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HULL CITY SUPPORTERS' TRUST

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NO TO HULL TIGERS

Proposed name change from "Hull City AFC" to "Hull Tigers"

Consultation response from HULL CITY SUPPORTERS' TRUST



A note on this submission: some of this material was presented to the FA in our written submission of 2014. It has been updated to reflect developments over this past year.

- Last year the Football Association received a submission from campaign group City Till We Die opposing club owners Assem and Ehab Allam's application to change the name of Hull City AFC. Following the FA's decision to reject the application in April 2014, City Till We Die merged with the existing supporters' trust to form the **Hull City Supporters' Trust**. This submission is from the Trust.
- It is our belief that the Allams' continuing obsession with pushing through a name change is symptomatic of a toxic relationship with the local council, a refusal to bow to the will of its own supporters (with whom they have an increasingly fractious relationship), and a stubborn determination to defeat all those who have had the temerity to challenge their decisions – including the FA. This is not a dispassionate business decision based on responsible research and sound economic principles. Last week we asked our shareholders to vote on whether they wanted the club to be called Hull City or Hull Tigers. **More than 99% of the 770 members who responded voted for Hull City.**
- The proposal to change the club's name emerged after chairman Assem Allam failed to persuade Hull City Council to hand over to him the KC Stadium, which it built and owns. From this point Allam associated the word "City" with the Council. He argued that if the club removed the offending word and called itself Hull Tigers this would bring massive financial rewards from foreign markets. He has never produced any evidence for this, broke the first of a series of promises when he said he would initially research the idea and launched into astonishing attacks on Hull City supporters who opposed his proposals.
- The Allams' relationship with Hull City Council has deteriorated to the extent that the Council has threatened legal action against the club after its owners, who manage the stadium complex, evicted community sports groups from a community-use arena, a move that has severely tarnished Hull City's reputation locally. There was no consultation with those community user groups.
- Likewise, the owners do not consult or engage with supporters, despite being castigated for this in the FA Arbitration Tribunal report. The ballot of season pass holders on a name-change, conducted reluctantly by the club last year, was deemed "unimpressive" by the Tribunal based on how the question was phrased, but had many other flaws that rendered it meaningless. Since the FA's rejection of their plans the Allams have taken actions that punish the club's fans, such as withholding funding designed to aid Hull City's away supporters and making draconian increases to ticket prices.
- The Allams have also snubbed the FA by changing the club's name in branding and communications. "Hull City AFC" has been removed from the badge, the club's proper name is rarely used, and as far as they're able they have ignored the spirit of the FA's decision. Their continued use of Hull Tigers instead of Hull City AFC is an insult to the Football Association and an affront to City fans.

[CONTINUES ON PAGE 2]



- The spurious rationale for the name-change – that it will bring in considerable new revenues – has been neither backed up with evidence by the club nor supported by marketing or football experts. Hull City has massive untapped financial potential by dint of its position in the world's highest profile domestic league – and it has achieved that as “Hull City”. Hull being awarded UK City of Culture for 2017 provides the club with another massive marketing opportunity – which is presently untapped.
- Hull City AFC struggled to get established. All three components of that name were hard-fought for in the teeth of opposition. 111 years later it is that name that binds generations, friends, families. Have no doubt: the name Hull City is extremely important to the club's supporters.
- Football clubs do occasionally change names: to celebrate civic pride, herald a relocation, or shorten an unwieldy name. But no club has ever considered a name change at the height of its achievement. And no club has attempted to change a name of over a century's standing.
- The No To Hull Tigers campaign attracted worldwide recognition and support, garnering national and international coverage, practically all of it supportive. The media coverage recognises the obvious: simply changing the name of a football club will not transform its financial fortunes. Indeed it will likely achieve the opposite by weakening an established and historic brand.
- Allow Hull Tigers and what next? Colours, badges, nicknames and club names should be cherished and protected for the value they possess, not discarded at the whim of owners bearing grudges.
- This is a pivotal moment for English football. FA decision makers can become the heroes that protected the national game. Or they can usher in a new era where money and ego matter more than anything else.

**Our message is once more clear and simple:
please reject this proposal and Say No To Hull Tigers.**

Who are we? From City Till We Die to the Hull City Supporters' Trust: Supporters united against changing the name of Hull City AFC

This section explains what the Hull City Supporters' Trust is.

There are a number of associations, fanzines, message boards and websites that represent the views of the Hull City supporters' community. The majority – the Tigers Co-operative (then City's supporters' trust), the fanzines City Independent and Amber Nectar, the message boards not606 and Tiger Chat, the supporters' website Tigerlink, the Hull City 'Ulltras, and the independent Hull City Southern Supporters – came together in September 2013 to form the City Till We Die (CTWD) campaign group.

City Till We Die was created for the sole purpose of opposing Assem and Ehab Allam's proposal to change Hull City's name. CTWD's reasoned and rational arguments against the proposal were successful and the name-change was rejected at the FA Council meeting in April 2014. On 19 April 2014 CTWD held its first general meeting, during which members endorsed a proposal to merge with the Tigers Co-operative, the existing Supporters' Trust. During 2014 the memberships of both Tigers Co-operative and CTWD voted overwhelmingly for the merger, recognising that not only were there more battles ahead over our identity, but that the vehicle of a strong Supporters' Trust was the best mechanism for representing City fans' voices.

The new Trust is now up and running, with shareholders voting in a Board of Directors at the first general meeting in February 2015. We are now the legitimate, democratic, independent vehicle representing Hull City fans, aligned to Supporters Direct. Membership has more than doubled since that first meeting and currently stands at well over 1,000.

