

Paul Ellix – STAR Election Statement



You may be wondering, “What, why him again? Didn’t he stand last year?”

The answer to both questions is yes, I did. The reason that I’m standing again is that a third of the elected members of the Society Board have to resign each year. It’s normally the longest serving members, but if the number that has to resign is not divisible by three then the Board has to decide the number of Board members that have to resign, to make it around a third. So, I volunteered to resign and stand again.

So, at the risk of boring you, as it’s largely what I said last year, if you elect me, you’ll get:

Someone who is passionate about STAR, who thinks that supporters’ organisation and collectivism is the best way to ensure that the powers that run our game and own our clubs do it for the benefit of the game and of the supporters and not for their benefit.

I believe wholeheartedly that no supporter of Reading FC should feel that they are excluded from STAR; that STAR is irrelevant to them. If they haven’t heard of STAR or they don’t know what it is doing and why and how it benefits them, then STAR is clearly is not doing its primary job.

STAR’s Board is democratically accountable to its members as well as having an overall responsibility to all of the club’s supporters. It needs to ensure that it engages with and takes account of its membership and listens to and engages with all aspects of the club’s supporters.

As far as its relationship with football club, STAR should be a critical friend – not afraid to say when the club is wrong, but also praising and supporting the club when it is right. It should never, ever break the club’s bad news for it. STAR needs to be the supporters’ voice to the club. It needs to ensure that it remains relevant, timely and authoritative.

STAR should not just be supporting the men’s first team in the EFL, it should be actively supporting the Academy teams, the under 23s, the WSL team and, crucially, the work of the Community Trust; they’re all intrinsically important aspects of our football club.

STAR is a Community Benefit Society – every activity that it undertakes and every decision that it makes should have a beneficial community impact to it. This goes from its sponsoring activities through to travel and publicity: when STAR acts there should be an overriding beneficial community aspect to what it is doing. It needs to think; if we do this, how does it benefit the community? If it doesn’t can it?

If anything, the Covid-19 emergency has proved that increasing the use of technology is vital. Supporters should be able to open a phone app or the website and see what STAR is doing or what

STAR thinks and why. Card payments and on-line membership and travel booking are a must and should be the norm, not by exception. It is highly unlikely that we will be able to operate in the traditional way going forward. The STAR Base does not lend itself to social distancing and in any case, this brings the opportunity to ensure that we move forward with technology.

STAR must strive to be more outward facing. Board members should not be anonymous; their pictures should be on notice boards and the website, together with their seat locations. Activities should be public. Decisions and opinions should be transparent. STAR should be the supporters' representatives in the stands.

STAR should have an authoritative opinion and be commenting on everything significant that the club does and what's going on in the wider football world. If the club releases a story STAR should have view on it and that view should be public. When the media want a comment from supporters they should naturally come to STAR.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this election statement, which I hope will be one of at least eight that are put forward by people wanting to be on STAR's Board. Why at least eight? Well, there are seven vacancies and eight people standing will mean that there is a competitive election this year. If new people, with new ideas and different perspectives are putting themselves forward, they should be encouraged (and elected). Enthusiasm, new ideas and belief in what you stand for are vital. Without new ideas STAR will quickly become moribund, unrepresentative and irrelevant to the club and its supporters.