

# HULL CITY SUPPORTERS' TRUST

## 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Registered as Tigers Co-operative Ltd. under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965 – 78

This annual report summarises the work of the Hull City Supporters' Trust during the year March 2016 to February 2017.

It will be presented to the shareholders of the Trust at its Annual General Meeting on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2017, as well as being published on the Trust's website.

The structure of this report is as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Chairman's Report
3. Secretary's Report
4. Treasurer's Financial Report
5. Financial Statement (31/12/16)

**Hull City Supporters' Trust** is the trading name of Tigers Co-operative Limited, a Community Benefit Society registration number 29021R.  
**The registered address is**  
 HCST, Suite 2, 117-119 Walkergate, Beverley, HU17 9BP.

**Elected Trust Board Members (8):** G Bielby, (Chairman), R Richardson, (Vice-Chairman), A Hemingway (Treasurer), G Cannon, S Dyson, C Dyson, P Walton, P Fleming  
**Co-opted Trust Board Members (2):** G Whitaker, S Pye  
**Secretary:** R Mathers

**The Hull City Supporters' Trust Partners are:**

Angel Beauty, Aspecs Opticians, Brookes Menswear, Circle 87 Café, Co-op Energy, Cross Solutions, Dinostar, EasyPeasyPrint, Essence Holistics, Finesse Internet, Frying Farmer Fish & Chips (Aldbrough), Harpers Fish & Chips (Beverley), Hemingway Bailey Ltd, Hornsea Walking Football Club, Leasing for Business, Nudge Websites, Photo Express, Rob McFadyen ADI, Ska & Soul, TDN Automotive, Wine On-Line, William Gemmell Social Club .



## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second HCST AGM, (*yes under the current guise of HCST we were "2" in January 2017!*). However, don't be fooled by those that believe we are a young naïve organisation. We are far from this as I hope we will demonstrate this afternoon!

When fellow board member Phil Walton and I attended a Supporters Direct meeting with other Premier League and Championship Supporters Trusts recently, it was interesting to note that HCST, (*thanks to the foresight of our predecessors who established the Tigers Co-operative on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1999*), is the oldest Supporters Trust in the top two divisions!

We welcomed four new directors this time last year, all of whom have made valuable contributions during the past 12 months, as have the two co-opted directors Steve Pye and Greg Whittaker.

It is worth remembering that all your board are volunteers and also passionate City fans like yourselves, who also firmly believe that HCST can make a difference for the benefit of you the shareholders & the wider Hull City fan base.

Before we commence the meeting, I would like to express my thanks to the two retiring directors namely Alan Hemingway and Cath Dyson. Both have decided that their extensive work commitments prevent them devoting the time and energy they feel their roles deserve. It's with regret that they step down and I and my fellow directors will miss their valuable contributions. Alan Hemingway has been with the organisation from inception, steering us as an excellent Treasurer through our transformation from a single-issue group in "CTWD" into a full Supporter Trust status following the merger with the Tigers Co-operative.

I mentioned earlier our legal entity was established on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1999, so in fact last December we turned 18, so you could say we have reached maturity!

There are still some Hull City fans who simply believe HCST is just CTWD under a new name.....how wrong they are!

CTWD was a single-issue group, set up to fight the ridiculous name change application over three years ago. In succeeding it captured hearts and minds of the "Football Family" both nationally and internationally. CTWD had a single focus and more importantly had an end date.

HCST is, (hopefully), an evergreen organisation. We are here to represent Hull City Supporters with both the Club and the local community. We have multiple objectives and must react to the environment in which we exist to achieve our aims and fully represent the supporters, but we need to appeal to more of them and ideally need to grow within the wider Hull City fan base.

Over the last year, we've grown and been successful. That's not to say everything we've attempted to achieve has been a success but as I hope you'll see today, we are moving forward on several fronts and making a real difference.

