



**BLACKPOOL**  
**supporters trust**

# BST Survey Results

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ONLINE SURVEY 2020



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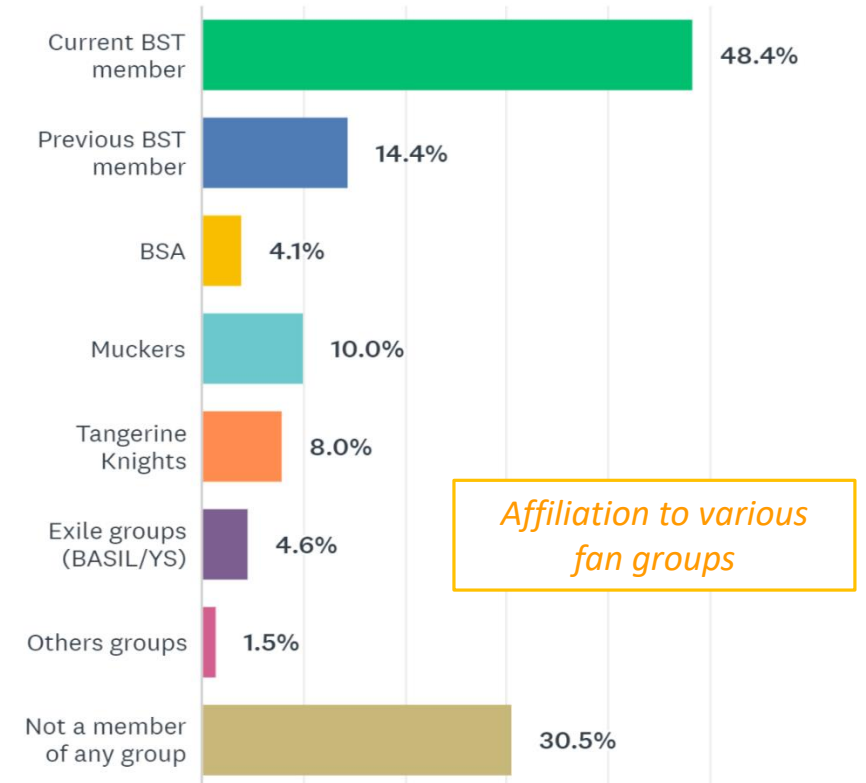
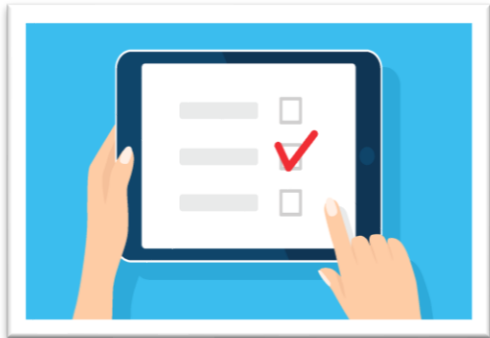
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- **Survey method and responses**
- **Summary**
- **Detailed results**
  - Previous attendance patterns and opinion of facilities
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  - Season ticket purchasing and predictions for the team
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  - Reactions to suggested social club



# Online survey: Survey method and responses

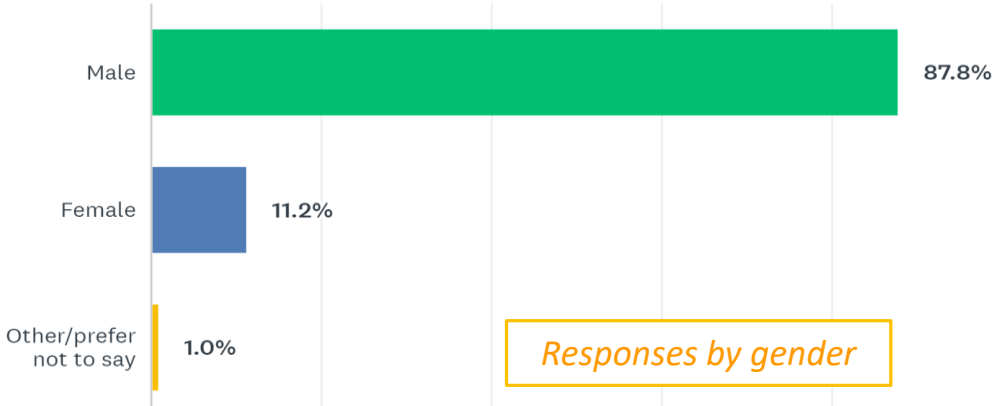
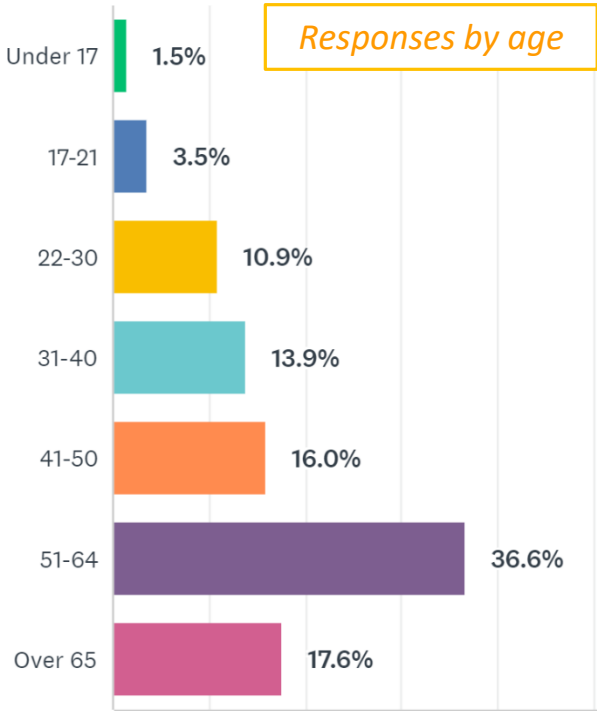
- Our online survey ran from **15<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020**. As with last year, the response rate was excellent, boosted by contributions from non-BST members, as the study was extended more widely to other fans and groups
- Indeed this year only half were current BST members. (As an aside, those not associated with any group were more likely to be younger – 48% of under 30s, vs only 28% of over 50s don't affiliate with any on the list)
- Our thanks must go to other fan groups, social media platforms and the Blackpool Gazette, etc for spreading the word and tweeting details, ensuring maximum input and the views of a broader audience
- We received a total of **1,331 responses**, sufficient numbers for us to flag any key insights by fan group, age or other respondent type. These are highlighted in the report where relevant/actionable



*NB: Fans could tick more than one answer. Of the 70% who associate with a group, on average around a third belong to more than one*

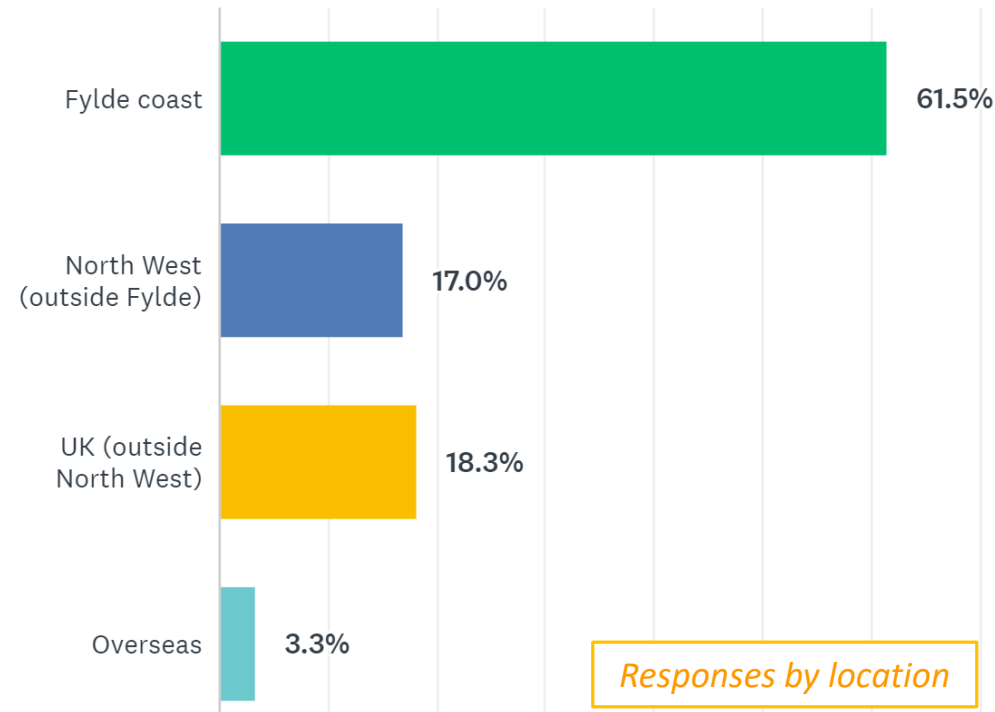
# Online survey: Respondent demographics – age, gender and race

- We achieved a good spread of responses by age, though weighted much more towards the over 50s (54%)
- The fact that so few under 21s (5%) and ethnic minorities (<1%) took part could well reflect the fan base, but could also imply that they are less inclined to engage in this kind of survey or may be less likely to hear about it, based on the information sources they use
- It was good to have representation from some female fans (11% shared their views)