As part of our objects, we have tried hard to engage with the club's hierarchy. We are represented on the club's Fans' Working Group and that group has selected one of our directors to represent fans on the KC Stadium's Safety Advisory Group. This is the only dialogue we have with the club – senior management do not respond to our communications. The staff member who chairs the Fans' Working Group has threatened to close meetings early for a variety of reasons (including when supporters have pressed for answers on the name-change) and the club's decisions consistently ignore the recommendations made by its members.



An introduction to the name-change proposal

This section explains the background to the name-change and how we got to where we are now.

In August 2013 the owner of Hull City AFC, Assem Allam, told the Hull Daily Mail, **"Hull City is irrelevant. My dislike to the word City is because it is common... City is a lousy identity."**¹ In the following month Mr Allam told The Guardian newspaper, **"By next year I will change the name to Hull Tigers... I cannot afford to run the club by fans' feeling."**² This final statement was especially baffling, as without supporters the football club would literally not exist. The wishes of fans should surely carry weight in any decision-making process.

Allam dubbed supporters of Hull City "hooligans" after they peacefully displayed a banner showing the message "We Are Hull City" during a match. **He also told a journalist that CTWD campaigners could "die when they want"**³ – an unpleasant statement that the owner has never apologised for.

On 1 November 2013 CTWD, along with other Hull City supporters' organisations, met with Mr Allam and his Communications Manager to discuss the name change proposal. This was a confusing, difficult and rambling meeting. Until now we chose not to report much of what was said, due to the legal, reputational and financial impact the statements could have on the football club, Hull City Council and Assem Allam himself. We now feel the time has come to make more details of that meeting public.

Allam made clear his disdain for Hull City Council, who had refused his offer to take the freehold of the KC Stadium and launch a development scheme in the stadium environs (the KC Stadium complex was built, and is owned, by the Council). He also made evident his disdain for the fans, who he said had not backed him on this issue:

"I am amazed that you fans are protesting against me for something like shortening the name – but where were you when I was speaking to the Council? You were nowhere to be seen. You did not back me. I wanted freehold of the KC – to improve and generate revenue. I had set aside £30m for this development, but have now used that to subsidise the club.

"The Council are liars and cheats. Councillor — went back on his word because he needed —'s vote. The Council wanted a joint venture which I am not interested in. I keep telling them this. It is a way for minimum wage councillors to collect £25k a year as directors of a company.

"Could you do business with liars and cheaters? I could not believe the fans did not protest outside the Council offices at the way they were treating me and the club."⁴
[Assem Allam – minutes of meeting with Hull City supporters]

An introduction to the name-change proposal [CONTINUED]

It was clear to those supporters present that this disagreement was at least partly behind Allam's desire to see the word City removed from the club name. He questioned why the Council should get any glory for the success of the football team that shares its name, making it clear that he sees a connection between the names Hull City and Hull City Council:

"I aim to retain the name Hull and the Tiger logo. But we will not promote the Council on the back of our promotion!"⁵

We were told that the name change proposal was also stimulated by a paper published by the Harvard Business Review, which stated that shorter names made for more successful businesses entering new markets. Allam claimed that he was merely shortening the name from Hull City Tigers (which is only the trading name of the holding company) to Hull Tigers. It subsequently became clear that this paper bore no relevance to sporting clubs or overseas marketing (see Section 6).

At the November 2013 meeting CTWD was able to extract some key assurances from Assem Allam: that he wouldn't progress the name change before researching whether it would achieve its aims, and that he would undertake consultation with supporters before applying to change the name. He stated, **"I give my word – I will not change if no benefit."**⁶ The wording of these key assurances was agreed with the club's Communications Manager.

Two weeks later CTWD wrote to Mr Allam to volunteer our help in consulting with season ticket holders regarding the name change. While we never received a formal response, Allam made it clear in the media that no such consultation was to occur, and that he alone would decide whether the club's name should change. The promises from our meeting were broken within days. It was an early indication that he could not be trusted when speaking to supporters on this subject.

Recently (March 2015), local BBC journalist David Burns spoke with Assem Allam and reported that Allam had told him that his spat with Hull City Council was behind the name change.⁷

"He admits the row with the Council is at the root of it. He feels the fans should have asked more questions of the council."

Throughout Assem and Ehab Allam's custodianship of Hull City, they have reacted in a consistent fashion to organisations or people who have blocked them from having their way or opposed their ideas: **"No-one on earth is allowed to question my business decisions – I won't allow it,"**⁸ Assem Allam told Sky Sports News in January 2014.

In the following sections we shall summarise their actions in respect to Hull City Council (who would not hand over the KC Stadium), Hull City supporters (who failed to back their takeover of the KC and opposed the name-change) and the FA (who rejected their Hull Tigers proposal).

Actions against Hull City Council

This section describes the extent of the feud between the Allam family and Hull City Council, and explains why it is at the root of the name change proposal.

