians.net would like to thank all those who replied on behalf of those who submitted questions.

QUESTIONS FOR CUFC: NOTE – ANSWERS PROVIDED BY NIGEL CLIBBENS UNLESS INDICATED

FOR NIGEL CLIBBENS:

Q1: At the last meeting you said the directors could improve the relationship with fans by engaging and talking to fans directly, sharing more information openly and honestly, demonstrating good stewardship of the club, and making decisions in the interests of the club. Can you give a couple of specific examples where they have made progress on this since the last meeting?

Engaging and talking to fans directly,

- Arranged a Forum for with three of the four shareholders and directors for 7 February 2020.
- Chairman separately issued an open invitation to meet fans and talk directly to fans.

Sharing more information openly and honestly,

- 55 specific questions from fans answered last month.
- Around 40 different questions answered this month(taking total to over 150 in the last few months).
- Answered around 10 fan emails directly.

Demonstrating good stewardship of the club, and

- Completion of A stand repairs – planning next phase to B, C and D.
- Installation and operation of the new scoreboard – makes sense commercially and in terms of engagement / matchday experience

Making decisions in the interests of the club.

- Increasing budgets to allow further player recruitment.
- Increased Football Operations budget to recruit first team analyst.
- Eliminating final remaining shareholder debt (now public since last meeting).

Q2: At the last meeting you said that “questions are aimed increasingly at getting a comment or responses to facts or issues (like Q3-6,1-11,14-19 etc)–and fewer about confirming/denying rumours or claims (Q40). I had a question about a rumour but was told that question wouldn't be allowed. So is it fair to say the only reason there are fewer questions about rumours is simply because those questions aren't being allowed?

Absolutely not.

The questions are not determined by the club. If fans feel censored they can email the club direct, or ask to meet a director.

I ensure we answer all the questions received.

I read on the forum the query about “rumour questions” - I said in Q29 last month ...

“All questions are welcome ... So it’s still far better for the club to answer with facts directly rather than leave a void. That doesn’t mean fans have a “right” to know everything, or can be told everything nor does it mean we will respond to every claim/rumour. What is best for the club comes first. So, where there is a conflict, the club interest wins, and I will say so and explain why when I answer.

Q3: You said before that fans are allowed to criticise and that it's part and parcel of running a club, but at a recent match day briefing we were told that banners which criticise the BOD weren't allowed. I don't know whether this was a misunderstanding by the supervisor, or whether they were given that instruction from above. Can you clarify if fans are allowed to bring in banners which criticise the BOD?

Your comment is the first time either the Safety Officer or myself have heard of this. There are no specifics of which game, who was told (different briefings are provided to different staff).

I have checked with the Safety Officer and he is unaware of such a briefing. I read all pre-match briefings and there are no instructions of that kind, and there is no such policy in operation.

The banner policy is on the website and in the Charter. There is no ban on any specific banners beyond this. <https://www.carlisleunited.co.uk/siteassets/documents/club-charter-june-2019-20-jan20.pdf>

Please provide me with any details so I can look into it. You can do so confidentially at kickitout@carlisleunited.co.uk

For me, the match day is all about the team and winning the game. Things that disrupt and distract from that are unwelcome and unhelpful and can damage the team, staff and players. That’s who feel the impact. So, what I would say is, if fans have an issue, get in touch and raise it face-to-face – make your point and tell those you want to hear it direct. The door is open, we have CUSG, these questions, plus many methods to make your voice heard.

Q4: What are Jenkins and co doing to relate to fans to help repair the damage, I don't think shushing fans who where vocal (politely, no swearing) in their displeasure of the current regime particularly helps repair these bridges?

See Q1.

Q5: On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being perfect, 0 being bloody useless) how would he view the club on:

- Customer service
- Matchday experience
- Catering and food
- Value for money
- Communication with supporters
- Communication with sponsors and local businesses

- **Media services**
- **Player recruitment**
- **Success of business plan**
- **Success over the last 10 years.**

If he has to give a number for each of the ten rather than a half page waffle, what would he say (Or any club rep for that matter)?

What does a score of 8 actually mean? or 2 actually mean? Is 8, 4 times better than 2, 6 three times better than 2? Does 8 and 2 in my opinion mean the same for another fan? Is 8 today the same as 8 last year.

I think subjective (based on personal opinion), individual (small sample of one person), number score (with no reference point as to what it means), no object (unbiased) scoring method is meaningless and actually doesn't help anything.