# Online survey: Respondent demographics – location

- Unsurprisingly, a large body of responses came from residents who are more local to Blackpool, with over two thirds living on the Fylde coast or the North West. The rest were mostly from elsewhere in the UK, though it's good to know that 3% still appear to fly the flag for the team from abroad
- These results differ very little vs last year, despite the previous survey being extended to BST members only



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# Summary: Insights for the Club

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- **Planned attendance this season** – The majority of fans (especially season ticket holders/regular attendees) are keen to return as soon as the season starts. While a fifth say it may take them three months to go back, they tend to be less regular match-goers and those more worried about Covid
- **Perceived risks** – Asked about fears for the coming season in relation to the Corona virus, over 90% claimed some concerns yet were still likely to attend or had no real concerns, suggesting that with safety measures in place, many could be reassured
- **Who fans sit with** – Yet, concerningly, two thirds say the people they tend to sit with (which can often be a group of 3-5) is often not from their own household, potentially creating more of a challenge for the club in terms of ensuring safety
- **Safety measures** – While some measures such as temperature checks are largely felt more of a 'nice to have' or unnecessary, the majority say certain precautions are vital. Most essential are thought to be hand sanitiser around the grounds and social distancing where practical, mentioned by around two thirds
- **Impact of other restrictions** – Measures such as not serving food or alcohol appear unlikely to dissuade supporters from returning. However one major deterrent would be if fans couldn't sit with friends and family, which over half admit would make them less likely to return, as most say they like to enjoy the game with others



# Summary: Insights for the Club

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- **Catering arrangements** - There are mixed views on the food and drink offering, with over half finding it just 'OK'. There are wide ranging suggestions on improvement, from quality and range to speed of service
- **Season Ticket demand** – Half the respondents have already bought or intend to buy with the rest a mix of still deciding and choosing not to purchase this year. So demand doesn't seem significantly diminished this year. Those still wavering often cite uncertainty around Covid and are keen to have assurances on safety measures and clarity about ticket terms in the event of future outbreaks – this may help them make an informed decision
- **Why buy a season ticket** – Providing support and income to the club, a guaranteed same seat, sitting with family and friends and pride in being a loyal fan, were the strongest reasons, all mentioned by around half. Obtaining a lower overall match day price seems less of a driver, but still a priority for a third
- **Understanding of the SLO role** – One in five believe they have a good grasp of what the SLO does, while the majority of other fans have some understanding. Many suggest that use of the club website and social media could be used to improve visibility of the role and provide more frequent updates





# Summary: Insights for BST

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- **Key objectives for the Trust** – Providing a voice for fans and holding the club to account were the key activities that fans rated as most important. National football governance and community projects were still deemed important but a lower priority
- **Other objectives for BST** – Members top suggestions included helping to attract younger supporters to Blackpool football club and using expertise to help fan groups from other clubs in trouble
- **Community initiatives / fund raising** – Asked the most appropriate causes for BST to support, youth initiatives and sport (e.g. grass roots football) were the most popular
- **Joining / renewals** – Members and non-members indicated that the Trust needs to generate more opportunities reminding fans how to join and renew, and what the key benefits are
- **Communication with members** – BST is felt to have very good member engagement. E-mail is by far the preferred mode of contact, followed by the website and Twitter
- **Fans Social club** – Most are receptive to the idea of this being a potential base for BST member meetings and other events. Only 3% were against it. Two thirds of all fans indicated that they would be likely to use the club at least once a season



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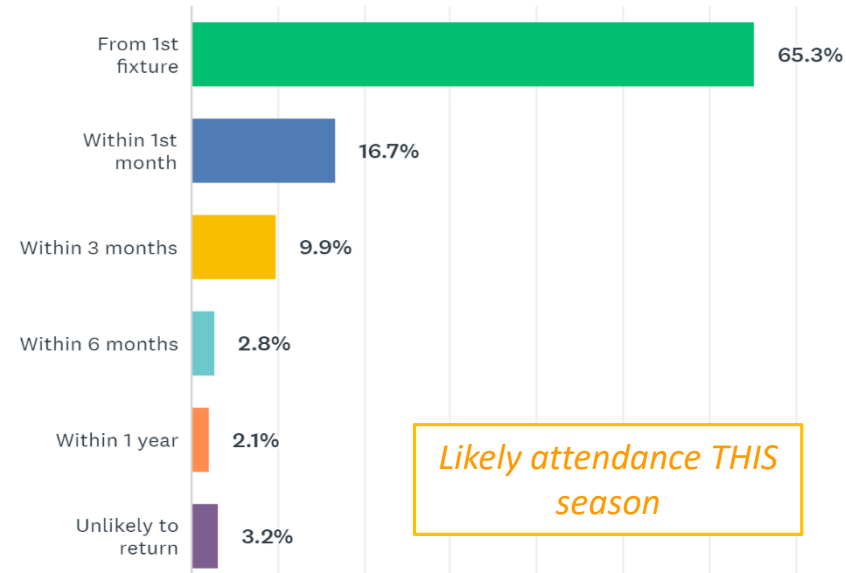
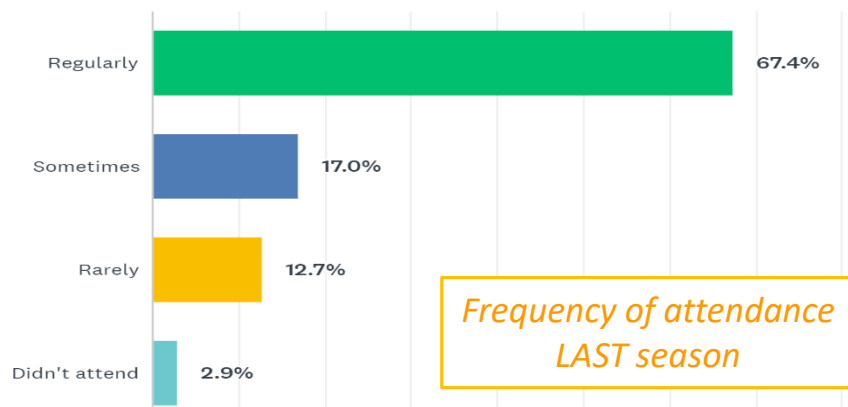
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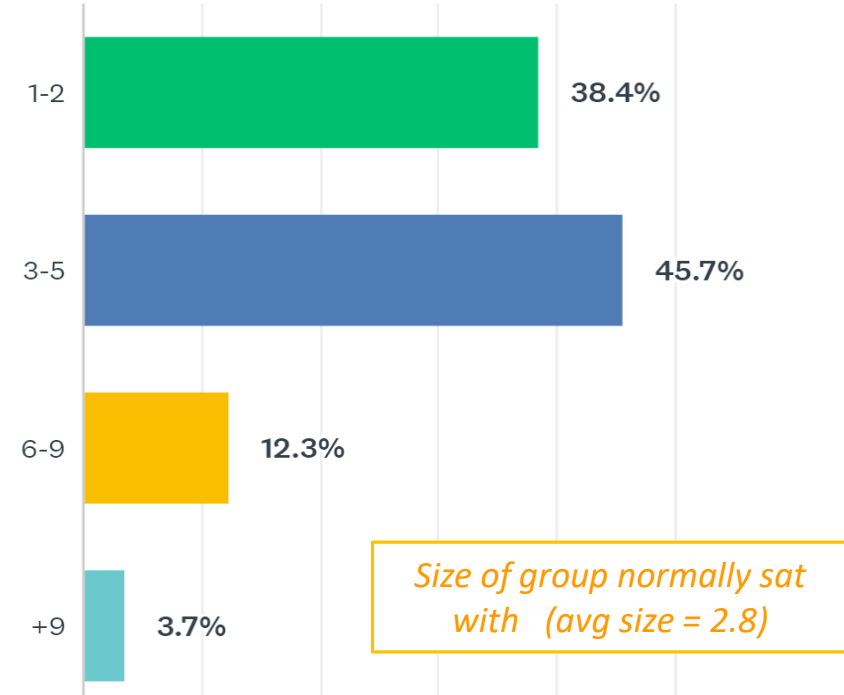
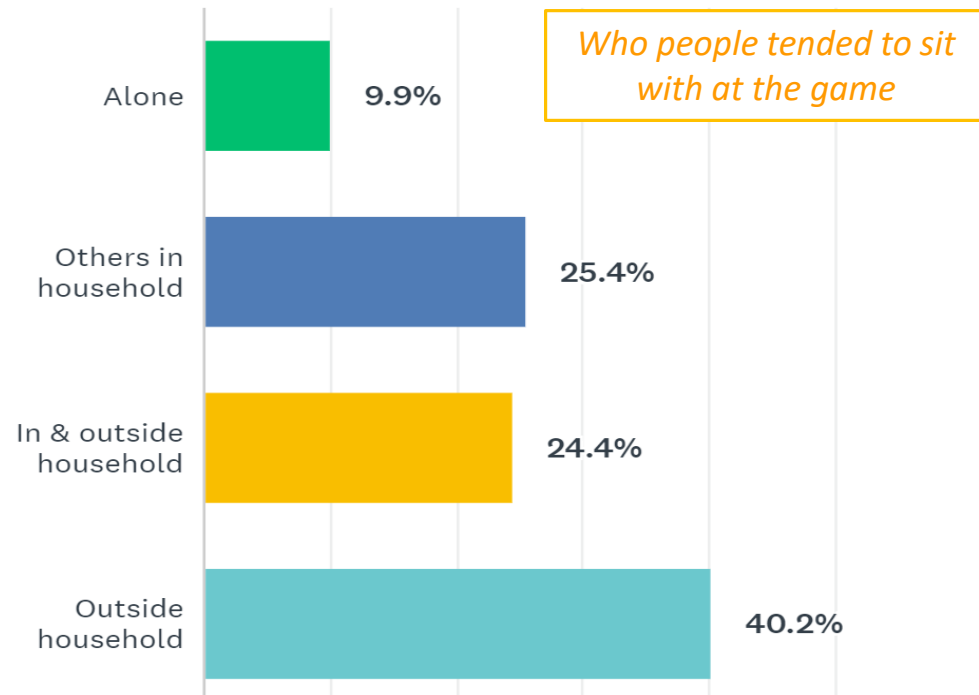
# Attendance: Many were regular match-goers last season and can't wait to get back