In Section 2 we described the Allams' view of Hull City Council after the latter's refusal to give/sell the KC Stadium to them.⁹ As a result of this acrimonious fall out – with Assem Allam castigating the Council in the press – the word "City" appears to have become distasteful to the club's owners. Relations with the Council deteriorated too, with Assem Allam adopting a petulant and self-defeating stance: the refusal to become engaged with the city's **City of Culture** bid; refusing a **civic reception** following Hull City's promotion to the Premier League in 2013;¹⁰ refusing to invite the **Lord Mayor** to the FA Cup Final the following year¹¹

A key rationale behind the Council's decision to retain ownership of the KC was that it was built as a community stadium: "We will not be selling the freehold as we want to ensure that public assets are maintained for all teams and clubs and for people who enjoy sport." ¹²

Apart from owning the club, the Allams also run the Stadium Management Company (SMC) and are therefore in control of the Airco Arena, a Council-owned community sports facility on the site. In March 2015 the SMC gave local community groups based at the Arena a month's notice to vacate so that a 3G pitch could be installed.¹³ This was in order that the club's Academy could gain EPPP Category 2 status.

This came as a huge shock to the clubs and societies that use the Airco, which include wrestling, gymnastic and trampolining clubs, electric wheelchair football teams, roller derby clubs and the Yorkshire Jets netball team. Once more the Allams acted without consultation, but this time the victims were from the wider community. Initially a compromise in the form of a new bubble pitch outside the Arena seemed to have been reached, but news broke in April that (without warning) work had begun on installing the 3G pitch in the Arena. It emerged, via letters exchanged between the club and the council¹⁴, that Ehab Allam had requested Hull City Council provide an assurance that any planning application would be approved (which is unlawful), and pay half the building costs. Council leader Stephen Brady said that the club had, "made certain requests... which could not possibly or legally be fulfilled".¹⁵

This has led to the current position where the Council are threatening legal action as they deem that laying a pitch for the club's exclusive use is a breach of the lease. The sensible long-term decision should have been to build the 3G pitch at (or close to) Bishop Burton, where the Academy is based. This would have taken longer, and cost more, but would have avoided the PR disaster the club now has on its hands.

By attempting to continue their feud with Hull City Council, the Allams have served only to alienate more people in Hull.

Actions against Hull City supporters

This section discusses the disdain with which the owners view the supporters of the club.

Since the Allams embarked on their crusade to change the club's name, their attitude towards the fans has been disgraceful. Despite the No To Hull Tigers campaign being highly respectful, the owners have abused the fans verbally (Assem Allam called them hooligans and suggested they could die as soon as they want), taken the view that they are **"irrelevant"**¹⁶; and asserted that the FA should make the name-change decision **"without fans' views"** being taken into account.¹⁷

Apart from the flawed Fans' Working Group (see Section 1) there is an almost complete lack of consultation or dialogue on any issue. As a result supporters are regularly subjected to poorly conceived and executed club decisions.

For instance: The Away Supporters Initiative (ASI) is an agreement between Premier League clubs to each spend £200,000 on improving the away supporters' experience. The Premier League advises clubs to consult with fans on how it is spent. Most clubs use the fund to offer free travel to away games or subsidise away tickets for their fans. Supporter representatives on the club's Fans' Working Group consistently asked for the club to reduce the cost of away tickets. The club ignored these requests. For weeks the club also ignored requests to explain what the money had been spent on¹⁸ until, in an interview with the Hull Daily Mail on 30 April 2015, Ehab Allam said the money had been spent entirely on away supporters at the KC and that he had made a deliberate decision not to spend it to help Hull City fans travelling to away matches.¹⁹

In 2010, Assem Allam told Radio Humberside, **"I hope I will live to see football watched by every housewife and child – make the tickets £10, £5. Watching football should be like breathing air – free of charge."**²⁰ In February 2014 Ehab Allam said that, **"whilst (raising ticket prices) may provide a short-term revenue lift, we do not believe that constantly raising prices is a viable long-term option."**²¹ Sadly, their actions have been at odds with these laudable statements.

After the name-change was rejected in April 2014, the Allams raised season pass prices for the 2014/15 season by nearly 30%. In 2015, after the Premier League negotiated a record-breaking TV deal, the owners increased the prices for 2015/16 by at least 6% (rising to a 10% rise for those who wish to wait for the FA's fresh decision). This is a 40% rise over two seasons, despite other Premier League clubs freezing or even cutting prices.²²

To add insult to injury, the club has given no explanation for the price hike, has not said what it would do if the club were to be relegated, and has said there is no policy to give a refund should the club's name change.²³ The Allams have refused to answer questions from fans' groups or the media on this issue.

The club had already targeted disabled supporters in 2012 by announcing the end of concessionary season passes.²⁴ Hull City is the only club in the Premier League or Football League to scrap concessionary prices for disabled fans.

Actions against Hull City supporters [CONTINUED]

The club's ballot of season pass holders, held after the name-change application had been submitted to the FA (and only then because it became clear the FA was likely to reject it), has been widely ridiculed. Martin Samuel wrote in the Daily Mail:

"It is not so much a ballot sheet as a ransom note. The supporters' vote on changing the name from Hull City to Hull Tigers makes it impossible to oppose the switch, without also standing against owner Assem Allam.

"Yes to Hull Tigers, no to Hull Tigers. The choices were simple enough.

"Instead, to support the move, fans must tick an option that reads: 'Yes to Hull Tigers with the Allam family continuing to lead the club.' By implication, no to Hull Tigers is therefore also no to Allam ownership, although the family are not brave enough to overtly link the two. They prefer veiled threats and brinkmanship.

"If they wanted to play fair, they could have made the issue black or white. None of this, 'Yes to Hull Tigers and we won't shoot this puppy'. Yet in any fair vote, they lose. And they know it."²⁵

Of the 5,874 who responded, 2,565 voted "Yes to Hull Tigers with the Allam family continuing to lead the club" while 2,517 voted "No to Hull Tigers". The other 792 voted they were "not too concerned and will continue to support the club either way" – i.e. no overall majority either way.

