



Bluebirds' Trust Members Handbook

Introduction

The Barrow AFC Independent Supporters Society Limited trading as "The Bluebirds Trust" was set up in 2014.

The Trust is an Affiliate member of the Football Supporters Association (FSA), and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (Reg. No 32452R).

What The Trust is for

The main aims of the Trust are:

- 1) To Maintain and Increase the 10% Supporter Stake in Barrow AFC
- 2) To Elect a Trust Representative to the Board of Barrow AFC
- 3) Provide Affordable Away Travel for All Barrow AFC Fans
- 4) Work to Ensure All are welcome and able to Attend Barrow AFC Games
- 5) Be a Voice for Barrow Supporters, Locally and Nationally
- 6) Work Closely with Others to Support our Wider Community

Our Trust set up in 2014 and initially our role focused on raising money for Barrow AFC related community projects and supporting travel and attendance at games. This expanded considerably in 2019 when we took the opportunity to become part owners of Barrow AFC with a consortium of locally connected fans.

As well as the initial outlay, we work to maintain the shortfall through share issue every season, in conjunction with the other owners. With our members and the wider Barrow support, we have raised £265,000 for shares in Barrow AFC and a stake that sits just over 10%. We have a say and we pay our way, through the efforts of all our members and supporters.

To support financially, we rely on the membership, matchday raffles, our shop in the ground and online lottery. We have a good relationship with the club board, which enables us to raise money provide that investment.

We are a firmly democratic organisation where members of The Bluebirds Trust Board are elected by (circa) 1000 membership. As well as that collective voice, members receive discounted travel and preference for home match tickets (after season ticket holders).

Over the years, we have supported the attendance at matches of thousands of families who would struggle to access matches at Holker St. We have carried our supporters all over England and Wales on the 'Bluebirds Bus' this season being the busiest ever and we enabled 323 accompanied under 16s to travel for free.



We have supported the setting up Disabled Supporters Association, some initiatives from Barrow AFC in the Community and the club, who have been fabulous with ticket giveaways and initiatives. We also organised anti-racist initiatives and challenged prejudice in all its forms, involving organisations such as Kick it Out and Anti Racist Cumbria.

We work with other members of the Barrow AFC family such as the BAFC Community Trust, Barrow Police and the club itself to raise money for a number of good causes throughout the last eight years, raising thousands of pounds in the process.

Most of all, we believe that football without fans is nothing. Our love of Barrow AFC, our football club, is part of the glue that binds us together.

Structure

What is a Supporters Trust, and who is in charge?

A Supporters' Trust is a democratic, not-for-profit organisation of supporters, committed to strengthening the voice for supporters in the decision-making process at a club, and strengthening the links between the club and the community it serves.

Supporters' Trusts are constituted as Community Benefit Societies, a form of Co-operative that operate under a one-member one-vote principle and are governed by a strict set of rules.



CBS' are registered with the Financial Conduct Authority and as such has a number of legislative requirements to fulfil such as holding an Annual General Meeting and submitting annual accounts.

The members own all assets and liabilities collectively, and any profit made is either kept as reserves or reinvested to meet the societies objects.

The Trust Board is elected by members and any (over 16) members of the Trust have the opportunity to stand for election to the Trust board.

Members requirements

How ordinary members can work to achieve the Trusts goals

There are lots of ways that ordinary Trust members can help the Trust achieve their goals. Specialist projects which the Trust undertakes will require large sub-committees to oversee the progress and input relevant skills and regular members meetings will allow ordinary members to bring a whole host of ideas and skills to the table.

Engagement is the main way ordinary members can help. Increasing Trust numbers strengthens the credibility and effectiveness of the Trust.





The Supporters Trust is all inclusive. Social media and digital communications will play a big role, so it won't matter where you live or whether you attend the meetings. Being a member, for example, in the USA who can't attend any meetings will give you the same voice and voting rights as a local member who can attend all the meetings.

If you have any questions or concerns you want to raise at an upcoming meeting this can be done via the website.

Meetings & Motions

Regularity of meetings, types of meeting and how to raise a motion

The Trust Board will meet monthly during the season and provide members with a summary of the discussion that took place. These items then placed on the Bluebirds Trust website as part of a newsletter. This will also address any questions from the membership as well as sharing information.