I can see the principles you are driving at (and I agree), but the score approach is flawed and there are better ways to benchmark (and monitor).

Q6: When he came to Carlisle United David Holdsworth promised accountability, can I ask who is accountable for the following ?

- **Player transfers?** Each manager/head coach has final say on all players recruited.
- **Appointment of Pressley?** Holdings board
- **Extension of Pressley?** Holdings Board
- **Spending or managing the Branthwaite, Mccaron and FA cup money? (Whoever's responsibility this is a dialogue or statement to fans would be appreciated)** Directors on the Holdings Board determine the available budget for football, and the other competing demands across the wider club. How that is spent / allocated to an individual deal is determined by DH, who does the deals, makes offers to clubs and agents / players for contracts .
- **Ground improvements?** Holdings sets budgets and 1921 is responsible for day-to-day to get best value for the available budget assigned.
- **Match day experience?** Holdings approves budgets and 1921 is responsible day to day.
- **Marketing?** Holdings approves budgets and 1921 is responsible day to day – that is undertaken by the two media staff within their other duties.
- **Attracting new sponsors?** Commercial department.
- **Responsible for the bid which Barrow subsequently laughed at ?** I never comment on speculation.

Q7: My question is quite wide ranging but simple. Why, when the club has been in such a decline under the current owners for over a decade, have they not sought to arrest the decline by welcoming a takeover (Not EWM as that is not a takeover)?

Answered Q17a in December.

Q8: In 2013 John Nixon stated: "That's the challenge (The Championship), and if we aren't up for that challenge, we shouldn't be putting football on here every week". Why is he deemed suitable to be on both boards,

See Q3 in December about board position.

given his undisputed failure at his aims?

I can't answer as I don't understand the question, as no aims are referred to.

In terms of "being up for the challenge" – that is different to aims and results.

Q9: Finally, you mentioned previously, the board were ensure etc about how to repair their relationship with fans,

I didn't say that. In Q28 last month I said ...

"I think that relations can improve by the directors:

- *continuing to do all we can to put the interests of the club first – and show that in what we do.*
- *engaging and talking to fans directly (we have forums, and will continue to, and the door is always open for anyone to come in and chat face to face); like a fans forum in the New Year.*
- *sharing more information openly and honestly – I think the club has changed in my time here on this, it has been uncomfortable at times, but I believe it's worthwhile.*
- *demonstrating good stewardship of the club – making decisions in the interests of the club.*
- *Answering questions like this.*

I asked ...

"...how fans think directors can best do that? Because it's fans minds that have to be changed and us doing things that don't / won't help do that, is not going to help."

have they thought about apologising? A sorry for the last 12 years (blue yonder, billionaire, stadium falling down, lack of engagement, that's before the football side) might go a long way with some fans.

Having given feedback, as I asked, I will pass that on.

Q10: In the EFL statement dated 22nd January about Andrew Jenkins, It states apparently written by Mr Jenkins that "it's always been our own money". Erm am I missing something here? Under Jenkins 1st disastrous tenure we could no longer pay debts and he had to sell to Michael Knighton.

Under his 2nd tenure, also turning out to be a disaster he was on the beg and now in debt to EWM for a reported £2 million. How on earth can he state it's always been his own money, that's a plain lie and a ludicrous thing to say as it's wrong!

Club funding has never just been "his own money" and he doesn't say that either. Your own quotes show that. In your quote you say "it's always been our own money" then you also say AJ said "it's always been his own money".

So you are misrepresenting the quote.

The point that was being made was the funding of the club has always been from those connected with the club, those with club interests at heart and wanting to see the club succeed. Rather than banks and financial lenders who have no affinity or relationship with the club, or fans, or City, or Community and see things only on a purely financial basis (whose support can quickly evaporate).

Q11: In a piece written in the program by Andrew Jenkins in our penultimate season we had in league 1, Andrew Jenkins stated we were going through what was the darkest period he could remember.

I haven't seen that article, but given it ended in relegation it seems a reasonable opinion.

We are now 4th bottom in tier 4? What does he think now?

We are in a worse league position compared with then. The key point is we are well below where we have been in the past and where we have the potential to be. That is not where we would "dream" of being, but a simple reasonable view of where we could be.

We have fallen back this season and must reverse that. We are in a better position than last week when the question was raised. So, things change all the time.

When is he going to do the right thing and leave?