The Arbitration Tribunal view on the ballot was scathing: "The questions asked were unimpressive and the result unconvincing."²⁶

Phrasing of the question apart, there were other serious issues about how the club conducted the ballot. Not all season pass holders received an invitation to vote. Corporate memberships were included. Staff were included. The ballot was not secret, and there were concerns about how ballot forms were collected and processed. Despite repeated requests from fans' groups, the club refused to release a report from an independent scrutineer that allegedly oversaw the ballot. We believe the multiple flaws in the process render this ballot meaningless.²⁷

The results of the club's ballot are also in sharp contrast with other votes conducted both last year and this. There was a resounding rejection of the name change proposal in two polls conducted by the Hull Daily Mail (one in August 2013 saw **78% of 3,671 readers vote in favour of keeping Hull City AFC**;²⁸ another in December 2013 saw **69% of 3,450 readers vote in favour of keeping Hull City AFC or Hull City**)²⁹ and a poll conducted by the Hull City Southern Supporters Club (**92% of the HCSS membership opposed the name change, with a return rate of over 60%**). Other polls by the Official Supporters Club³⁰ and various websites and fanzines have delivered a similar message.

In April 2015 the Hull City Supporters' Trust conducted a poll of its members, some of the club's most committed fans. 99.2% of the 770 votes cast supported retaining Hull City as the club's name.³¹

Actions against the FA

This section illustrates the contempt with which the owners have treated the FA and, by extension, the football family.

At a press conference in September 2014, at which he announced he was to go to arbitration on the FA's decision on the name-change, Assem Allam said, **"I am using the wording Hull City now to show respect to the FA decision."**³²

Nothing could be further from the truth. Since the FA's ruling, the Allams have gone out of their way to snub both the FA and supporters by shunning the use of Hull City and using Hull Tigers, or sometimes Hull City Tigers, or nothing at all.

- In a statement on 9 August 2013 the club said that a **"new badge, to be used from the 2014-15 season, will be designed and created in consultation with fans"**. Reneging on this promise, in June 2014 the Allams unveiled a new badge which had the words Hull City AFC excised from it.³³ The team continues to play wearing this badge.
- The club's website is entitled Hull City Tigers.³⁴ Emails and written correspondence from the club come from Hull Tigers.
- The Academy team continues to be branded as Hull Tigers Academy. On 9 December 2014 the club launched a standalone website for the Academy team, at the URL www.hulltigersacademy.com.³⁵
- After the club's historic FA Cup run in 2014, official club DVDs of the semi-final against Sheffield United and the final against Arsenal were released. Neither features the words Hull City anywhere on the cover.^{36, 37}
- On 13/14 December 2014 the club took part in a Barclays Premier League Live event in Mumbai. The name Hull City was not used anywhere; instead, their stand was branded with the club's nickname, The Tigers. To tie-in with that event, the club set-up the Twitter account @HullTigersIndia and the Facebook page facebook.com/HullTigersIndia. Both are still active, and in April 2015 the club paid to promote tweets from @HullTigersIndia.
- 20 December 2014 saw the matchday programme redesigned to remove the words "Hull City" from the cover.
- On matchdays at the KC, you will struggle to see the words Hull City. You will not hear the name being used in the tannoy announcements.
- On 26 December 2014 the club's Facebook account was renamed to facebook.com/hulltigersofficial. The club's Google+ account was renamed the same day.
- On 8 January 2015, the club's YouTube channel was renamed youtube.com/HullTigers.
- The club marketed its 2014/15 season passes without mentioning the name of the club at all (see Section 7) and the season cards themselves also lacked any mention of Hull City. In April 2015, the club released a video promoting season tickets for 2015-2016.³⁸ Despite assurances given during a Fans' Working Group meeting on 19 March that the video would "highlight" the word City,³⁹ it makes no mention of the club's name.

Actions against the FA [CONTINUED]



EXAMPLES OF CURRENT HULL TIGERS REBRANDING: FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE, GOOGLE PLUS, ACADEMY WEBSITE, 2015/16 SEASON CARD RENEWAL, MATCHDAY PROGRAMME, FA CUP SEMI FINAL DVD

In short, as far as they are able the Allams have ignored entirely the spirit of the FA's decision. Their continued use of Hull Tigers instead of Hull City AFC is a deliberate insult to the FA and an affront to City fans.

Dismantling the economic rationale for change

In this section we demonstrate that the economic argument is spurious and that there has been no serious attempt by the owners to prove an economic benefit.

The Allams claim the rationale behind changing the name of the club is economic. We assert that whilst this may be a factor in his thinking, it is largely a pretext masking Assem Allam's antipathy to Hull City Council. Nonetheless, we shall address the economic argument here.

Assem Allam purports that the name change will increase revenues for the club. But his logic is totally flawed, based on his reliance on an irrelevant research paper related to gaming on the stock markets, not marketing football clubs worldwide. In their submission to the FA last year, the owners had the perfect opportunity to persuade the Association of the merits of their argument, but as the Arbitration Tribunal report makes clear, the club **"had agreed to provide a business case but did not do so"**⁴⁰, and the application **"was neither strong nor compelling"**.⁴¹

We believe that there is no evidence to suggest that future revenue increases will be attributable to changing the club's name.