I mentioned we are a mature organisation compared to other Supporters Trusts, but we also act in a mature, responsible and business like fashion. We've made great progress and gained recognition within with our affiliated organisations Supporters Direct and the Football Supporters Federation. Long may this continue, as I certainly intend to ensure HCST continues to contribute for our members & shareholders, with the football club, in the local community and with those influencing the game Nationally.

Enjoy the meeting

**Geoff Bielby - Chairman**



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Following the last AGM I was elected Chairman by your Board on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016. At the same meeting, it was unanimously agreed to elect a new position of Vice Chairman & Ryan Richardson took on that role. Ryan had acted as interim HCST Chairman following Mark Gretton's resignation in late 2015. He's been a great support and I think that role has proved very worthwhile.

**MARCH – APRIL** - An interesting indoctrination for me as Chairman, with the initial details presented by Hull City to the Fans Working Group of the then proposed new Membership Scheme. Rob Harmer and myself attended that meeting and signed the non-disclosure agreement required by the club. Like most attendees, we were cautiously positive but we were not given prices or a launch programme. We were invited to submit comments which we did, but these were largely ignored by the club.

The HCST "Scrap the Scheme Campaign" began with an overwhelming display of Red Cards at the Brentford game on April 26<sup>th</sup>. It was an idea I came up with having seen Charlton fans the previous Saturday on the TV. We were needlessly fearful it may flop, as it was a huge success and received wide acclaim and drew attention to the campaign. The only problem was that I and a couple of other directors missed it! *(We were too busy giving out red cards outside the ground and late to our seats, I arrived in E7, via the gents at kick off. For me it really was like a father missing the birth of his child!)*

**MAY – JULY** - So to Wembley, promotion to the Premier League and the summer for a well-earned rest and for HCST to regroup. My wife was expecting me to be less involved in football, not a chance of that I'm afraid!

In mid-June I was contacted by a senior member of the US consortium headed by Peter Grieve. Many details were discussed and commitments made should they be successful in purchasing the club but in mid-July they gave up trying to achieve a satisfactory price with the clubs' current owners.

21<sup>st</sup> July, I attended the inaugural FSF led Premier League fans meeting with Richard Scudamore and his team at the Premier League in London. There were long discussions over 'Concessions' and questions on how, under the new membership scheme, Hull City can charge young and senior supporters adult prices?

The debate continues over seven months later! In summary, the Premier League cannot enforce their own Rule 8, which states Concessions should be offered to younger and senior supporters. Hull City are in effect exploiting a legal loophole that we are trying to close. HCST are working on changing the wording of this rule with widespread support from other clubs, the Football Supporters Federation & Supporters Direct.

22<sup>nd</sup> July Steve Bruce leaves the club. If half of what I learnt and shared with the HCST Board in June from the local media and the US consortium was true, then I'm not surprised the managers' position was untenable!

**AUGUST** - a new season, a new potential owner, a new protest campaign leading with "AskEhab", which was HCST's tribute to Steve Bruce after his now infamous pre-season interview with BBC's Matt Dean.

On the "Glorious" 12<sup>th</sup>, *(the eve of the opening day victory over 'Champions' Leicester City)*, I'm contacted by a senior club official who stated he's impressed with our stance and claims HCST will be the recommended "go to organisation" following completion of the sale to new owners, to help mend the fractured relationship between club administration and its supporters.

Fellow Board Member Graham Cannon and I are interviewed by Rob Palmer for Sky Sports Soccer Saturday, there's a great piece in the Times written by George Caulkin and other articles that week in The Mirror, Daily Mail and The Guardian. Ryan Richardson is interviewed live on Radio 5Live and Graham Cannon, (n.b. Media name 'Barrow') is interviewed on Look North. *(Matt Dean will cringe I've mentioned that again, he's so apologetic the BBC got Graham's surname wrong on the caption!)*

All this media coverage was due to our campaign over the lack of Concession tickets and how our club was mis-managed. Steve Bruce walking out and a total lack of new players leaving a paper-thin squad were also highlighted.