I have answered the question about leaving and nothing has changed. The need to change and succession has been clear for some time. It is accepted. The issue is someone coming in. I explained at great length about what that needs and how it would work.

Q10-Q13 November.

Q17 December.

Again the key issues I highlighted remain unchanged.

Q12: To quote Chris Lumsdon: "I think the signings show where we are, cost cutting, bank the money that comes in and pray we limp over the line (not my words, those of PD man)". We'll have to believe him cause no one from the club will confirm or deny.

No-one has asked the club until you have now, so I will answer now.

So my questions is if this is the clubs attitude to football,

That is not the club's attitude to football, so the conclusion you have drawn is incorrect.

I explained in Q41 last month about windfalls.

Yes - we have to keep costs to a minimum and prioritise what we spend, but balance is also crucial. We need to spend wisely and also retaining some in reserve, but respond to circumstances properly.

Our spending on football has increased this season and continues to rise since August.

The chairman and director of football work very closely alongside John Jackson to agree spending and funding to support Steven Pressley, and now Chris Beech, to improve the squad and football department to make the team and results better.

Since Chris joined us we have seen eight joiners, five departures and two new deals over one window.

- Dewhurst, Guy, Kayode, Patrick, Watt, Alessandra, Anderton and Hunt join the club.
- The departure of Hope, Carroll, Elliott, Branthwaite and Sorenson.
- Aaron Hayden and Gethin Jones signed new deals.

Under Pressley we had 14 joiners and 18 leavers in the last window, with just four outfield players retained + two keepers and Eтуhu (long term injury).

So, in just seven months and two windows we have seen 22 players arrive and 23 leave. We now have a squad of:

- 21 + 3 keepers + Charters + Eтуhu (long term injury) at 6 February 2020.

... compared with ...

- 17 + 2 keepers + Branthwaite + Eтуhu (long term injury) at 31 August 2019.

The growth in size of the senior outfield squad has been accompanied by an increase in the cost of the squad – not cost cutting.

As a result, the committed football player budget (what we are certain to spend this season on wages plus estimate of potential bonuses):

- Was higher than at August 2019 than in August 2018 ... it has risen since last year.
- Now higher at 31 January 2020 than at August 2019 ... it's risen since the start of the season.
- Higher at 31 January 2020 than at January 2019 ... it's increased compared with last year when we finished 11th.
- Is forecast to be more for 2019/20 than in 2018/19.

At every point it has been higher and gone up.

Also, elsewhere in the football department, we have increased spending. It is higher than last season. For example, we recently hired the club's first football analyst (spending more than we saved by Nathan Rooney leaving) to support Chris and the team. There are other examples too. Again, that is not cost cutting. It is supporting the manager / head coach during the season as our finances have allowed.

We have increased football spending on both players and football operations, the opposite of "cost cutting".

If you look at the comments on the Cumbrians forum "rate-our-transfer-window"
<https://www.thecumbrians.net/forum/main-forum/11276-rate-our-transfer-window>

I don't think anyone would say "I think the signings show where we are, cost cutting, bank the money that comes in and pray we limp over the line".

why should fans come down to Brunton Park on a Saturday ? (Please don't give me cause it's your team spiel etc... we've been doing this for many years, and this is arguably the worst team in living memory of the younger fans).

I would simply say watch the video of the goal in injury time at Mansfield and look at those fans and ask if it's worth supporting the team. That says more than words.

Q14: Attendances have dropped significantly since the BOD took over. Will there ever be a point where the number gets so low that the BOD accept they have lost the confidence of most of the fans?

I understand and have discussed the relationship with some fans in questions and answers (see prior months). I have accepted there is an issue and it's covered again in Q1 this month.

The year before they took over, the attendance in 07/08 in L1 was the second highest in the last 40 years as the club reached its highest position in 40 years. From those peaks on the field to now in L2 it is indisputable attendances have fallen.

I don't see any reliable evidence that there is any significant correlation between confidence in BOD and attendances, so using attendance trends to measure as a guide for confidence trend has no value, in my opinion.

In 16/17 when we got to the play-offs the L2 average was over 5,000 – higher than the previous two years in L2 – does that mean confidence in BOD had improved in that time? Even though the overseas investor, Blue Yonder and other issues were unresolved?

To say one number is a proxy measure of another is over simplifying and mixing a number of very important issues.

Q15: Has the club got a financial plan in place for non league?

Our detailed financial planning for next season has not begun for any division.