Assem Allam quoted what he described as a "Harvard Business School paper" as support for his "name-shortening" theory. He sent the summary page of this article ("Company Name Fluency, Investor Recognition and Firm Value") to us after we requested more details. Originally published in the Journal of Financial Economics, it evidently came to Mr Allam's attention after it was mentioned on the Harvard Business Review blog on 12 September 2013.

The complete article is 59 pages long. We suspect that Assem Allam only read the summary, though, since the full paper has no relevance to the marketing of football clubs; instead, it relates to the attractiveness of companies with short names to stockbrokers buying and selling shares.⁴²

Our analysis of this paper's lack of relevance was confirmed when CTWD spoke to the co-author of the paper: Clifton Green, of Goizueta Business School, Emory University, Atlanta. He told us:

"Applying our study's findings directly to the Hull City name is perhaps pushing on it too strongly. For example, we find the added benefits of name simplicity are weaker for larger, older companies where the name has already been well established. And none of the company name changes in our study elicited the backlash that is accompanying the Hull City situation.

"It is possible that a name change could bring in new fans from abroad, but it would be nice to test that idea before alienating the local fans. Go to Asia and other countries where you want new fans and do focus groups and surveys. Marketers would have many things to talk about, and I don't think that whether to change the name would be high upon the list of things to consider in terms of how to market the team." He added, **"Focusing on The Tigers is an easy thing to do without having to drop City."**⁴³

Dismantling the economic rationale for change [CONTINUED]

Of similar relevance is an article written by Mark Ritson in the 11 December 2013 edition of Marketing Weekly. Mr Ritson is an eminent expert in marketing and brand management, and was PPA Columnist of the Year for business media. Mr Ritson's assessment of Dr Allam's proposed renaming of Hull City can best be described as "unsupportive".

"[The name change proposal] ... illustrates one of the most important points about brand management – how you enact a strategy is often just as important as the strategy itself. Much of the "marketing theory" being quoted by Mr Allam is, quite frankly, nonsense, but the one area he has completely failed to grasp is brand engagement.

"The lesson for other marketers intent on radical changes like rebranding or repositioning is that the more ambitious and dramatic the proposed strategy, the more gentle and engaged a marketer must be to ensure the strategy is first accepted and then executed correctly."⁴⁴

This article reflects what most common sense football supporters understand. The marketability of football clubs in new markets such as Asia, the Arabic nations, the Indian sub-continent and Africa, is not reliant on a team's name. The key driver for brand and marketing success is the success of the football club in winning trophies and attracting international stars to their squads.

Whilst the relationship between the traditions of a football club and its ability to market itself has been little studied, a recent piece of academic research (a yet to be published dissertation for Hull University) has some interesting conclusions.⁴⁵

The author found that in the case of football club rebrands where supporters are not consulted – such as those at Cardiff City and Everton – the clubs have lost money as well as failing to achieve the rebrand. In addition, the author conducted polls of overseas football fans specifically about the name of Hull City and found that none of them found the idea of a change of name to "Hull Tigers" a sufficient reason to support the club, whereas players, form, media coverage and tradition would be.

The irony is that Hull City is currently closer to entering those markets and achieving new brand recognition than it has ever been in its 111 year history. **And that is an achievement that has occurred using the name Hull City AFC.** Renaming to Hull Tigers is more likely to confuse the brand, decouple the club from its history and reduce the club's marketability in new territories. The name change simply makes no business sense.

The awarding of City of Culture status for Hull in 2017 is a tremendous opportunity for Hull City. An opportunity that the club has consistently turned its back on due to the involvement of Hull City Council in the successful bid.

Our conclusion is clear. Mr Allam's grasp of brand marketing is extremely weak. Most experts agree that the name change will not achieve its stated aims. Clubs that are successful in marketing their brand worldwide do so irrespective of the number of letters in their playing name, or the supposed "power" of those words – their success is entirely down to winning trophies and attracting renowned superstar players.

There is no business rationale for changing the name of Hull City AFC.

Modern-day football income

In this section we discuss the ways in which Hull City AFC can sustain and prosper without a name change.

The Allams have, as we have seen, proposed that the name-change will bring in increased revenues and have cited various sums for said revenue. They have, however, failed to provide any evidence at all for how they arrive at these figures.

In our submission last year we explored the issue of how Hull City could maximise their income through improved marketing, such as: aligning official club partners, shirt manufacturer and sponsorship with the values of the fans of the club; developing the club's shops with interactive museums; maximising match-day spend; understanding your customers; acquiring fans outside of the immediate catchment area. We will not detail those proposals again here, but some further points are worth making:

- The club have not shown any capacity to market the club effectively, either home or abroad, and changing the club's name will hardly improve things. Its promotion of Hull Tigers in India, as part of a Premier League roadshow, was a flop. The Twitter account @HullTigersIndia, though heavily promoted by the club, has only 623 followers, many of them who clearly followed it purely to demonstrate their opposition to the concept. Last year's campaign to recruit season ticket holders contained no club name at all and was marketed with the slogan, "We support our local team" – a slogan surely designed to alienate rather than attract fans from outside of Hull (bear in mind that Hull City is the only Premier League club in Yorkshire and therefore there is huge potential to recruit new support from the region).
- With billions of pounds coming into football via the new TV deal, the most important factor in retaining this level of income is to provide, for the television companies, an event that is vibrant, with full stadia and lots of noise. That again the club has failed to do: the attitude of the owners to the club's fans has been a barrier, and so have season pass price rises of almost 40% over two years, coupled with exorbitant match-day prices for games against the big clubs. That has meant a full KC has been the exception, not the rule.
- Leveraging the club's assets (such as a great nickname) abroad should be investigated but in no way should that marketing alienate those closer to home. Whilst seeking to increase the reach of the club, the core support should be treated respectfully.