**SEPTEMBER** - HCST have a high profile locally especially thanks to support from the local media. James Hoggarth, (*Radio Humberside*), told me he'd had a call from James Mooney at the club asking "If Geoff Bielby is on the BBC payroll". Surely a sign we were getting under someone's skin perhaps? (*I'm still waiting for a pay cheque anyway!*)

Also in September, the Premier League state the Dai Yonng Consortium fail the "fit and proper person test". That news broke at the late Ron Blacks funeral, (*former chairman of the Hull City Supporters Club*). Assem Allam to his credit attended the service and I was introduced to him. Ill health or not he was charming and told several of us the news from the Premier League, including David Burns, (*Radio Humberside*), who broke the news, so we also spread it widely. Mr Mooney was on the phone the phone to me again whilst I was having a beer at the wake. It was his leaving do that evening and I was pleased we kept him busy until the end. (*He tells me he's enjoying life at Leeds United now*)

**OCTOBER - DECEMBER** - The club's new Marketing and Communications manager, (Tom Rowell), begins work but it took us four weeks before myself and Phil Walton met him.

He was too busy to meet us until 15<sup>th</sup> November, a few days after a superb article in the HDM by James Smailes with an opinion piece by our own Greg Whittaker, (*also now of Sky Soccer AM fame*), on overstated attendance figures for the Southampton game was published! (*Phil and I got a meeting very quickly after that!*)

The meeting followed our attendance at an FSF PL Club fans meeting in London the previous evening. At that meeting we got unanimous support from all other 19 clubs and the FSF to press the Premier League for an amendment to their Rule 8 on concessions. Ideally to express a percentage concession based on adult prices but if we only get a one word inserted "price" concessions it closes the legal loophole Hull City are currently exploiting.

I'm sometimes asked what about disabled concessions and that's only to be expected. The club removed them several years ago, and I believe they should be reinstated and we won't stop pressing for that. Having said that, Hull City are not unique in making that move. However, City are unique and challenging a PL rule with the issue of general concessions. That makes it an easier objective to have.

It is a salutary lesson though that if fans don't object to a change that affects a small number of supporters and come out in support of them even though they may not be directly affected, it can be a first step to a bigger change. (*Sadly in my opinion, far too many Hull City fans still fit into the "I'm alright Jack mentality" and won't back those adversely affected. That's exactly why HCST exists.*)

November also brought out the flawed BBC Ticket price survey. "Hallelujah - Hull City have the cheapest adult season passes in the PL!" This is true if fans sit in the cheaper zones but please explain why we also have 6000 empty seats each home game unless we play Manchester Utd, Liverpool Chelsea etc? (*We all know the answer!*)

In December, we also raised our campaign against the club Membership Scheme by taking out Billboard advertising on Anlaby Road. Again, a twist which highlighted ticket prices, especially young future supporters, under the Membership Scheme.

As the year ends, HCST support a community project by backing Blokes United with a shirt sponsorship deal. It's an organisation very close to my heart as many will know! (*I'd like to formally thank the whole board for supporting me on that initiative. All publicity about men's mental health can save lives and is very much needed.*)

**JANUARY** - Mike Phelan is gone having tried his best and replaced by relatively unknown Marco Silva.

The 'magic' of the FA Cup and our decision to call for a boycott of our 3<sup>rd</sup> round tie with Swansea City. This was something I personally was against, but following prolonged debate by the HCST Board, democracy ruled and we reluctantly went ahead. As a generator of media attention, it was a big success. Another example of poor marketing, the club managed to shoot themselves in the foot closing the North and West Upper stands. That move alone forced many of those supporters affected to join the boycott.



We asked fans boycotting to donate the ticket money to two charities, Mind HEY and 'Launch Pad', (*probably better known at the High Flyers Trampoline Club*) Just under £1000 was raised and split between them both.