FOR JOHN NIXON:

Q16: Back in 2013/14, you said in numerous interviews that the club could not move to the next level (The Championship), or support its managers without a new stadium. What have we done since to:

1. Get a new stadium.

In December 2017 I said ...

The facilities are now, more than ever before, struggling to keep up with the passage of time, the expectations of supporters and the ever-growing regulations of all authorities we come into contact with.

<https://www.carlisleunited.co.uk/news/2017/december/chiefexecupdatepartone12dec17/>

Since then, the club has held discussions with the council and a number of developers. Options have been discussed. The position is clear.

The stadium issue has worsened since 2013/14. In the 2018 financial statements, we said ...

“The stadium remains in a high-risk area for flooding and most areas of the buildings are well over 50-years old. The facilities are now, more than ever before, struggling to keep up with the passage

of time, the expectations of supporters and the ever-growing regulations of all authorities we come into contact with.

We have made it clear the stadium issue is one which is a top priority to make progress on. CUOSC and all other shareholders and directors share this view. There is no ability for the Company to self-fund a new stadium. This severely constrains the options for the Club. We are continuing to review the options ahead but at present for any meaningful progress this will need a united and community-based approach, with fans and public and private sector working together”

There remains no ability for the Company to self-fund a new stadium from its normal trading activities (we make losses and need cash, so there is no surplus cash to build).

This severely constrains the options for the club. Meaningful progress beyond the current incremental approach to renewal will need a united and community-based approach.

I personally believe the Local Football Facilities Plan could be the catalyst. It is a once in a generation opportunity for Carlisle and its community. But it could pass us by if we don't explore the possibilities.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/3.%20Local%20Football%20Facility%20Plans%20-%20Phil%20Woodward%20and%20Claire%20Waldron.pdf>

We need a community vision to look beyond a new 3G pitch, and some pitch drainage here and there, to something that can transform, inspire and create huge community benefits.

This inevitably requires long-term planning and leadership and crucially also community and political ambition and vision. From the club side, it needs certainty over the future direction of the club, which requires resolution of questions over succession.

2. Improve facilities, to a standard that they're ready to move through the leagues?

In the 5 and a half years since 30 June 2014 the club has spent approximately £1m on the stadium from its own resources, plus the proceeds of the 2015 flood. This has gone to maintain and renew facilities.

EWM:

Q17: EWM are running the club due to the loans made to the club to protect their loans (and in getting money back)

EWM debt

NO – that claim is untrue – the directors run the club.

Also -see Q23 November

“No debt has been repaid to any current shareholder (including Andrew Jenkins) since June 2016 when I joined (I haven't looked back before then), or EWM since they became involved.No cash was repaid from previous windfalls – they were all 100% used within the club. There is no existing requirement or commitment at present to repay any of the EWM loans.

In Q40a in December I reiterated

“we have had no discussions about using windfalls to repay debt as explained last month (Q23)”
This remains the case still. To be clear, I will restate again, no debt has been repaid to EWM or shareholders, none is planned to be – nothing has changed in that regard.

Shareholder debt

In terms of shareholder debt, I confirmed in November Q2 and Q20

“the existing shareholders have already converted £1.5m to extinguish all of their personal debt”

The final transaction was £145,000 detailed in the documents lodged at Companies House recently.

This was reiterated again in Q20 November

“What I can say is since 30 June 2018, the shareholder debt has now been fully eliminated. The Pioneer debt has also been reduced as agreed as part of their sponsorship deal. The overdraft and mortgage are unchanged”

The Club continues to spend more money on players than it can afford itself from its own trading activities. Even with improvements in this since 2018, and a reduced player budget last year in 18/19 (compared with 17/18), the Club still spent more money on players than it could afford itself. This again continues to be the case in 19/20. That extra spending on football which is otherwise unaffordable, is possible only with the financial support of EWM. This continues to be provided as loans (as it has been in the past). So inevitably this balance has increased since June 2018.

So as a consequence fans should expect the total Club debt to increase when it is next reported [at 30 June 2019], as some debts go down and EWM debt goes up. This is a continuation of the same overall funding model as in previous years. It is the same as most EFL clubs follow.

Again it is crucial to note, this is all as we budgeted, as expected and as planned and with the support of our shareholders, EWM and the board. It is from a sustainable source as part of an agreed plan (see Q10).

Fans should also be aware the funding required has reduced considerably 2019 and it is worthy of note, no external funding has been required for many months.”