Motions at a members' meeting, must be seconded by a member and submitted to the Trust Secretary Mike Hoggan before the meeting in order for the motion to be added to the agenda. Any members are able to submit a motion or request to attend.



The Trust will hold an Annual General Meeting where members will be asked to vote upon a number of motions including the acceptance of the previous year's accounts and election to the Club Board of the Trust Representative.

Three separate events will be held that invite members to put questions to the Chairman and available Trust Board Members.

- 1) Pre- season 'Surgery' to support membership and travel queries etc.
- 2) Annual General Meeting
- 3) Meet the Trust Board Event

All Trust events and meetings to be announced on our website along with notifications sent by email to members and through our social media channels.

Elections

How to stand for election to the Trust Board

Each year members will have the opportunity to stand for election to the Trust board.

Board members serve a set term of 3 years

Prior to the elections the Trust board will advise members of how many board seats are up for election and invite nominations.

If there are more nominations than the number of available seats a formal election will take place.



Candidates will be asked to provide a candidates statement laying out their strengths and what skills they could contribute to the Trust board and members will be invited to vote for the candidates whom they would like to fill the available seats.

Roles & Responsibilities

The board is a group of people elected by the Trust members and co-opted onto the board to carry out strategic management of the society.

Board members have a legal duty to act in good faith and in the pursuit of the best interests of the society.

Some of the Trust Board roles carry unique responsibilities as detailed below.

Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for the efficient administration of the society, particularly regarding ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and for ensuring the board's decisions are implemented. They need to remind the board of the rules to protect members interests.

It is recommended practice that the Secretary be appointed rather than elected to the board.

Treasurer

The Treasurer deals with all aspects of finance and funding, although some aspects of the work may delegate to a bookkeeper or finance sub-committee.

The treasurer will have a general financial oversight, advising the board on all aspects of finance.

Chairperson

The Chairperson is an important role, providing leadership to the board for the overall governance and strategic direction of the society.

The Chairperson may also be the external face of the society liaising with partners and stakeholders.

Rules

What are the rules and where to find them?

The Trust will have a registered set of rules or constitution which lays out how the society should operate.



These rules be registered with the FCA and any changes to them have to be agreed at a general meeting with the FCA informed and accepting of any alterations before they can be enacted.

All members are bound by the rules contained in this handbook.

Policies

What are the policies of the Trust and where do we find them?

Whereas the Trust rules tell you what to do it is the Trust policies that tell you how to do it!

The Trust have adopted a number of policies which are guidance on how to hold an AGM, how to hold Board meetings, how to run elections, disciplinary policies for Board members and ordinary members, social media use guidance and an inclusion and diversity policy.

These policies do not need to be registered with the FCA, merely adopted at general meetings.

You can find a list of the policies and the policies in full on the Trust website.

Complaints Procedure

If a member has a complaint to raise in the first instance, they should put the complaint in writing to the Trust Secretary for consideration by the Board.

Where the complaint cannot be resolved, the dispute will be escalated. There is provision within the society rules as detailed below:

This action used as a last option when all other avenues for resolution are exhausted.

Every unresolved dispute which arises out of these Rules between the Society and:

- a member; or
- any person aggrieved who has ceased to be a member within the six months prior to the date of the dispute; or
- any person claiming through such member or person aggrieved; or
- any person bringing a claim under the Rules of the Society; or
- an officer of the Society

Is to be submitted to an arbitrator agreed by the parties or nominated by the Chief Executive (or equivalent) of the FSA. The arbitrator's decision will be binding and conclusive on all parties.

Any person bringing a dispute must deposit with the Society the sum of £500 or such other reasonable sum as the Society Board shall decide. The arbitrator will decide how the costs of the arbitration will be paid and what should be done with the deposit.

Get in Touch

Website: www.bluebirdstrust.co.uk

Twitter: @BluebirdsST

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bluebirdstrust/>

e-mail: info@bluebirdstrust.co.uk

Membership Secretary: Richard Ingham info@bluebirdstrust.co.uk



Secretary: Mike Hoggan info@bluebirdstrust.co.uk

Press Enquiries: info@bluebirdstrust.co.uk