Thanks must also go to the 'Swans Trust' who supported us and boycotted their Directors box seat on the day. (*Yes - the Swans Trust have a supporter representative on the main club board!*)

To end January David Conn of the Guardian saw, (*with the sale of Jake Livermore and Robert Snodgrass*), that my calls for an investigation into the club's finances were merited. His article is worth a read if you haven't seen it.....especially for those fans who still think Assem Allam has put £millions into our club!

**FEBRUARY** - More of the same really. Marco Silva has got the team playing better and some fans believe all is well. But the problems at the club have not changed. There are still no concessionary prices for our Junior and Senior supporters, there is still no imminent sale to new owners and there is still no meaningful dialogue by the club with ourselves or other supporter's groups.

HCST are working away in the background with the FSF, other clubs and the also the Premier League directly.

Six months after meeting Richard Scudamore and his team I recently wrote chasing an update on the Concessions issues.

This is the reply I received on 3rd March.

***"The Premier League is aware of Hull City Supporters Trust's views in relation to the Club's ticketing policy and availability of Concessions. The matter is still progressing and the League will respond to the Trusts letter when further information is available to share."***

I've also been in constant dialogue with Tom Rowell, (*who is now the Marketing, Communications and Ticketing Manager*). He's still not quite understood where we are coming from and doesn't acknowledge our issues. I suspect he's not being allowed to by "the son of the Chairman" but we will prevail.....eventually!!

Owners, Managers and players come and go. Only the supporters are a constant at a football club and ours is no exception.

Many City supporters may not now attend home games but they've never stopped supporting our club and I can assure you that the Hull City Supporters Trust never will!

**Geoff Bielby, HCST Chairman**



## SECRETARY'S REPORT

I must begin by passing on my thanks and gratitude to Mike Scott, (previous Secretary), for the quality of the handover we completed as I began the role back in June 2016, which certainly gave me a solid foundation to build upon.

Like most Hull City supporters, I have had to cope with the sheer joy of the most successful period of **our** club's history in recent years, alongside the sheer frustration of the various proposals and schemes that the current club owners have tried to enforce during this time. I was a regular Trust member but noticed in the weekly newsletter at the end of last season that a new Secretary was required and eventually decided to express an interest. It all developed quickly from there!

The role of Secretary was something I went into knowing that the demands on my 'spare' time would be high on occasions, but I've tried to get into a routine to combine these duties with my demanding day job.

Since taking on the role, it has made me realise the depths in the structure and organisation of the Trust that the original board members documented, with numerous rules and policies in place to ensure we work in a constructive and respectful manner.

There are bi-monthly board meetings to prepare agenda's and minutes for, (*as well as ensuring that the Board Members remain within our rules and constitution when the meeting debate gets lively!*), and of course today's AGM and this Annual Report. I also have 2 e-mail accounts that I need to administer and ensure that the board are aware of any communications from the Football Supporters Federation, (FSF), Supporters Direct, (SD), local and national media organisations and of course from our expanding number of members with responses swiftly arranged where required.

We also have considerable financial obligations and returns to complete, (*inc the Financial Conduct Authority*), to ensure that every single penny of the membership fees and merchandise sales received has an audit trail and is used for the benefit of Hull City Supporters or the local community.

However, one of the most rewarding parts of the role is processing new or renewal Trust membership packs, as it's extremely important that our membership base continues to grow if we are to achieve our longer-term goals together.

As you can imagine, the debate amongst the board members as campaign activity is planned and media/press exposure is arranged can at times be extensive, but their level of personal effort and commitment to ensure the best interests of our supporters are represented is extremely passionate.

There are numerous initiatives and projects that the Trust is either involved with or have been approached about, but we continue to look to our members to let us know what's important to them and are always open to new suggestions and feedback on areas you feel would benefit from Trust involvement. (*We'd love to hear more from our members – write to me!*)

Looking forward to the year ahead, I believe that as a Trust, we still have some work to do to convince some of our fellow Hull City supporters, that we are more than just a 'protest group' and that we are genuinely determined to develop meaningful dialogue & communication channels directly with the club and serve all supporters and the local community as best we can.