What's in a name? The heritage of Hull City AFC

In this section we explain the importance of the name of the club to our team, our city, our history and our heritage.

Though amateur football thrived in Hull in the early years of the 20th century, the city's professional sporting landscape was dominated by the Northern Union rugby teams, Hull FC and Hull Kingston Rovers.

Until, that is, the East Riding of Yorkshire Football Association met on 24 June 1904 to ratify the creation of a "first-class eleven", a team named in the local press as Hull City AFC in the August of that year.

Hull had been granted city status just seven years prior, as part of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, so the prestigious appellation would still have been fresh in the minds of the club's founders. As for the AFC suffix, that served to further differentiate Hull City from Hull Football Club, of the Northern Rugby Football Union. Although the Association game and the two variants of rugby had been codified in the latter part of the 19th century, the term "football" was still used as a catch-all term for several sports. City's use of AFC made it quite clear what code of football they played. And the use of the suffix "City" demonstrated civic pride in city status that is still important to this day.

The new team would face a struggle to establish professional association football in the city – indeed, an unnamed contributor to the Hull Daily Mail noted that, "Many of the [rugby community] are doubtful as to the advisability of fostering what may become a serious rival" when a deal was struck for Hull City to play games at Hull FC's home ground. A condition of City using the Boulevard venue was that Hull FC pass-holders gain free entry to association games, lest they be tempted to attend Hull Kingston Rovers matches, sowing enmity between Rovers and City.

In March 1905, the Northern Union forbade Hull FC to let their tenants use the Boulevard ground for a friendly with Manchester City, forcing The Tigers to relocate the game to the nearby Anlaby Road Cricket Ground at short notice. The rugby authorities and clubs were clearly rattled by the growth of "soccer" in Hull and sought to place obstacles in City's way. Though The Tigers would intermittently use the Boulevard ground until 1907, they ensured they were in control of their own destiny by building the Anlaby Road Ground where the KC Stadium now stands.

Though owner Harold Needler briefly considered renaming the club when league competition resumed after World War Two, the name Hull City AFC has been constant from its inception to the present day, a period approaching 111 years. In the rich tapestry of club history, it is the name that connects the scorer of the team's first goal in 1904, George Rushton, to legendary player-manager Raich Carter, to iconic 1960s striking partnership Chris Chilton and Ken Wagstaff and to current star Tom Huddlestone – the name of Hull City binds generations of fans, families and friends.

**Hull City AFC. It simply shouldn't be up for grabs.
The name Hull City is part of Hull's history, part of
Hull's culture. It is part of Hull's celebrated present.
And it should be integral to the city's and
Hullensians' prosperous future.**

Changing names in English professional football – it's happened before, but not like this

In this section we review reasons for changing club names and demonstrate why what is being proposed for Hull City is something completely new.

We accept that football clubs occasionally change their name. Clubs regularly did so in the 19th century as they formed from the merger of various sporting clubs, as they moved home and as they found their feet in the emerging league structure.

This continued to some extent into the 20th century – only one current League team, Stevenage, has renamed in the 21st century, dropping “Borough” from their name on election to the Football League, amid consternation from their fanbase.

Some clubs have renamed after many years. In 1960 non-league Headington United abandoned their name of 66 years and became Oxford United in order to raise their profile – and were elected to the Football League shortly afterwards. Municipal influences have led to long-standing names being changed – Stoke, Swansea Town and Leicester Fosse became Stoke City, Swansea City and Leicester City on award of city status, the previous names standing for 55, 35 and 58 years respectively. After 60 years as Hartlepool United, Hartlepool was formed in 1968 after the municipal merger of two adjacent towns, industrial West Hartlepool and the historic monastic settlement at Hartlepool Headland. Leyton Orient became Orient in 1966 when the Borough of Leyton was subsumed within the London Borough of Waltham Forest – although, notably, a campaign led by supporters saw the name revert to Leyton Orient in 1987.

Other clubs have changed name following financial difficulties. Port Vale (in 1909, after 25 years as Burslem Port Vale), Gillingham (in 1913, after 20 years as New Brompton), Chesterfield (in 1919, after 52 years as Chesterfield Town), Leeds United (in 1919, after 15 years as Leeds City) and

Aldershot Town (in 1992, after 55 years as Aldershot) changed their name after variously dicing with liquidation, expulsion from the FA and other no less catastrophic problems. Other clubs changed name due to amalgamation (Torquay United, Rotherham United) or relocation (Leyton Orient in 1946, Arsenal in 1914).

Our research shows that only AFC Bournemouth has changed the club name (in 1971) for the stated aim of streamlining their name. Hardly surprising given their previous moniker was Bournemouth and Boscombe Athletic FC. Weighing in at 32 letters, there is little comparison with Hull City AFC.

Yes, football clubs occasionally change their names. But history shows that this is done for reasons of civic pride, relocation, amalgamation or financial woes. In one or two cases non-league teams have changed name to help catalyse a rise to the Football League. And the club with the longest name in England shortened their name to save ink in newspaper print works across the land.

No club has ever changed its name for the spurious purpose of becoming more marketable overseas, one of Assem Allam's stated objectives. No club has ever changed its name in order to spite its local municipality (indeed, quite the opposite applies amongst a number of modern day “City” clubs). No club has ever changed its name during the most successful period in its long history. And no club has ever tried to alter a name that has stood unchanged for anything approaching a span of 111 years. This name change is a step into the unknown for a successful member of the world's most historic Football Association.