Since that answer in November 2019, we have seen further unbudgeted cash from the FA Cup and player sales. This has meant no external funding has been required this financial year so far (19/20) and the debt from 30 June 2019 has not increased.

Is 3rd party running of a club allowed?

No

Does it not go against EFL rules?

No because EWM is not controlling the club.

Q18: What is the connection if any between CUFC and Eden Valley Sport Ltd of Global House Castle St. Carlisle?

As John Jackson is a director there is an indirect link.

There is no shareholder connection and it's not related to us.

DAVID HOLDSWORTH:

Q19: In response to Q30 in Dec 19, why wasn't there a recruitment process for the David Holdsworths director of football position?

Directors from Holdings met and interviewed David and, as a result of discussions at that board, Holdings concluded David was the one for the job, and so he joined the club. No further process was judged as required.

Does this not show a who you know rather than a what you know attitude?

No.

If you meet and interview a candidate and think they are the one for the job, and you don't need to look any further, it simply shows you think they are the one for the job. No need to look further.

Does this not prove we are being ran by EWM and they are making (incorrect) decisions?

No. Directors made the decision, not EWM.

Q20: Can you ask since Holdsworth's illustrious football management career ended with Goole Town in 2014, in the 4yrs until he took over as DoF what exactly did he do in football to justify his appointment(apart from being PD pal)

One for the football forum about David's journey.

Q21: Do the Holding Board have the power to terminate his appointment without consultation with EWM if his performance is felt to be inadequate?

The Director of Football role reports to the Holdings board. It is Holdings job to define the role and responsibilities and manage that position. This means hiring, and any changes.

Q22: It's been well documented David Holdsworth was the man who selected Chris Beech, based on him being accountable for this, will the board be removing him from his position if we are relegated (Been claims from the club we have the power too, not sure we do though)?

Everyone is focussing on improving and getting up the league - that's all.

Q23: Can the "ring fence" around DH's wages not be bulldozed, say like Philip Day did to Galt Woods?

No answer received.

Q24: What objectives does Holdsworth have in his role ?

In that role, he works closely with first team coach on the recruitment of senior players, once the first team manager has identified his targets, and on creating pathways between the Academy and senior team.

He uses his contacts among scouts, agents, players and executives to get the best deals for the club.

This means the manager no longer negotiates deals and terms with players and agents, and agrees his deals with the chairman, as was the case previously.

Now, once targets are selected, David can agree all terms and do all aspects of the transfers on behalf of the board, and directly control our football spending liaising with the chairman.

He helps ensure we recruit the talent identified by the first team coach and assists in developing future players.

He provides a key link between chairman, board and head coach, ensuring Chris Beech is able to implement his team strategy and recruit players within our budgets.

He is also responsible for establishing a pipeline of talent between the senior team and the club's Academy (Like McCarron, Galloway, Branthwaite and Charters).

How is his performance measured?

No different from any person at the club performance is measured by comparing what is done against what was agreed to be done.

Surely our DoF should be responsible for shaping a vision for our transfers and progress, what is ours?

One for the football forum.

<https://www.carlisleunited.co.uk/news/2018/august/directoroffootballaugust18/>

Q25: To quote our head coach "Financial questions are to be directed at David Holdsworth", can Mr Holdsworth make himself available to the press to explain where the Branthwaite money has gone?

As Q24a above, David negotiates all football contracts, and the comment was in the context of football deals, so it was right to direct them to David.

I explained in Q40 last month the general principle of the club decides what is spent in total and what the priorities are. Not what individual player contracts are. That is controlled by David and signed off by the chairman.

As with McCarron, the proceeds come into the club, but although David negotiates deals he does not determine what happens to sales proceeds.

Q26: David Holdsworth said in the summer when Liam McCarron left: "I have to say that I've built up a good working relationship with Leeds throughout this process and it could prove to be a good

**fit for us going forward should we want to consider any of their players for loan spells with us.”
My question would be why hasn't this come to fruition**

The key is “should we want to consider any of their players for loan spells with us”. Players and both clubs need to see the same opportunity. None have happened to date. That doesn't mean they won't in future.

when we've been desperate for a striker from day one of the season. Or was it just flannel from Mr Holdsworth to justify his remuneration?

We brought in Loft, Olomola and Sorenson, and retained Hope in the summer, to cover the striker position. In the Pressley system of 4-3-3 that called for a certain mix of squad.

Since then we have brought in Kayode and Alessandra, and finally Patrick, to address the issue. We have kept Loft and Olamola so have lots of options through the middle.

