



**LEYTON ORIENT FANS' SOCIETY LIMITED**  
**T/A LEYTON ORIENT FANS' TRUST (LOFT)**

**AGENDA FOR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**TO BE HELD AT**

**The Birkbeck Tavern (upstairs),**  
**45 Langthorne Road, Leyton E11 4HL**

**ON Thursday 10 November 2016 AT 7:30pm**

**A G E N D A**

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Chairman's Report for the period ended 31 May 2016
3. Treasurer's Report and Accounts to 31 May 2016
4. Election of nominated candidates to the Society Board  
  
Re-election of Mark Dunn and Mike Randall to the society board. Current directors are:  
  
Doug Harper (Chair), James Cassidy (Vice-Chair), Peter Osborne (Treasurer), Jonathan Kaye (Secretary), Paul Arnup, Tom Davies, Mark Dunn, Anna Fleming, Dave Knight, Adam Michaelson, Mike Randall and Mat Roper. External directors ('trustees') are: John Cryer MP, John Mackie, Jim Nichols and Tony Roome.  
  
James Cassidy, Mark Dunn and Mike Randall will be standing down from the committee at the end of their term. Mark Dunn and Mike Randall are standing for re-election.
5. ORDINARY RESOLUTION 1: That the Society calls on the owner of Leyton Orient Football Club, Francesco Becchetti, to either:
  - set out a plan for how he will change the way he runs the football club – and in particular the ongoing hiring and firing of managers and reported interference in team selection – or
  - put the club up for sale, so that a new owner (or co-owners) can take the club forward in a manner more appropriate to that of a Football League club
6. ORDINARY RESOLUTION 2: That the Society does not proceed with purchasing the leasehold of the Matchroom Stadium from Matchroom Sports Ltd, on the understanding and assurance from Barry Hearn that the ground is being sold to a Matchroom pension scheme and that the lease to the club will remain unchanged; and that LOFT ensures that the ground retains Asset of Community Value status.
7. ORDINARY RESOLUTION 3: That LOFT calls on Leyton Orient Football Club to vote against the EFL's 'Whole Game Solution' proposals at the EFL clubs' meeting in February (or any subsequent meeting where a vote takes place); and that LOFT writes to the EFL laying out our opposition and the reasons for it, and to demand a full consultation be undertaken with EFL clubs' supporters.
8. Any other Society business
9. Q&A with Guest Speaker:  
**MATTHEW PORTER** (ex-CEO, Leyton Orient Football Club)



## Nomination for Proxy Vote

I appoint.....

OR the Chairman of the Meeting [ ]

as proxy vote for me on my behalf at the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held on 10 November 2016 and at any adjournment thereof.

I instruct my proxy to vote at his/her discretion if any vote occurs.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Membership No. \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Please return to: LOFT - Leyton Orient Fans Society Limited, 20  
Market Place, KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES, KT1 1JP by 7  
November 2016.***



## Items 5-7 – Background to Resolutions

### Background to Resolution 1:

Francesco Becchetti took over Leyton Orient Football Club in July 2014. Since then, the club has seen a period of continued instability that is unprecedented in its recent history; 6 different permanent managers and another 3 caretaker managers.

Over that period LOFT has done everything it could to ask, repeatedly and respectfully, for Mr Becchetti and his lieutenants to set out their plan for the future, to explain how the club would progress from (or at the very least maintain) what was achieved in the final years of Barry Hearn's tenure as owner. It was obvious to all that a connection was built between club, fans, players, coaching staff and backroom staff that made Leyton Orient a great place to work and a great place to be a supporter.

There was no great magic to what made Orient great in the run-up to the 2013/14 season; we were all a family, we all knew what our role was and we all played our part. What Mr Becchetti has done is unpick what made Orient work.

There is a huge disconnect between what Mr Becchetti or his lieutenants say and their actions:

- Matt Porter has spoken of how Mr Becchetti liked using the words 'stability' and 'family' in negotiations to buy the club, yet the way the club has actually been run cannot in any way be labelled like that
- When Ian Hendon was appointed as manager a little over a year ago, chief executive Alessandro Angelieri talked of "turning a new page" to avoid the mistakes of the previous chaotic year, but 3 changes of permanent manager since then show that there has been no such change
- Mr Becchetti continues to assure supporters that he will invest in the squad to gain promotion, but the cancelling of contracts "by mutual consent" has been a continued feature in recent months, including the extraordinary release of the club's longest-serving player the day after the transfer window closed

There is also evidence from a series of ex-managers that the owner interferes with team selection, and that incredibly he believes his view as owner, with no prior experience in football, should influence that of managers whose football experience is much greater. It's one thing to have an experienced coach guide an inexperienced manager, but breathtakingly egocentric to act that way as a club owner.

There has been an alarming financial loss by the football club that is covered by a loan from the holding company; while this is not dissimilar to the situation under Barry Hearn (where annual losses were usually covered by a director's loan), the difference here is that the holding company's purchase of the club was in turn funded by a loan from elsewhere (presumed to be another Becchetti family business). This puts Leyton Orient in an extremely financially vulnerable position.

Looking back over the past two years, there is no evidence of understanding, no evidence of lessons being learned, no evidence of seeking guidance from those who know about football, and most worryingly no evidence of getting better at running an English football club.



Mr Becchetti does not appear to be prepared to put football people into football positions and trust them to do their job without interference. LOFT policy (like that of Supporters' Trusts generally) is not to comment or criticise on-pitch matters; it is now clear though that the instability and lack of a long-term plan off the pitch is a threat to Leyton Orient's future, whatever division it plays in.