- Previous attendance behaviour is useful to know as it helps to compare it to likely turnout this season, in the light of Covid-19
- Over two thirds claim they were regulars at home games last year, with hardly any saying they didn't attend at all
- And a similar proportion say they are keen to return again as soon as the season starts (as long as safety precautions are in place)
- Those most excited to go back quickly are more likely to be season ticket holders and/or those who attended regularly last year (cited by 82% in both cases). Any differences by age and gender are far less marked
- Though nearly a fifth say it could take them at least three months to return, they tend to be less regular home-match goers and those admitting to being somewhat concerned about the risks
- It's encouraging to see most fan predicting that they are likely to attend as often as they did last year, and spend a similar amount (both at 79%). Indeed 14% even say they may visit a little more than before. This is offset a little by the 8% who foresee going a little less frequently, plus in terms of revenues, spend could be reduced if food and drinks sales are restricted (see later chart)



# Attendance: Most enjoy the social aspects, attending with friends/family

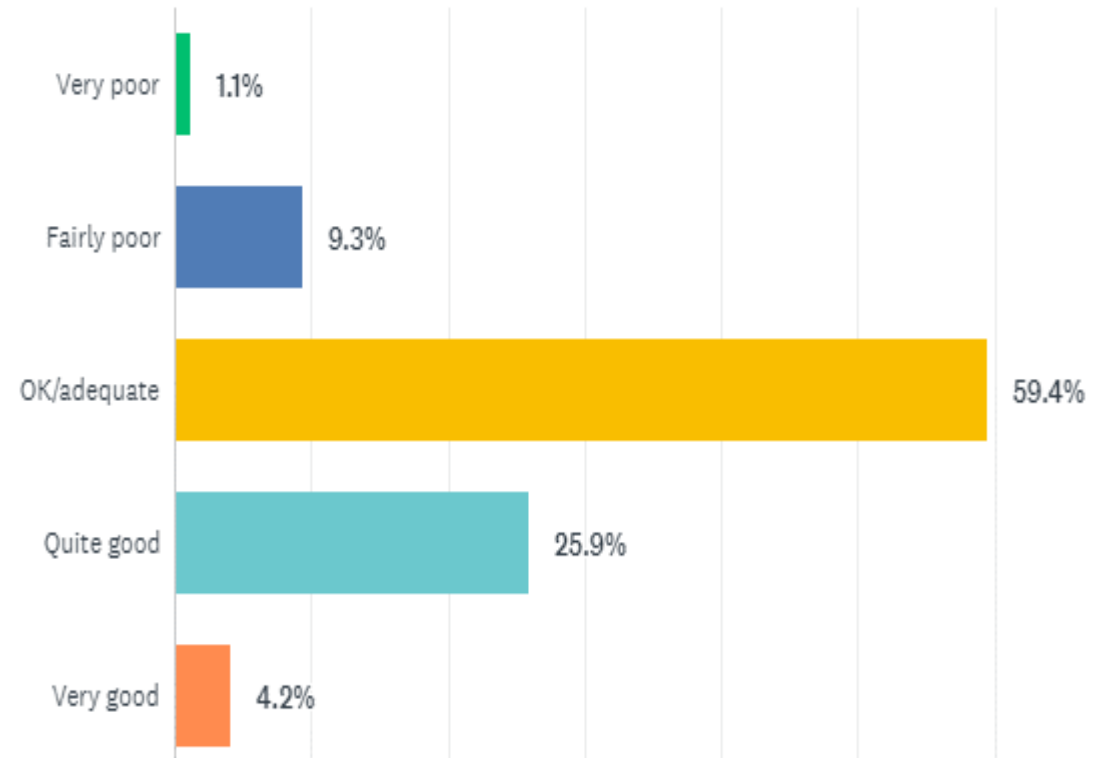
- It's no surprise to learn that part of the pleasure is to sit and enjoy the game with others (90% say this is was their tendency last season)
- Yet, concerningly, many say the group they sit with is often not from their own household, potentially creating more of a risk of transferring Covid between homes. Only a third sit with others from their house or alone, while the rest mingle with a wider group
- On average the size of group sat with is around 3 people, though a fair few attend with groups of 6 or more (16%), posing a likely challenge for the club when it comes to safety and social distancing



# Food & drink: There are opportunities to improve catering at the match

- Only 30% of fans rate the food and drink arrangements at Bloomfield road as good or very good, with a sizeable proportion feeling it is just 'OK', implying there is scope for improvement
- Indeed, this was one of the leading suggestions for enhancement by fans in last year's survey
- Asked how catering could best be improved, there appears to be no single solution, as suggestions were fairly evenly split across the following categories:
  - **Beer** (quality, range, real ale, a bottle bar, etc)
  - **Food** (healthy/vegetarian options, quality, choice and many diverse views on the best way forward with pies!)
  - **Service:** faster/less queues (esp at half-time)
- NB: Lesser mentions of **price**, but noted by some

*Perceptions of the food and drink offering at BFC*



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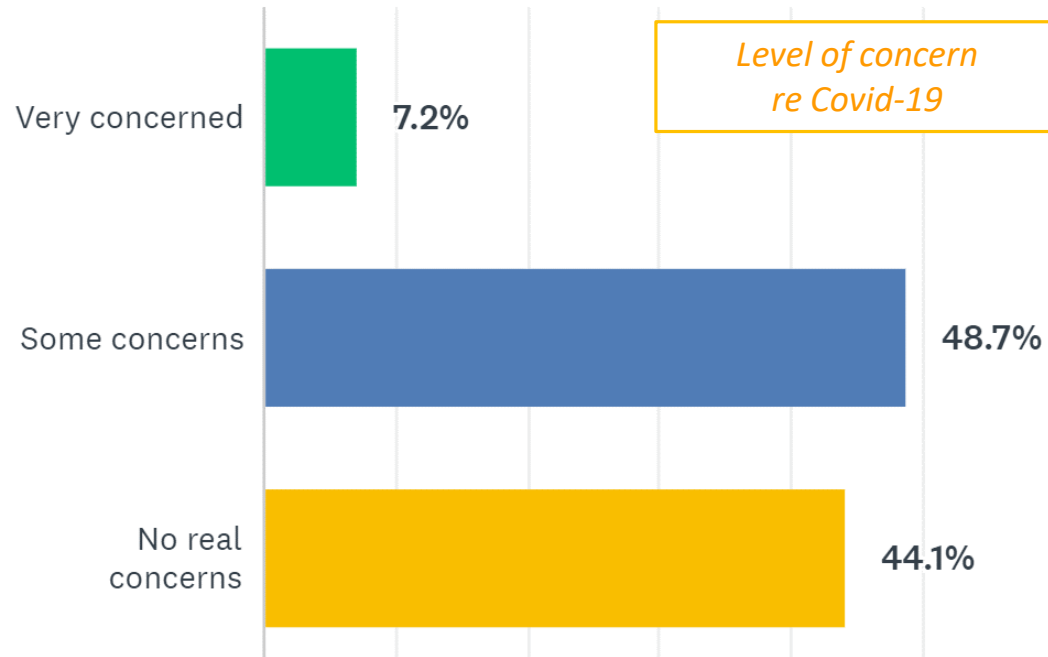
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# Future attendance: Yet attitudes err towards optimism more than over-concern

- Asked their feelings about the upcoming season and which statement best reflects their attitude, fewer than 10% were **very** concerned and unlikely to return to Bloomfield Rd for some time
- The rest were split between having **some** concerns yet still likely to attend or **no real concerns**, given that games are outdoors and they can take some precautions themselves. This suggests that with sensible precautions in place, most could be reassured



Those answering '**very concerned**' are more inclined to be:

- The over 65s (12%) – makes sense, as more vulnerable
- Those who tend to sit on their own (10%) – less understandable. One might imagine them to be at lower risk, as they are mixing with fewer people. Yet they are more concerned, while those sitting in larger groups are the least likely to be (3.5% vs average)