Q27: David Holdsworth gave an interview after the good result at Cardiff but we didn't hear much from him during the bad run of results prior to that. Can you explain why that was?

No specific reason - coincidence. David was on the Radio on Saturday at Mansfield, gave a club interview post window and will be at the upcoming football forum.

ON FIELD MATTERS:

Q28: I've now heard: Pressley, Sheridan and Curle make claims about our budget, and Beech doesn't speak to fondly of our financial capabilities, so where in the L2 budget tables (money spent on playing budget) do we stack up ? And can we have this in relation to previous years?

See Q12 above.

Q29: How long does Beech get before he's under pressure we have won one league game, and the only real apparent achievements is a second half victory against a Crewe team who had their flip flops on, and getting a point at Oldham after taking Cardiff to the “12th round”?

Patience is often in short supply in football. But this question stretches even that. 😊

Chris has been in the job a short time and so to talk of pressure is not helpful or needed or warranted either.

We are supporting Chris to make us better, that's our priority – as seen in the window (see q12).

There are few quick fixes in football that last. The January window was important to allow Chris to reshape the squad to match the way he wants to play, and the qualities of players he needs and wants.

Fans who have seen the team in recent weeks can see us changing and that we are seeing some of the changes start to come to fruition. That builds confidence and puts smiles on faces, as we saw at Mansfield.

Q30: Can we have some honesty about the Carroll situation, he's doesn't seem to have featured in the 18 since the Bradford game on Boxing Day having impressed in the two cup games against Forest Green. Something discipline related?

Selection decisions are made by Chris Beech. In this specific case it has been purely football related.

Different coaches see and want different qualities. They play in different ways. That means things inevitably change. It's inevitable. Canice has now moved on and we wish him well.

Q31: Why oh why was SP given another contract when he proved to be hopelessly inept and the team went from being a half decent league two outfit to a rag tag bunch of useless misfits within three months of his tenure? To oversee such a decline then be offered a new contract is quite staggering. What did they see that 99.9% of the regular match going public could not?

The reasoning was explained at the time ...

<https://www.carlisleunited.co.uk/news/2019/april/contract-manager-signs-for-further-year/>

OFF FIELD MATTERS:

Q32: It seems the game advertising board was still displaying the Plymouth match as the next game 3 days after it had been played, and was also advertising the Cardiff match the day after it had been played. The issue of outdated adverts has been brought to your attention before, it makes the club look unprofessional and like you have no pride or just can't be bothered doing the basic things right. Why has this issue not been properly addressed?

I gave a very detailed answer in Q1 in September 2019 and nothing has changed.

I explained the target is to change the board, by latest, close of play Tuesday. In practice, for the most part, it is changed the next working day morning. That is not always possible due to events and special circumstances. There is always, (as there was in this case) a sound reason - oversight, forgetting, lack of pride and not being bothered are not one of them.

The post-match clean-up issues and fixes required after the Plymouth game, needed before Cardiff were abnormally high. Those had to take priority. The damage to the pitch after the awful conditions v Plymouth meant Dave Mitchell had to devote 100% of his time to the pitch. Keith, our other member of groundstaff had a number of things to fix that had to be done first. A tight ship means compromises are sometimes unavoidable.

Q33: How does the club expect to attract sponsors who want hospitality throughout the season, if week in week out, it only dishes out the same carvery? Isn't it about time the club put some renewed imagination into hospitality catering?

That feedback is welcome and will be passed along.

Q34: Was the attendance figure for the Cardiff City replay deliberately undercounted or did someone's calculator fail?

The attendance was calculated on exactly the same basis as every other game.

The attendance for Cardiff minus their fans was given as 4033. Walsall attendance 3811. Difference 222. There were far more than 222 extra home fans at the Cardiff match and that's not just my opinion either. Which attendance figure is wrong?

The figure announced is the number of tickets sold. Not every person who has a ticket comes to the league game, as some season ticket holders don't come to every game. While at a cup game almost every person who buys a ticket comes. Hence the people in the stadium may differ even though the announced numbers may be close together. This is the same practice at every other club that I am aware of.

FANS FORUM:

Q35: It is now 18 months since the last directors fans forum, where Jenkins, Nixon, Pattison and CUOSC were present (September 18). Why hasn't there been one since, and why is taking so long to organise another (It was mentioned at the CUSG meeting 5 weeks ago)?