What do supporters and the football community think?

In this section we present the views of the football family and the local community on the proposed name-change.

Last year, during the months our campaign was running, CTWD's "No To Hull Tigers" message received substantial local, national and international coverage. As a result, we attracted widespread support for our cause. It wasn't just Hull City fans who rallied to our cause – supporters from other clubs, prominent football people, journalists and celebrities expressed their support. Below are some quotes from prominent people in the football community:

Richard Scudamore (Premier League chief executive)
speaking on BBC Sportsweek:

"I would personally prefer they didn't [change name] but that is a decision for the FA"⁴⁶

Adam Lowthorpe (East Riding County FA chief executive,
Hull City player 1993-97):

"Massively against, part of identity and who we are. It connects all generations of supporters through good and bad times."⁴⁷

Arsene Wenger (Arsenal manager):

"I don't see why it should happen. Usually there's a tradition that is linked with the name of the club. The modern way of thinking is to combine tradition with forward thinking."⁴⁸

Ian Ashbee (Hull City captain 2002-2011, a club legend
who played in all four divisions for the Tigers):

"Managers/players/chairmen/directors come and go. Club names shouldn't."⁴⁹

Stan Collymore (talkSPORT presenter, former footballer):

"I support Hull City supporters' groups 100% in the campaign to retain their name, identity and history."⁵⁰

Jimmy Greaves (Sunday People columnist, former footballer):

"Allam's argument is that fans in Asia and elsewhere will be more attracted to Hull if they are known as Tigers rather than City. Yet I feel sure that those who follow our football in far-flung parts of the globe tend to do so largely because of history and tradition."⁵¹

Gary Lineker (BBC Sport presenter, former footballer):

"May they always be known as Hull City!"⁵²

What do supporters and the football community think? [CONTINUED]

We received significant supportive coverage from prominent football journalists, including David Conn (The Guardian), Richard Rae (The Independent), Mick Dennis (football correspondent, Daily Express), John Dillon (chief sports writer, Daily Express), Paul Hayward (chief sports writer, The Daily Telegraph), Oliver Kay (chief football correspondent, The Times), Guy Mowbray (BBC Sport), Ashling O'Connor (The Independent columnist), Martin Samuel (Daily Mail columnist) and Henry Winter (football correspondent, The Daily Telegraph).

Below we select some of the supportive quotes received from experts in football journalism, football administration and wider marketing/media:

Jyoti Malhotra (business journalist) speaking on BBC Radio 4's Business Matters:

"Why would you throw it away in favour of something that's totally untested and tried? I would really support the 'Hull City' guys on this one."⁵³

Grant McCracken (economist, anthropologist and author) speaking on BBC Radio 4's Business Matters:

"I think Hull City is the better choice. There is contemporary theory that says brands are not decided by owners: they're decided by consumers or fans. To jettison [the present brand] seems to me culturally wrong and economically foolhardy."⁵⁴

Jim White, The Telegraph:

"It seems the most simple of marketing rules in football that the first priority is to nurture what you have. And then build from there. What matters are the people who clack through the turnstiles every fortnight."⁵⁵

John Richardson, Sunday Express (Chief Football Correspondent) on Sky Sports - Sunday Supplement:

"You can't change 109 years of history just like that. It's sad because the fans should be consulted, it's the fans' club."⁵⁶

Martin Lipton, The Mirror (Chief Football Writer):

"Another club whose fans are being ignored, whose traditions and history are being airbrushed by the supposed custodian of their dreams. It is for the FA, alone, to determine whether Dr Allam should be given the green light to ride roughshod over the fans, the lifeblood of the game."⁵⁷

Mark Herman (four-times BAFTA nominated film director and screenwriter):

"We all want the club to succeed financially. But there are ways of trying to do that without upsetting the very heartbeat of the club."⁵⁸

Colin Murray (talkSport presenter):

"I can't imagine ever calling Hull City by the name Hull Tigers on the radio or anywhere else. In fact, I won't."⁵⁹

What do supporters and the football community think? [CONTINUED]

We also received a range of supportive comments from elected members of Hull City Council, including the portfolio holder with lead responsibility for sport in the city:

Councillor Terry Geraghty (Portfolio Holder for Public Health):

"My own personal view is that I'm against any change of name. I first went to see City play in 1946. It was City then and it should be City now. Back in the 19th century, our forefathers fought for city status for Hull and I think it would be an insult to them if this was allowed to happen. More recently, we have fought tooth and nail to be the UK City of Culture in 2017. If the club stays in the Premier League then surely it will get all the worldwide publicity and exposure it needs without having to change its name."⁶⁰

Councillor Charles Quinn:

"I am completely opposed to the renaming of Hull City and we made it clear in a Council meeting today."⁶¹

Councillor Claire Thomas:

"Personally, I agree with you that the name should stay the same."⁶²

Councillor Tom McEvoy:

"After the fantastic news story of being awarded the City of Culture 2017 at the end of last year, the attempts to change the name of the club in my opinion do not reflect well upon the city... I have submitted my own submission to the Football Association expressing my anger at the proposal and outlining why the FA should reject the proposal of the owners of Hull City AFC."⁶³

Councillor Gary Wareing:

"Can I assure you I am totally opposed to the name change from Hull City. Owners of football clubs are only in temporary charge; the real owners of clubs should be the fans."⁶⁴