Nor is the club run competently; missed deadlines for filing of accounts, an imposed new ticketing system that was clearly worse than the previous one, continued poor communications – none of these are criticisms of the backroom staff who have dealt with so much upheaval, rather the decisions made at the very top.

LOFT has surveyed over 1,100 members and non-members in the past couple of months, and the findings are clear:

- 70% of members were dissatisfied with the financial competence of the club, 76% were dissatisfied with the longer term planning and aims, 85% were dissatisfied with staffing /Human Resource management and 92% were dissatisfied with communications
- Similar levels of dissatisfaction were seen among the wider fanbase
- Over half of members believe LOFT should declare it has no confidence in the club owner, rising to over 70% among supporters generally
- Around two-thirds of both members and non-members would participate in peaceful direct action (such as a demonstration) if organised by LOFT

**It is the considered opinion of the LOFT committee, that Francesco Becchetti's current ownership is not compatible with the future well-being of Leyton Orient Football Club without radical changes to the way he runs the club.** This is not an opinion we've taken quickly or lightly; we've weighed up the events of the past two years, the disconnect between the club and supporters, the views of members, the views of the wider Orient fanbase, and in comparing our situation with other clubs where supporters are at odds with their owners (sadly, a list that continues to grow). We didn't want to be in this position; we very much wanted him to learn, to understand, to basically get better at being Orient's owner, but there are no signs whatsoever of this ever happening, nor of Leyton Orient ever becoming as stable as it once was.

**LOFT therefore feels it has no choice other than to call on Mr Becchetti either to change the way he runs the football club, such that it is on a stable footing where employees aren't continually looking over their shoulder waiting for the sack, or put the club up for sale.**



## Background to Resolution 2:

The Matchroom Stadium is effectively owned by Matchroom Sport Ltd, with the club having 'sold' its interest in its 999-year lease to Matchroom in 2009 (as part of Barry Hearn's clearing down of debt owed to him and providing the club with some working capital).

LOFT successfully nominated the stadium to be registered by the local council as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). ACV status means that any sale has to be notified to the council and a delay put in place so that a community group (such as LOFT) can put together a bid to purchase. Note that ACV status does not guarantee that an owner has to sell to a community group; it is a right to bid not a right to purchase.

LOFT maintains a line of communication with Barry Hearn, and through this we learned some time ago that he was seeking to transfer ownership of the stadium from Matchroom to one of its pension schemes, while maintaining the lease granted to the club as part of the original sale. The club currently has a 20-year lease which began in 2009, and an option to extend that lease for two further 20-year periods.

Matchroom gave formal notice to the council in July, once Francesco Becchetti's option to purchase the ground (as part of the club takeover) had lapsed. LOFT had a six-week period to give an 'intention to bid' notice to the council, which would pause the sale process until early 2017. After consideration among the committee, and in particular noting that there were possible options to raising finance to purchase the ground, we submitted an 'intention to bid' notice.

We considered the financing options in greater detail, and whether it would be feasible to cover the repayment and interest on such financing with the rent charged to the football club. In short, it would not be feasible due to the limitations in place in the lease to increase rent at each review period, and in any event it would be incompatible for LOFT to have to increase the club's costs to cover our debt repayments.

Having discussed this with Barry Hearn at length, we are satisfied that he does not intend to deprive the football club of its lease rights. We also note that Matchroom sold its property at Western Road, Romford (which is leased to external parties) to the pension scheme 2-3 years ago, so there is precedent in Matchroom organising its property ownership in this manner.

Taking all this into account and the protections the club has in its lease to both extend its occupancy up to 2069 and that limit future rent rises, LOFT does not believe it is appropriate at this time to seek borrowing to purchase the ground from Matchroom. Barry has told us he is happy to sell the ground to us at any time, so this option would remain open to us if (for example) a high net worth individual or consortium wished to work with LOFT to take the ground into supporter ownership in the future.

A sale of the ground would ordinarily lead to the ACV status being removed, however there is a question as to whether legally a sale of this sort qualifies as 'exempt' under the law relating to ACVs - if Matchroom and the Matchroom Pension Scheme are considered as connected companies by law, then the sale is exempt and ACV status would remain. Even if the sale is not exempt and the ACV status drops off, we would seek to re-apply for ACV status.

**LOFT therefore seeks approval from the membership not to pursue a purchase of the Matchroom Stadium at this time through seeking borrowing, but to ensure the ground's ACV status remains or is renewed.**



### Background to Resolution 3:

There are several specific proposals in the English Football League's (EFL) "Whole Game Solution" which are of concern:

- Proposed new League structure with Championship, League 1, League 2 and League 3. The Championship would have 20 teams with Leagues 1, 2 and 3 having 20 or 22 teams. This would mean additional teams coming into the League from the National League, which would struggle to remain viable with the loss of so many clubs. This appears to achieve nothing for current League 1 and 2 clubs other than a reduced fixture list.
- FA Cup ties to be played midweek with no replays. The FA Cup has been undermined by the changes that have been made so far to the world's oldest football tournament. LOFT believes that cup ties should be played over the weekend to ensure that it retains its status as a major competition, and that replays are an important part of the competition and are of benefit to lower league and non-league clubs.
- Leagues 2 and 3 to be regionalised. LOFT believes that the League should remain a national competition. Regionalisation would not necessarily rid the clubs of long distance away games and would devalue the status of the competition. Many Orient supporters enjoy the trips to northern clubs and to lose those trips would not enhance the fans enjoyment of the competition.
- Winter Breaks to be introduced. Given the unpredictability of the English weather, LOFT believes that a winter break would not necessarily mean fewer postponements, nor would it ease fixture congestion. The only benefit seems to be for Premier League clubs to play lucrative games abroad.