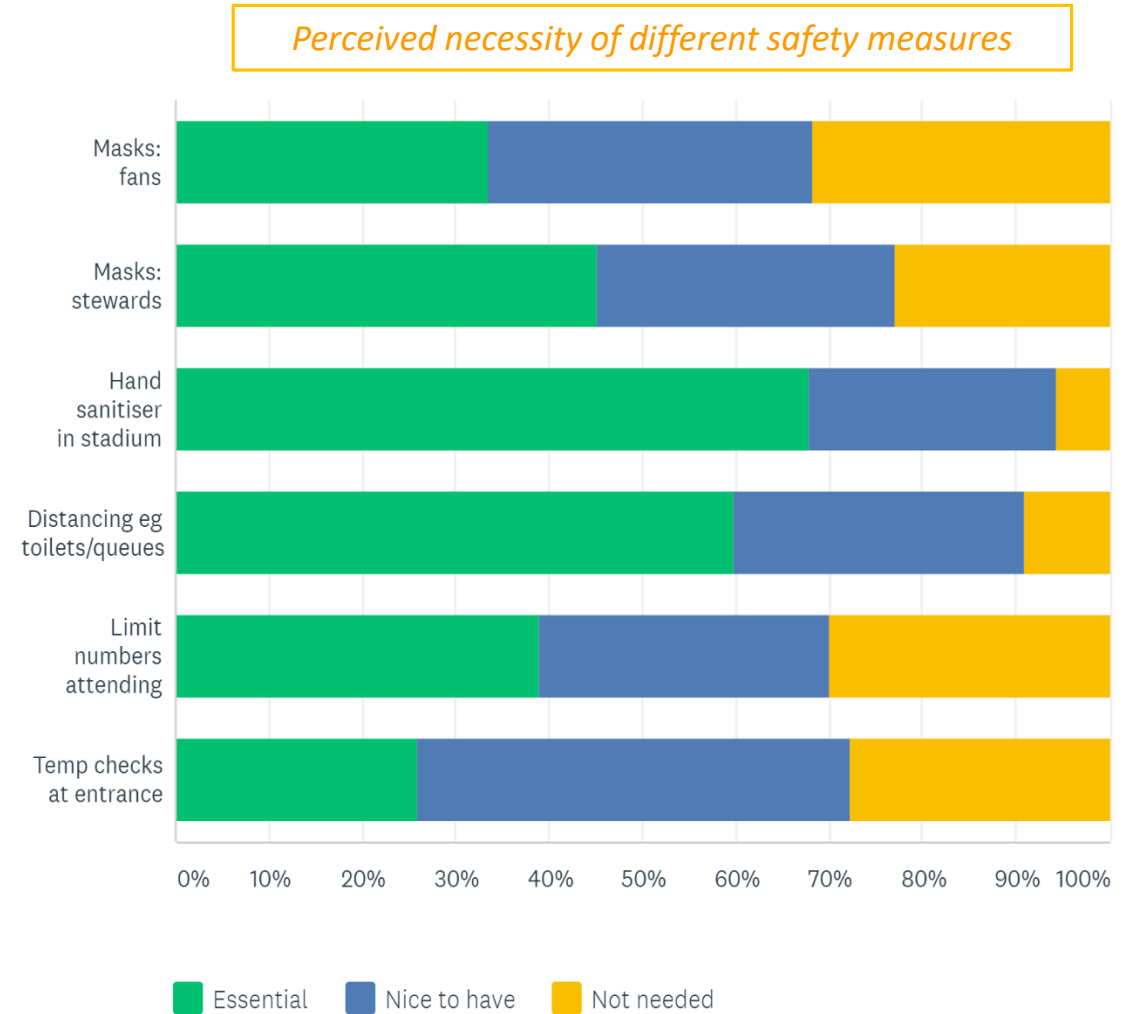
Those saying they have '**no real concerns**' tend to be more:

- Fans who've already given a vote of confidence and bought a season ticket (76%)
- Those affiliated to the Muckers (68%) – though this may be due to them tending to have a younger following



# Future attendance: Certain precautions are deemed key to safe attendance

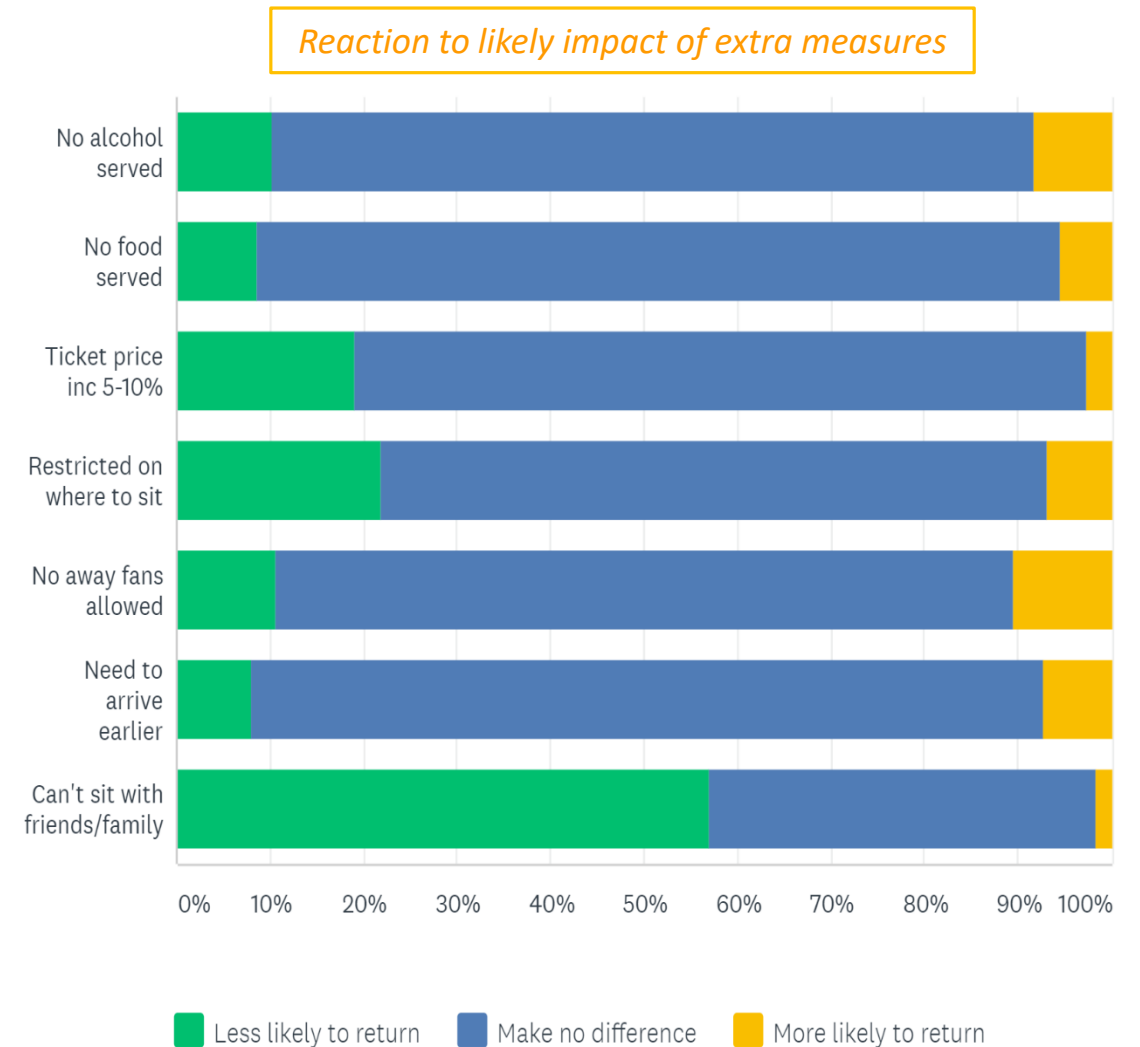
- While certain measures are deemed 'nice to have' or unnecessary by some, the majority say it's essential to see some sensible precautions before returning
- Most essential are deemed to be hand sanitiser around the grounds (say 68%) and social distancing where practical (60%)
- Temperature checks on arrival and masks for fans are thought unnecessary by many, yet still felt important by over a quarter (34% and 26% respectively)
- It's interesting to note that masks for stewards are thought to be more important than masks for fans
- Around a quarter had further ideas on what else could be done to ensure safety, the more popular being:
  - Good crowd management (eg: one way systems, opening more turnstiles, more portable toilets to avoid congestion, etc)
  - Stewards strictly enforcing the rules
  - Regular cleaning (handrails, seats, toilets, etc)





# Future attendance: Other changes may have little impact, except seat restrictions

- Asked what impact other precautions may have on fans' likelihood of returning, certain restrictions would not appear to make a massive difference
- For example, not serving food or alcohol and even increasing ticket prices to cover safety costs would not, perhaps surprisingly, deter the majority from attending
- The one decision that *could* be a major deterrent though is if fans were not allowed to sit with friends and family
- This would make 57% feel less inclined to come back. As reported earlier, most do like to sit with others, so would find this a particular blow. (NB: Results differ little across age groups)
- Conversely, having no away fans might actually make a minority more likely to return (stated by 11%)
- 8% would also be more reassured if alcohol stopped being served (rising to 23% among those who are very concerned about returning – perhaps they feel fans may pay less attention to safety once they've had a few drinks!)