Councillor Alan Clark:

"As a Councillor not just for the city but for the Newington ward that the football club falls into, I can assure you that I am totally against any name change of the club."⁶⁵

Councillor Pete Allen:

"On a personal level I fully agree with your aims and objectives and will support the retention of the historic name of the team."⁶⁶

What do supporters and the football community think? [CONTINUED]

Councillor Stephen Hull:

"Whilst I believe it is Mr Allam's choice, as the owner whose investment has brought recent success to the club and wider city, and his desire to recoup on that investment through marketing; I do not believe that he needs to formally change the club's name. He could still market the club under the 'Tigers' brand as he desires. I believe he has failed to appreciate that a club is not just players and coaches, but much wider and is built upon its fanbase, who provide the initial funding for wages etc, until a time when the club is big enough to be a brand, this still relies on the support of fans attending games and buying merchandise."⁶⁷

Councillor John Fareham (Leader of Conservative Group):

"The Conservative Group on Hull City Council support retaining the historic name."⁶⁸

Councillor Stephen Baker:

"Just to be clear I don't support the name change and have already said so in public."⁶⁹

Councillor Michael Ross (Leader of Liberal Democratic Group):

"Along with my Lib Dem colleagues, I am clear that the club should retain its historic name and not change to Hull Tigers."⁷⁰

While the "No To Hull Tigers" campaign went from inception to national prominence within three months, no counterbalancing "Yes To Hull Tigers" movement formed then, or has since. While we accept that some Hull City supporters remain apathetic towards the name change, perhaps fearful of the consequences should the Allams not get their way, those who do express a preference are overwhelmingly supportive of keeping our historic name.

The proposed change to Hull Tigers is a suggestion that receives no love amongst Hull City supporters, and is equally unpopular with the wider football community.

The consensus is clear: the Football Association should once more say "No To Hull Tigers".

The wider implications – don't open the floodgates

In this section we consider the harmful consequences of reversing the previous decision for English football as a whole.

Finally, we suggest a moment of reflection on what the wider implications of this name change proposal would be, if approved by the FA. Because this isn't simply a vote on a new name for Hull City – this is the opportunity to put a stop to the franchising of English football and prevent further trampling on the long and proud history of English football clubs. There have been some decisions that on reflection can be regarded as mistakes, notably accepting the relocation and subsequent renaming of Milton Keynes Dons when they replaced Wimbledon. Now is the time that the FA can make a decision to avoid the same kind of mistake being made again.

It is unequivocally true that names, colours, badges and nicknames are important to football supporters. They feature in supporters' chants; they are tattooed on their bodies; they adorn their motor cars; they form the colour scheme of many fans' homes.

And those football supporters matter. Fans support their teams through thick and thin; in warm and cold climates; during famous European ties, League six-pointers and humdrum Johnstones Paint Trophy ties. Without football supporters there is no purpose for a football club. A club cannot exist without its supporters. And for that reason, a club's owners must listen to the fans.

What supporters hold dear is therefore pivotal to the future of football. The key features of a football club – its name, colours, nickname, badge – are key historic components of the club itself and the suburb, town or city it represents. A fine old building in a city will typically be listed and afforded protection by the Town and Country Planning Act. The key features of a football club are just as dear to their community and are often more well-known nationally than a church, town hall or famous abode. Invariably a football club's identity will be far more well-known internationally than that community's protected buildings. Football club names should have listed status, just like historic

buildings. There should be certain extreme circumstances where names can change – we don't believe today's status quo should be ossified for ever more. For example, a name change should be allowed if a clear majority of supporters agree, in a poll, that it is in the best interests of the club. But as a general rule, club names should be protected and cherished, not tossed away at the whim of an owner who may be gone in a few short years. The FA can provide that listed protection, starting with this decision. Hull City Supporters' Trust, in conjunction with other fans' organisations, would be more than pleased to work with the FA in helping to strengthen its rules. We have no desire to go through this every year, and we doubt the FA's officers and members do either.

If Hull City AFC is thrown away and Hull Tigers are born, what next? Which other football clubs' fans will have the sporting love of their lives desecrated? Will Newcastle United soon be playing in red and blue, to match their owner's corporate colours? Will Manchester United's nickname become the Buccaneers in order to improve the brand of the owners' American Football franchise in Florida? Would Cardiff City, had they remained in the Premier League, have become Cardiff Dragons to match their unloved red shirts? The Austrian League now has Red Bull Salzburg (and Red Bull were reported to be interested in buying Leeds United). Where will it end, once the floodgates are opened?

Approve this name change and the FA will lose a once in a generation chance to protect English football's heritage. The history and culture of English football that is so loved and respected across the world will erode. The most important element of the English game that attracts global audiences will fade, and the willingness to buy the shirts and watch the matches might fade too. This isn't just a decision about Hull City AFC. This is a decision about the future of our beloved game.

Conclusion – make the right decision once again

In April 2014 the football world believed that the FA had made the right decision in rejecting the Allams' application. Today's members of the Football Association have the chance to clearly and unambiguously reinforce that decision and make a statement that will protect the unique selling point of English football – its history, its culture and therefore its success.

Be remembered as the heroes that saved football's culture in this country, not the ones that tore it to shreds on the hubristic whim of a man who argued with his local council. Once more, this decision is pivotal to English football – exercise your choice wisely, with an eye on the future as well as an appreciation of the present. **Say "No To Hull Tigers".**

HULL CITY SUPPORTERS' TRUST

May 2015



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