The week 1 of Feb forum is, as I said, in August 2019.

At the CUSG group meeting in August 2019, the minutes recorded (<https://www.carlisleunited.co.uk/news/2019/august/cusg-august-meeting-minutes/>)

“The recent fans' forum was once again considered a success. Between 6-10k online streams had been recorded. Andy stated the event is better attended if it isn't carried live on radio. The club would consider switching the start time to 7pm in future, after some feedback. The next forum was expected to be targeted for February. The groups requested it should be aimed at business rather than football matters, but Andy stated he believed Steven Pressley, Nigel Clibbens and David Holdsworth should always be in attendance. Groups requested that representatives from shareholders should attend any business-focused forum.”

In Q10a of the Q&A from December 2019

(<https://www.carlisleunited.co.uk/news/2019/december/cusg-answers-to-december-questions--from-thecumbrians.net/>), I confirmed ...

“Q10a Will Nixon, Jenkins and Pattinson [three individual shareholders] be attending the next fans forum,

They have attended them on each occasion when they have been held in the past, so I see no reason why they wouldn't attend in future. At the CUSG meeting we discussed potential future forums possibly in the New Year. When I confirmed this week with JN he said would and also AJ said his door is open for anyone who wants to meet him as well.”

Since July 2019 we have held five CUSG meetings in just six months. In the process the club has provided answers (many in great detail) to over 125 questions raised by fans, as well as detailing and updating on all major and a variety of very detailed and minor club matters. Far more than any forum (I explained further in Q10b).

Q36: What's happening with the fans forum ? Surely it doesn't take a month to ask Nixon, Jenkins and Pattinson what day they are free on? Will these 3 attend?

The director forum will be on 7 February 2020. NC, JN, SP and BA to attend.

Q37: Will John Jackson be willing to attend the forum as a board member - be nice to see whose involved with running our club after over 12 months of being here.

Not this forum.

In terms of running the club, JJ does not attend games or the club, he is not involved in operational matters or football. His involvement is remote, with a very light touch. His role is not involved in running the club, it's focused mainly on simply monitoring our finances – like forecast cash requirements and monthly accounts and budgets and, if required, to consider material contracts we enter into. This allows him to be the link with EWM on the commercial funding agreement, and things of interest to EWM when required.

Q38: Why isn't/did Andrew Jenkins attend the directors fans forum?

No. AJ has issued an open invitation to fans to meet and talk face-to-face.

He feels that is the most productive way for him to engage with fans.

He feels we can better deal with fans questions in a larger forum.

Q39: Why isn't/did John Jackson attend the fans forum?

On club matters – other attendees have same info and can provide all answers.

On EWM matters – there is no new comment or information to add to what has already been said, at this time.

See Q37 about his role in other matters.

Q40: I presume the meeting is this Monday coming, can we therefore get assurances that the minutes/answers will be published prior to Friday's forum?

Normal arrangements apply. Publish Friday AM.

Q41: Page 33 of the Club's Charter has this passage:

"5. Media

The directors of 1921 will hold open media briefings on an ongoing basis. The aim is to hold them every 6 weeks."

What's happened to these? They seem to have vanished (Similar to the last 2 parts of the DH interviews over the Summer!). Regular interaction with Supporters through both these Meetings via the local Media and the more traditional Forums are surely a key communication outlet?

The success of these direct club-to-fan questions have been so strong they have simply taken over.

Club / fan engagement has changed and continues to change very quickly. This is a simple example where issues that matter to fans can be put direct to the club. Media report forums and Q&A but it's fans who drive the agenda on what matters to them. Which is surely a good thing?

That doesn't mean traditional interaction goes entirely, but media channels are changing very quickly.

For example, in years gone by a mid-week press conference with a manager would be well attended - now it's only guaranteed that the News & Star (Jon Colman) will turn up. Again, this is due to the way the needs and working practices of other agencies have changed.

We all have to adapt to that and try new things ... and when they take off really use them.

SOCIAL MEDIA: ANSWERS BY ANDY HALL

Q42: Why is our social media so abysmal? Do we get volunteers/help from Universities or colleges?

Interestingly, and this is not a dismissal of the point, we perform extremely well when external reviews are carried out on our social media activity – and that’s for content, regularity and delivery. However, that doesn’t mean we should be complacent, and we most definitely aren’t.

This season the club took a decision to have a traditional programme.

That focuses a large part of the media department’s working week on writing, producing and editing it.