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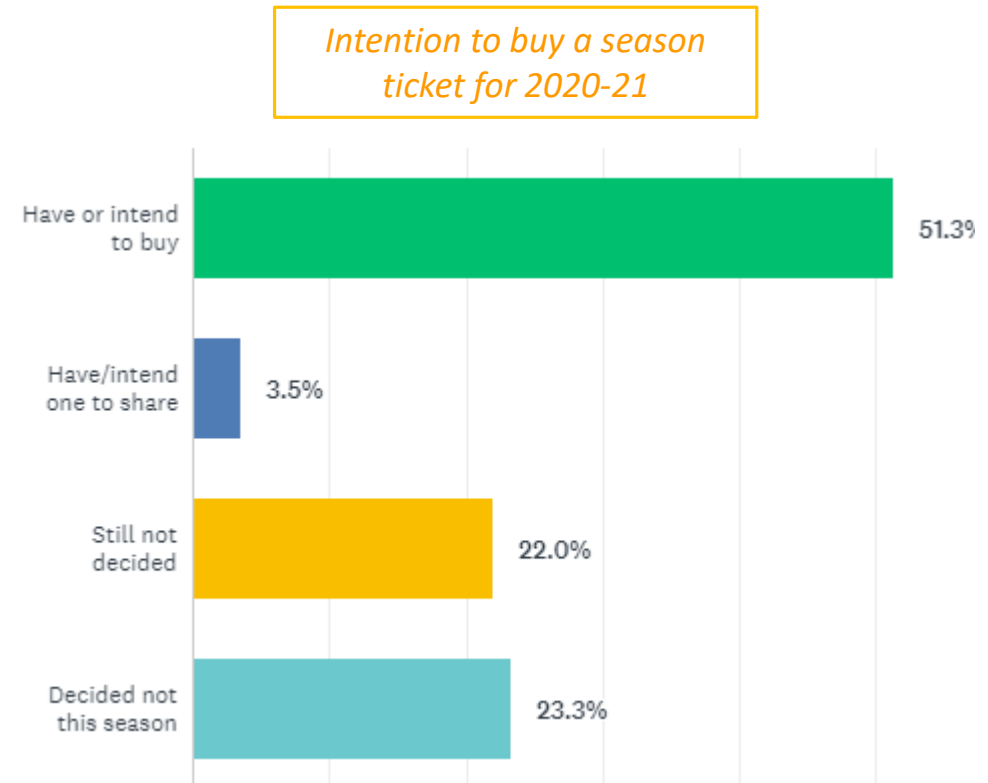
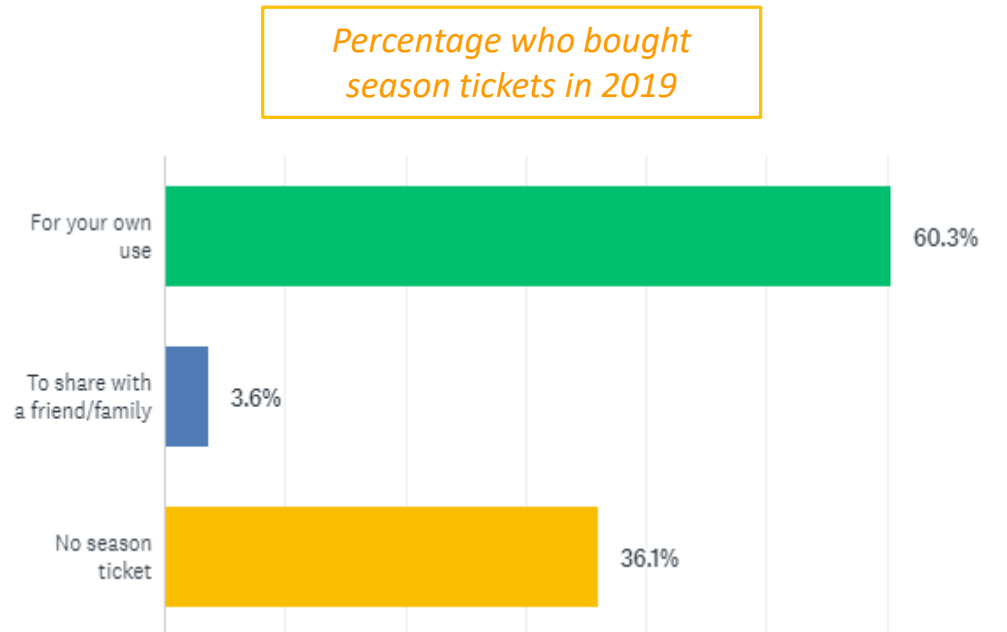
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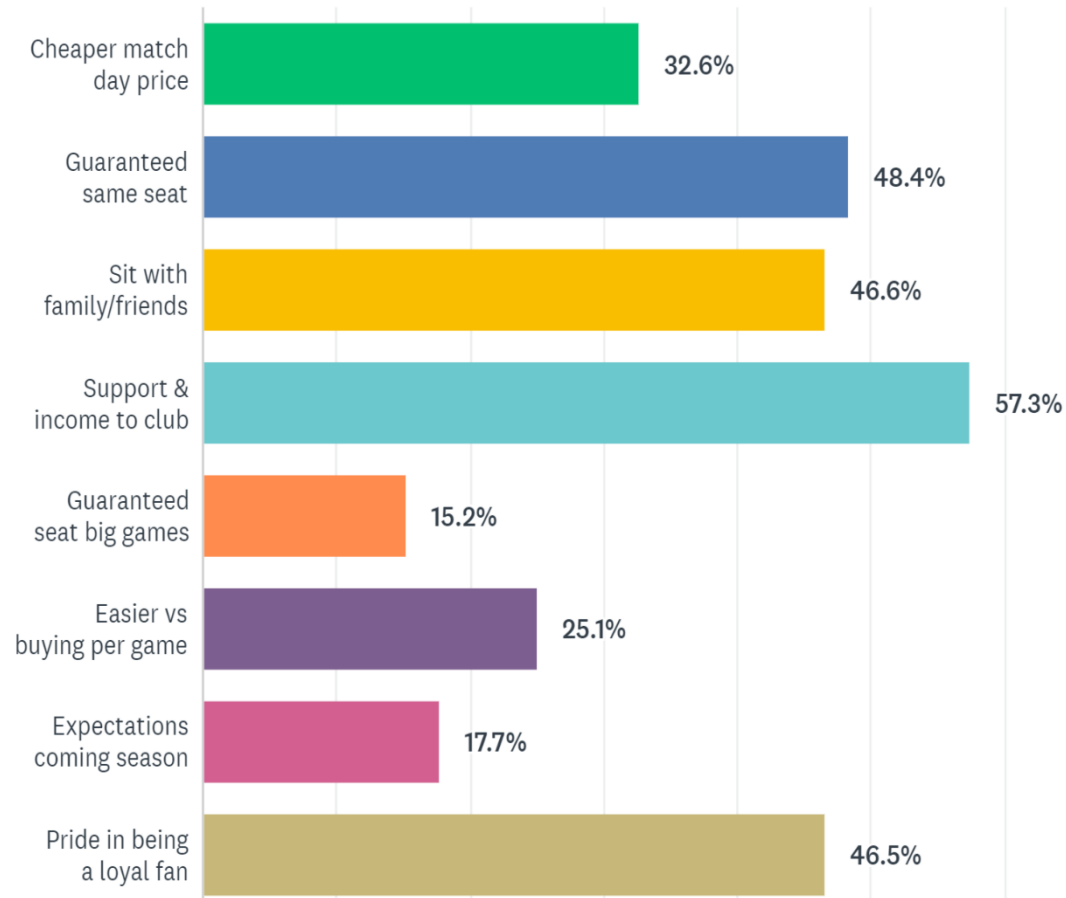
# Intention to buy season tickets: Demand for seasons tickets remains consistent

- With 51 % having already bought or intending to buy, and 22% still undecided, the demand for season tickets does not appear to be significantly diminished vs last season's behaviour. There are however still 22 % of fans undecided, a prime reason being uncertainty around Covid (see page 20). Assurances on safety measures and clarity on ticket terms in the event of future outbreaks would be helpful for fans still considering.
- NB: It is worth noting that there is no significant difference between age groups regarding intention to buy