Irrespective of what Division the team begins the 2017/18 season playing in, the relationship between the club and the increasing number of disengaged supporters of all ages needs major repair, especially before an entire generation of younger supporters are lost at such critical ages. Please be assured that the HCST Board has always offered an open invitation to the club's owners and senior management for such conversations to take place and continues to do so.

In summary, it's been a pleasure and an honour to be the Secretary of our Trust in the past 8 months and I look forward to a busy year ahead, where hopefully I process an increased number of membership packs, (*Junior, 1 year, 3 year or Lifetime*), whilst guiding and advising the board on our constitution and various rules as we become the preferred Hull City Supporters organisation that works proactively with the club.

**Richard Mathers, HCST Secretary**



## FINANCIAL REPORT

For the year of 2016 HCST have provisionally made a deficit of £3,834 before exceptional costs (2015: £1,771 surplus), this is after having membership fees and merchandise sales of £4,654 (2015: £6,285) The difference is primarily explained by lot less merchandise sales and slightly reduced membership fees. Merchandise sales were lower from a combination of no CTWD scarf sales in 2016 and new merchandise ranges not being available until the final quarter of the year.

In 2016 we had donations of £0 (2015: £1,382) and this meant our total income was £4,654 against £7,667 in the prior year.

In 2016 we introduced 3 year memberships and lifetime memberships and for these, we have only put the first year of membership through and accrued 2 years of the 3 year memberships and 9 years of the lifetime memberships, assuming lifetime membership is over 10 years for accounting purposes. This means that at the end of 2016, we had £4,685 of deferred membership on the Balance Sheet to release to future years.

The closing cash balance was £14,053 (2015; £11,284). In addition to these cash figures we also had £7,044 held in a separate bank account relating to funds collected on behalf of the Megan Pratt, a City fan who tragically died during the year. These funds are awaiting final donation to good causes close to Megan.

Costs were higher at £8,488 (2015: £5,896) and this is primarily result of:

- Additional postage costs
- Higher merchandise costs with stock purchased at the end of the year
- Charity donations
- Costs associated with protests over the membership scheme and loss of concessions
- Higher website costs

During 2016, no costs were spent on the artwork project or player sponsorship.

As a reminder, none of the HCST Board Members are paid for any of their time and travel costs are only reimbursed at cost for long distance travel to attend FSF and Premier League meetings in London.

Hemingway Bailey prepare the financial figures free of charge and invoice HCST £72 per year to cover the cost of the Cloud software used to maintain financial records.

**Alan Hemingway, HCST Treasurer**



## HCST PROVISIONAL P&L – 31/12/16

	<b>2016</b>		<b>2015</b>
Membership	£3901		£4487
Merchandise	£753		£1798
Donations			£1382
<b>(Sub Total)</b>	<b>£4654</b>		<b>£7667</b>
Merchandise Purchases	£1791		£1484
Website Costs	£441		£153
Postage	£1492		£489
Printing & Stationary	£529		£151
Bank Charges	£454		£369
Travel	£133		£0
Charity Donations	£650		£0
Subscriptions	£60		£300
Artwork Project	£0		£1750
Player Sponsorship	£0		£1200
Protest Costs	£2938		£0
<b>(Sub Total)</b>	<b>£8488</b>		<b>£5896</b>
<b>Surplus before exceptionals</b>	<b>(£3834)</b>		<b>£1771</b>
Tigers Co-Operative Donations	£0		£18000
<b>(Sub Total)</b>	<b>(£3834)</b>		<b>(£16229)</b>
<b>Closing Cash Balances</b>	<b>£14053</b>		<b>£11284</b>
<b>Deferred Membership</b>	<b>£4685</b>		<b>£0</b>