The positives and negatives of that decision were discussed at the time, as you would expect, and the outcome was that it was felt that the return to a larger format programme would have a better response commercially and from a business point of view.

One of the negatives highlighted was that the time would be diverted (other areas of engagement – like social media presence would suffer, as time (two full days, 16 hours of labour time, 20% of media team time per programme, from start to finish) is allocated to the publication.

The two members of staff still put a lot of time into social media – indeed our Facebook page is one of the busiest in Leagues One and Two, and our Instagram audience is growing due to the amount that goes on there – but the Twitter side of things has to take a step back on occasion.

Twitter is most effective with short videos, intricate graphics, etc, etc – this is where our output has been affected in favour of the printed match programme.

On Universities – yes, in the past this has been extremely useful. Sadly the journalism course was taken away from the Carlisle Campus, and we lost what was a ‘deal’ to have four students embedded per year. Those people, as I’m sure you’ll remember, provided mass content and were a delight to have. We have since tried to form the same links with universities further afield, but success with that has been limited.

Volunteers is the same. Due to the nature of them being volunteers their attendance can’t always be guaranteed. Having said that, I would not give a volunteer access to club accounts for obvious reasons.

Q43: As of writing this question, it is almost 48 hours since FT at the Oldham game, we have posted twice on Twitter. Advertising of games is diabolical, local non league teams (Barrow and Workington) are streets ahead of us in this regard. The content is just links to the official website, no imagination, no design. What are we doing to improve this?

We are constantly looking to exploit social media and, as explained above, when time is on our side it is something we feel we do well. Often deadlines, aligned with the busy nature of the fixture schedule, conspire against us.

Some clubs at our level have employed individuals (some more than one) to look after social media. Indeed, some L2 clubs visit us on matchday with up to six media personnel (Championship clubs have even more).

The simple solution is more resources, but we have to compete with other demands across the club for resources. We have two full time staff to do all the work. Our design requirements are contracted out, which takes time, and does not fit easily with creating quick content. That is unchanged since 2016. In that time the demands of supporters has increased hugely and the nature of communications / interaction has changed hugely too.

We will continue to work as hard as we can to keep as much as we can current, updated and informative, as and when time allows.

Q44: Does the club have a code of conduct regarding the players' use of social media?

Yes.

Q45: Does the club monitor the players' use of social media?

Yes.

Q46: Have any players been disciplined due to misuse of social media?

As you would expect, any disciplinary matters are between club and any player or staff member. We would not normally divulge them publicly – just the same as any other business wouldn't.

QUESTIONS FOR CUOSC:

Can we have an update on the "mystery proposal" of June that led to the resignation of John Kukuc? What was nature of the proposal made that apparently had to be agreed to on a "tight timescale", was it agreed to/passed and what is the timescale for releasing this information to the supporters?

Other parties involved in the meeting concerned insisted that a decision be made immediately. That decision was though subject to further consideration and approvals. The proposal is still a live one which is potentially important for the future of the club and its fans. We cannot divulge any details at this point but will do so as soon as this is possible.

QUESTION FOR CUSG: NOTE – ANSWERS PROVIDED BY SIMON CLARKSON (CUSG CHAIR)

Over the last year what positive contributions have you made to the club?

The very fact that there is now a frequent opportunity to ask questions of the club via this medium, and through fans reps at meetings, is a significant improvement compared to before CUSG was set up. The early days of CUSG saw an emphasis on improving disabled facilities at BP and gathering memorabilia for the bars.

Some highlights from 2019 were:

- Organising and hosting 2 fans forums.
- Organising and hosting 'An evening with Jimmy Glass'.
- Marketing and sale of 500 'Jimmy Glass' commemorative pin badges.
- Polling supporters for suggestions for the renaming of the bars in Brunton Park.
- Facilitating the collection of and display of the club's replica shirts from the last 30 years.
- Appointing a Supporters Liaison Officer.
- Raising (via bucket collections at forums) £344 for the charity Jigsaw.

In the pipeline for 2020 are the following:

- **Construction of new disabled fans viewing area in the Warwick Road End.**
- **Fans forums (Directors booked for 7 Feb and playing staff scheduled for March).**
- **The marketing and sale of pin badges to commemorate the 1994/95 season.**
- **In conjunction with club staff the planning and overseeing of the refurbishment and renaming of 3 of the Brunton Park bars.**
- **Developing a CUSG website which will hopefully act as an umbrella website for all supporters groups.**