# Why buy a season ticket: Varied reasons, but top is support & income for the club

## Key reasons cited for getting a season ticket



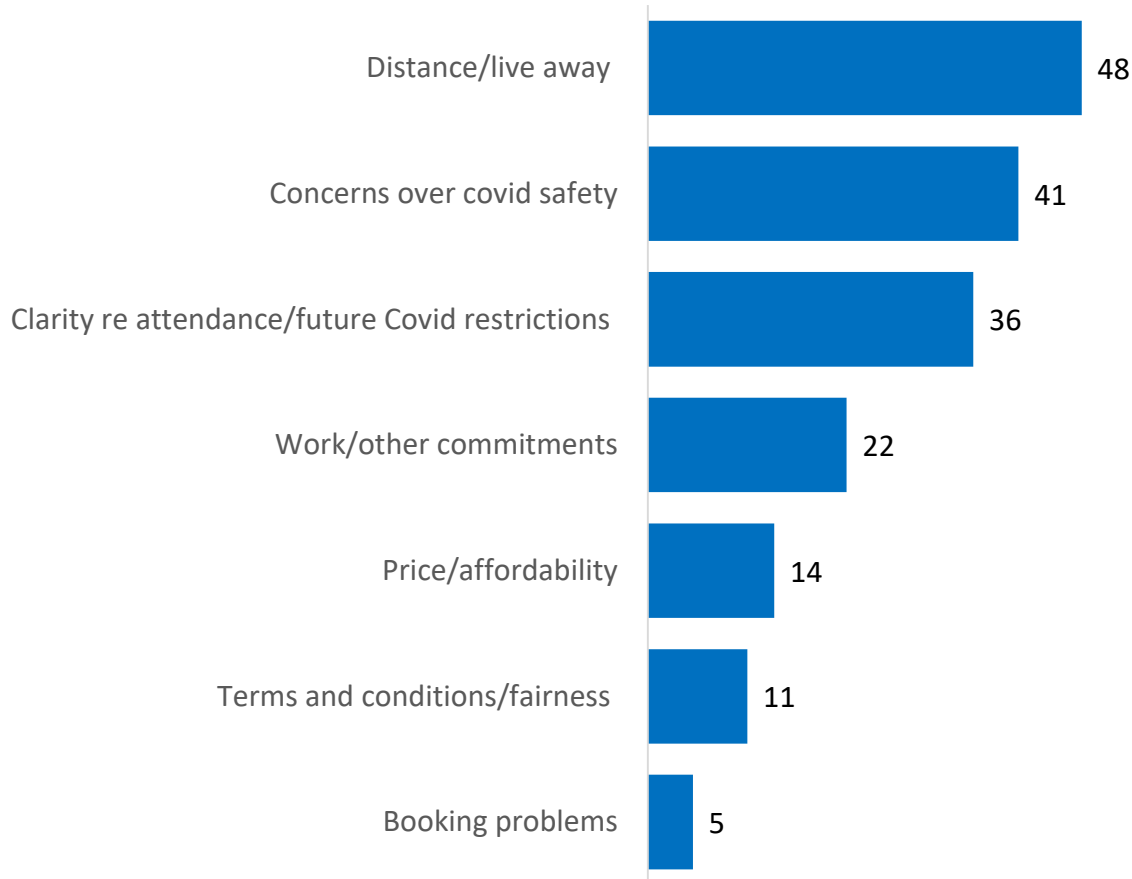
- Providing support and income to the club and pride in being a loyal fan are claimed to be key reasons for buying a season ticket, noted by over half
- This seems especially important to the under 30s, with 72% selecting 'pride in being a loyal fan' and 68% 'providing income to the club' as motivations
- Equally key for some are having the same seat and being able to sit with friends and family. In fact for the over 50s in particular, having the same seat was the most cited reason for buying a season ticket (58%)
- Obtaining a lower overall match day price seems less of a driver, but still a priority for 32% of respondents. NB: only a marginal difference by age group, with slightly fewer under 30s quoting this as a reason (28%)
- Interestingly, expectations for the coming season were less of an influence, as was the guarantee of a seat at big games

NB: up to 3 answers allowed. Those who would not consider a season ticket were excluded



# Barriers to buying a season ticket: Safety and uncertainty around Covid

*Barriers to buying a season ticket (number of mentions)*



Fans were asked if there were any personal obstacles/reasons that may be stopping them buying a season ticket. Analysis of their comments shows:

- Unsurprisingly, Covid was one of the main issues cited, for two key reasons: firstly, concern over the ability to return in a safe way (41) and secondly uncertainty about where they would stand if there are further outbreaks and restrictions (36)
- Distance (48) and other commitments (22), were also mentioned as making it uneconomical to buy a season ticket
- Price and affordability were raised by only a few fans (14) – some of whom say their personal circumstances have changed recently
- Pricing of Block M was raised several times for pensioners, while others suggested a more flexible approach for fans who want to pay in instalments
- Finally a minority claimed problems with trying to order their season tickets online



# Barriers to buying a season ticket: Covid concerns, distance & other commitments

Illustrative comments include:

*"I don't believe social distancing will be adhered to"*

*"Uncertainty as to when it will be possible to return to matches, which it is impossible to predict"*

*"My availability for all of the games, which means it can be expensive if I miss more than 3 games a season"*

*"Struggling to get to mid-week matches would make purchasing one less cost effective"*

*"Uncertainty and concern relating to future prevalence of COVID and potential transmission at mass gatherings"*

*"I live 200 miles from Blackpool so with likely travel restrictions I'm unlikely to be able to get too many matches this season"*

*"I've no idea how the whole thing is going to pan out. Restrictions may be lifted then re-introduced, like travel to Spain and France"*

*"I think lockdown will happen again in the winter and much of the season ticket value will be lost"*

*"I am concerned about C19 so I'm hoping for a vaccine before attending crowded events"*

*"I just cannot commit to a season ticket as I do not live locally anymore but do get to as many games as possible home and away"*

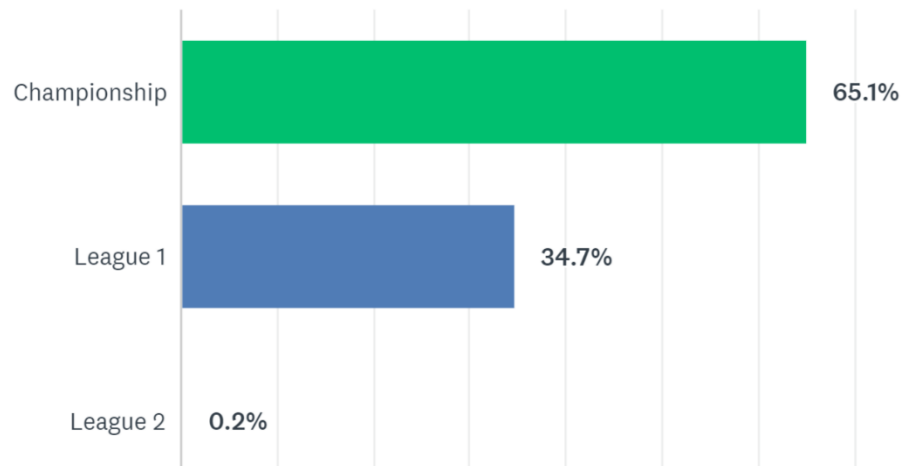
*"Due to my work patterns i can not attend on a regular basis"*



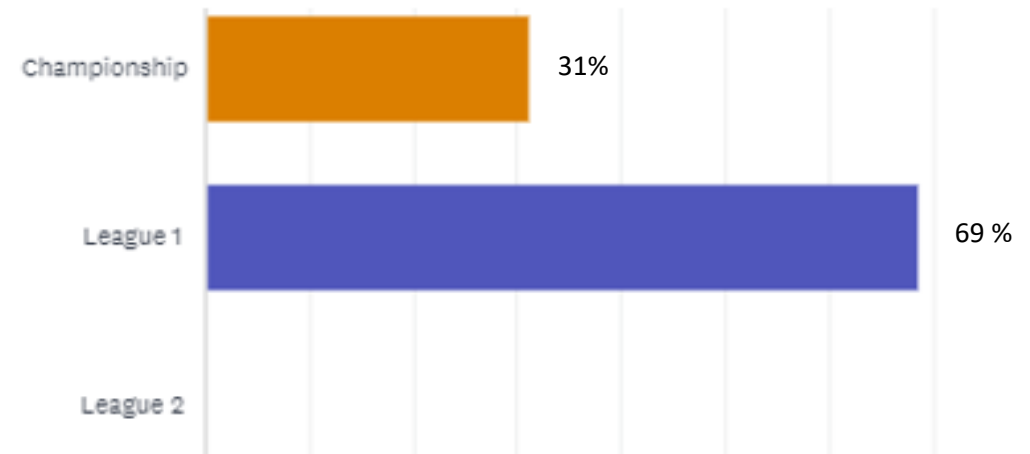
# Predictions for BFC in 12 months time: This year fans are more optimistic

- Fan expectation has risen over the last year, with 65% now believing the championship is achievable (vs 31% at the same point last year, if we look back at the previous survey)
- The level of optimism is more or less the same across all ages and fan groups
- Three respondents believe the club will be in League 2 – Owen, Karl and Sam perhaps?!

*Predictions for the coming season (from this year's survey)*



*Predictions for last season (from last year's survey)*



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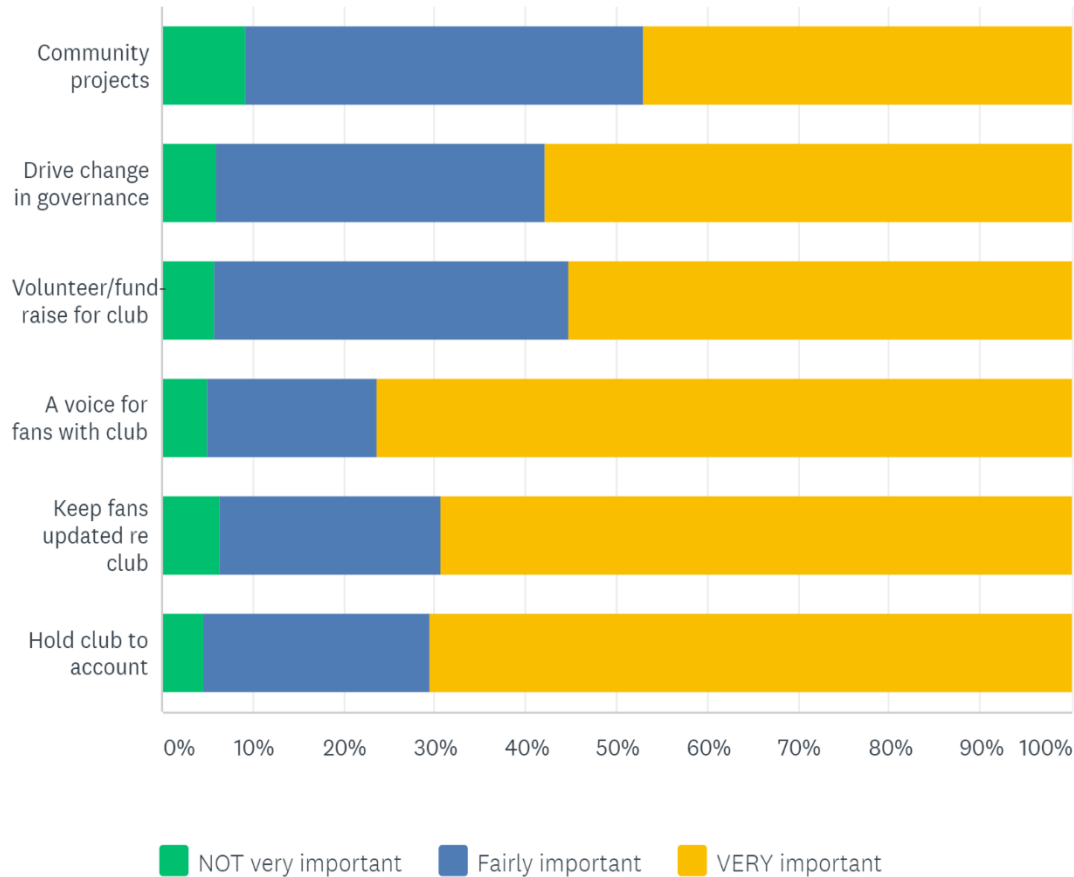
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# Key objectives for BST: Most vital is to act as a voice for fans with the club

Importance of various areas of BST focus



- Members were asked which aspects of the Trust's activities they felt were the most important objectives to focus on
- For the majority of members, all the areas within BSTs remit were rated as fairly or very important, (though support for the local community was deemed marginally less of a vital role)
- Providing a voice for fans and holding the club to account were the key activities that fans were most likely to rate as VERY important, mentioned by over three quarters in each case
- From a few of the comments made, it would seem that some feel BST's objectives and purpose are less clear now that the key goal of changing club ownership has been achieved



# Other objectives for BST: Attract the next generation, support other clubs' fans

- Members were asked there were any OTHER objectives the Trust should be focusing on. Key suggestions included:
  - Continue to campaign for representation at board level locally and nationally
  - Initiatives to attract younger supporters to Blackpool football club
  - Use of expertise to help other clubs' fans groups in trouble e.g. Wigan, Newcastle, Hull
  - Help with cheaper away travel
  - Reduce the number of supporters groups

*"Efforts to get the next generations of supporters through the gates"*

*"Input to board meetings to ensure the fan's voice is heard as an input to the future direction of the club"*

*"Have an aim of increasing under 11s support for the club"*

*"A representative seat on the Club Board of Directors was a goal, and was in place for a period following Receivership. I think that should be a nationally governed objective to help ensure transparency and legitimacy of all professional football clubs"*

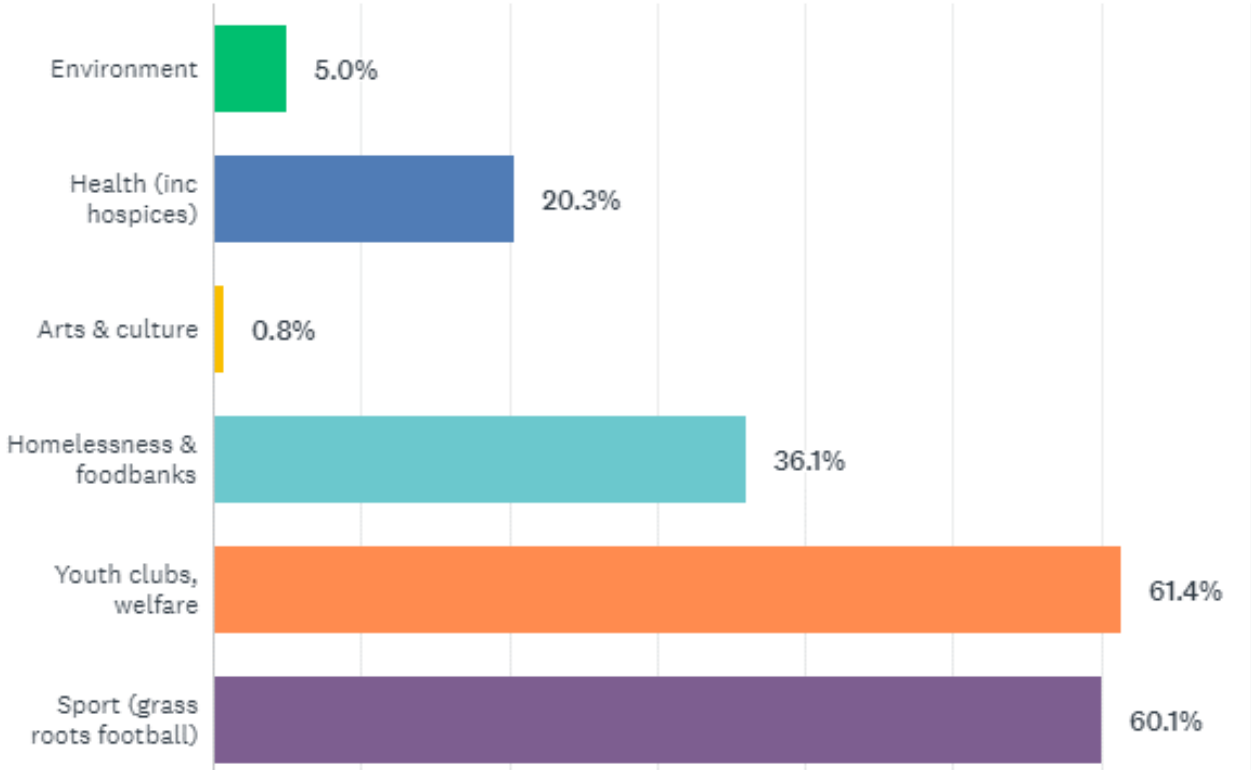
*"I think the deep experience that key people at BST have of poor governance at our club is an invaluable resource to other clubs. Tactics, strategies, interpretation of rules, etc. I hope BST can help other clubs, but I recognise it's a lot to ask."*

*"Supporting other clubs in trouble. Rally support for clubs like Wigan"*



# Community fund-raising: Youth & sport are felt to be the most appropriate causes

*Types of charity/community fund-raising deemed most appropriate for BST to support (NB: could select up to two)*



- Asked what kind of community initiatives and local charities it is most appropriate for BST to support, over 60% believe the focus should be youth or sport related, such as grass roots football
- This feedback should provide direction for the Trust, enabling them to align more closely with causes that members feel more strongly about
- Causes related to arts/culture or the environment were seen as less of an appropriate BST focus by members



# How to increase BST membership: Make it easy, communicate new objectives

- We asked non-members if there was anything that may encourage them to join or renew their support. The key themes from their comments shed some light, with key comments including:
  - I never thought about it / how do you join?
  - I forget to renew, send more reminders
  - I need more of an understanding of the benefits
  - Now the goal of removing the Oystons has been achieved, I don't feel it's necessary
  - I don't feel you need to belong to a group to be a fan
  - There are too many fans groups

*"Remind me of my renewal and make sure I read it!"*

*"So far as I know I've lapsed. Not for any reason. It's just that it slips by without reminder. I have every intention of re-joining"*

*"Not now. The objective of the original BST has been achieved"*

*"Without wishing to demean work done by BST, there are too many BFC fans groups"*

*"Not sure. It's certainly not the cost but I joined in the Oyston era and now feel the Club is where I always hoped it would be. Even though I love watching BFC there are other, non-football, organisations that I choose to be a member of. I'll always be grateful to BST though"*

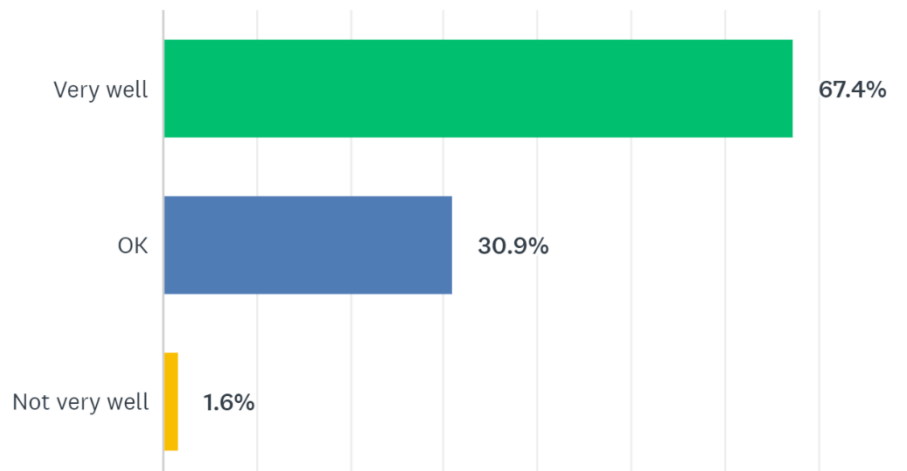
*"I never had any correspondence from BST, not a criticism just being honest. I probably would if I received a letter or an email."*



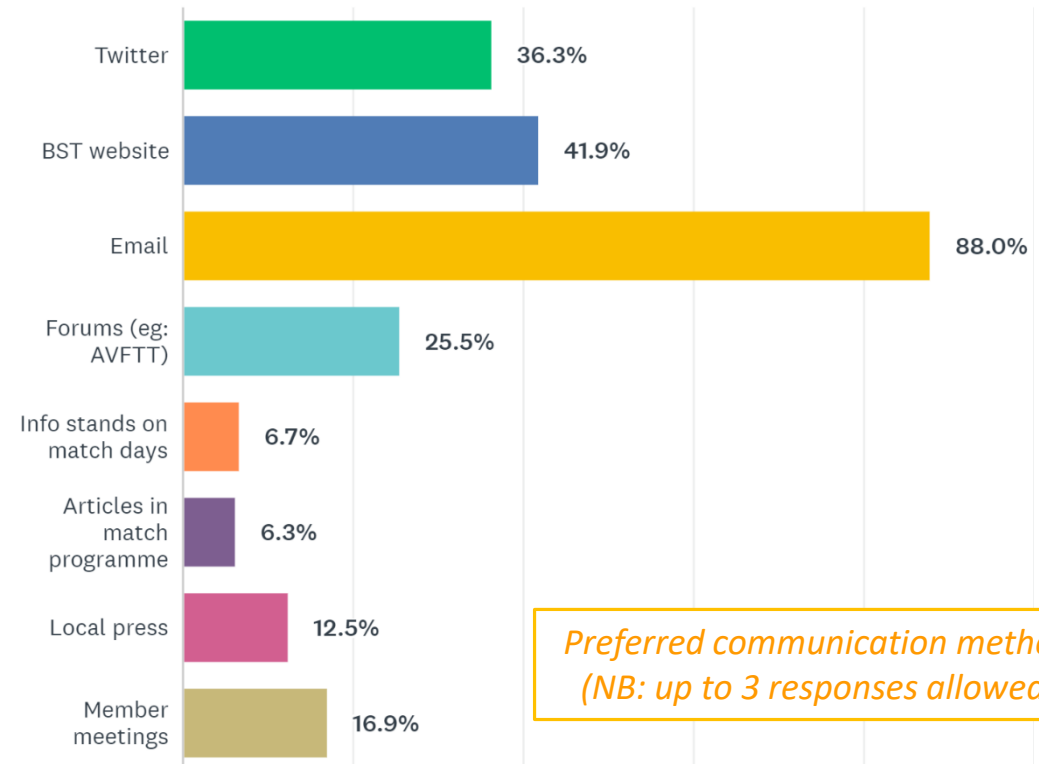
# BST communication with members : E-mail is the most preferred method

- BST is deemed to have very good engagement with its members, say over two thirds. The rest find it 'OK', with very few saying communication is poor, though a minority would like more engagement, eg: more updates, member meetings or a fanzine, etc
- E-mail seems by far the most favoured method to engage, selected by 88% of members. The BST website and Twitter are the next most popular options, demonstrating that in order to communicate with the highest number of fans with key messages, using these three channels should achieve the widest reach (though may miss out the less tech-savvy)

## Perceptions of how BST communicates with its members



NB: Questions in this section were only asked of BST members



Preferred communication method  
(NB: up to 3 responses allowed)



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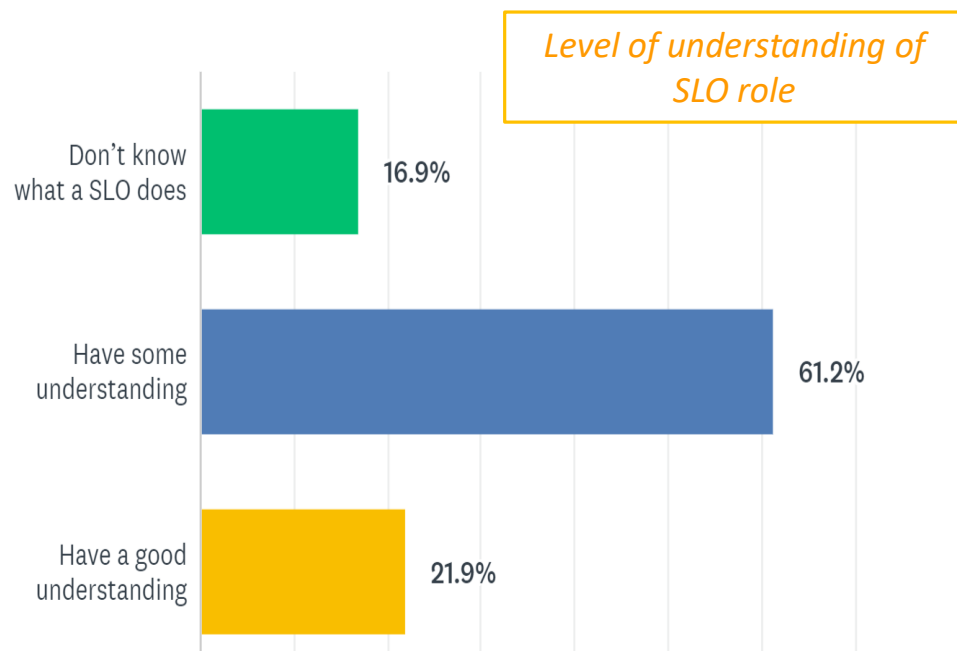
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# SLOs: The majority appear to have some understanding of the SLO role

- A minority (20%) believe they have a good grasp of what the SLO does, while the bulk of supporters feel they have some understanding, with 17% not knowing what the role involves at all



- Some feel there is room to increase awareness, provide more regular updates and generally engage with fans more
- Asked for ideas on how communication could be improved, the most frequent comment was that there could be more information/a link on the BFC website (54 mentions)
- Other suggestions (in rough order) include:
  - Social media/Twitter (45)
  - Email (25)
  - Gazette (15)
  - Newsletter (13)
  - BST website (13)

*“Have a section on the website about the role and its purpose, along with regular updates, successes, etc ... a suggestion box on there, which is read by the SLO”*

*“More articles highlighted on social media and message boards ... Better interaction - there is a bit of arrogance towards fans in general. The club think they don't need to engage and win over new supporters”*



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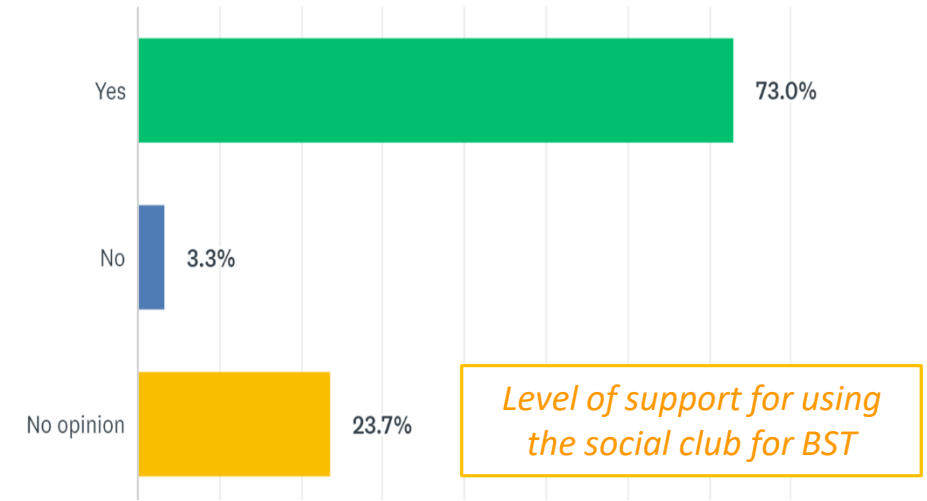
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  - Reactions to suggested social club





## Supporters' social club: This idea was generally well received by fans

- When the suggestion of a social club close to the ground was mentioned, most were receptive to the idea of this being a potential base for BST member meetings and other events. Only 3% were against it
- Fans claim a willingness to use the facility, with around two thirds saying they'd be likely to go there at least once a season on match days, and around a quarter claiming they might even visit over ten times, though of course in reality this is likely to depend on the quality of the beer, the service and the atmosphere!
- Patronage is likely to be much lower outside of match days though, with three quarters claiming they'd be unlikely to visit when there is no game on. Only a hardcore of around 1 in 20 predict they would still go at such times
- There were plenty of inventive suggestions about how a room at the social club could be decorated to reflect previous struggles, with banners, scarves, photos of protests, etc. Predictably, a few of the ideas are unprintable, in terms of how some would like to see the Oystons depicted!
- Yet a few prefer to see more uplifting pictures or feel it's better to look ahead to the future rather than to keep being reminded of the past



*"A picture of the guy on the mobility scooter who invaded the pitch!"*

*"Photos and assorted memorabilia from the protests emphasising our solidarity and camaraderie"*

*"A few amusing Oyston anecdotes, but my main thought is to move on ... Why give them airtime. It was a dark time for the club – we should look to the future"*





THANK YOU

BST COMMITTEE

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