



Date: 24th December 2013

Dear Mr McGee

As promised, the board of the United Trust considered the contents and questions contained within your open letter of 3rd December 2013 at the latest board meeting on 14th December. We are now in a position to respond and have done so in writing open and honestly as requested. We were able to do so without the need for divulging any confidential information relating to the Trust or the Club, therefore, if you wish to post the letter in full on the internet via your social media sites then please feel free to do so.

Obviously we were not able to go into considerable detail in this letter as your many points did take some time to discuss and respond to taking into account the busy schedules of the board members, so we thank you for your courtesousness and patience in awaiting the response.

In response to your concern at being unable to attend our next open meeting, Chairman Norman Steel is more than willing to meet with you in London, to allow you to air any additional concerns or table any further useful ideas. He has suggested he could meet you before the away game with Leyton Orient on Saturday 11th January, which will be our last trip to the capital this season (not counting any further FA Cup progression). I'm sure as a Carlisle United supporter you will be doing all you can to attend this game, but if for some reason you are not then we can discuss alternative dates at a later stage.

Getting on to the details of your letter, I would like to begin by stating that the United Trust has managed to recruit 136 new members within the last year. For this membership, in line with other trusts across the country receiving Supporters Direct backing & governance, each member receives one vote, they have a direct link to the Trust & the Club Boards, they have access to a forum to air genuine issues, grievances, suggest ideas, give opinions and views etc. and have the opportunity in July of each year to stand for election to the board of the Trust themselves if they wish. Please see the additional list of reasons to join the Trust on our website.

The United Trust is run in the democratic tradition using good governance supplied & supported by Supporters Direct. Sporting Trusts are now very well established in the UK in major areas such as Rugby and Football to name but two. There are currently 190 trusts in existence, 73 of which have a director on the board of the relevant club (ref Supporters Direct), 33 of which currently own their clubs and not only do these organisations have some 400,000

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members in the UK alone, they receive significant support from Government via the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, Cabinet Office and Department for Communities and Local Government. Parliamentary support is also at something of a high, particularly in the support for the reforms that are still pending from the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee review of football governance in 2011 & 2012.

In terms of recruitment of new members, as has been stated previously the United Trust is seeking to grow its membership at this present time and as such is developing & planning new ideas and events.

More specifically, we were invited to have a stand at the Family Fun Day at Brunton Park in August, which we duly did and recruited over 50 members on that day; we have a number of ideas for profile & fund raising events in the coming weeks and months, which whilst achieving other goals will also contribute a number of additional new members (some specifics are mentioned in a later paragraph); early in the new year we will have a stand/meeting point at every home game where board members will be available to recruit new members as well as allowing supporters to air their views, have face-to-face access to Board Members, offer suggestions, as well as allowing the Trust to inform supporters, pass on information and generally engage with supporters before the game. We have also, for a number of reasons including recruitment of new members, approached a number of famous local people, ex-players and celebrities with links to Carlisle, Cumbria and the Club to be Honorary Members of the United Trust. As previously stated many of these discussions are currently on-going, so it wouldn't be prudent to disclose those names at this point, however, we do have 3 recently signed up honorary members who were more than happy to lend their support to the cause as they believe not only in Trusts, but in The United Trust as Carlisle United and the Carlisle Community are very close to their hearts – Matt Jansen, Paul Nixon and Jimmy Glass are now Honorary Members of the United Trust and we hope to be involving them in promotions in the near future.

We also sponsor a player every season, currently 'Lee Miller' for 2013/14 and have sponsored a Player of the Season Award for a number of years now.

The increase in the use and activity of social media is another means by which we are increasing our reach and by extension, our membership as well as actively courting supporter opinion. In the last few months the number of Twitter followers has gone up by over 200 and continues to grow. It is at an

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early stage, but we have to start somewhere, and numbers are increasing due directly to the increased usage of the social media and also from re-tweets of messages by followers with much larger numbers of followers such as Grant Holt who has pledged to promote the Trust as much as he can via social media and promotional events etc.

The United Trust does have very strong links with other supporters groups such as the CUFC Supporters Club London Branch, Carlisle United Supporters Away Travel and Cumbrians Elite, along with some links to other groups such as the West Cumbrian Supporters Club and the Norwegian Supporters Club. Whilst we have close links with these groups, we don't necessarily speak for them or they for us, but we are of the same mind on many of the issues facing the club at this present time. With that in mind, we think it would benefit us all if we had these groups even more 'united' under one banner, working together on projects. We had some discussions earlier this year about doing this and will have further discussions specifically with the London Branch and Away Travel representatives in the near future.

We view all supporters of Carlisle United as stakeholders in Carlisle United, and therefore see them as important stakeholders of The United Trust – even if they're not actual members (The United Trust 'is' just over 25% of Carlisle United after all) – this is a concept that Supporters Direct (United Trust's governing body) was built upon. The Trustees of the United Trust (as do the board of the Club) have one duty above all others and that is to 'protect and promote the Club'. Recent high profile cases such as Hull City, Portsmouth, and Coventry City highlight the dangers of owners not viewing supporters as valuable & integral stakeholders. A short discussion with members of any of these Trusts would ensure you were left in no doubt about the dangers of allowing clubs to be owned and managed with 'no' community voice, engagement or stake-holding – conversely they would also highlight the fact that there are any number of clubs who have only been saved due to the existence of their Trusts – in excess of 50 according to Supporters Direct.

In terms of joining or not joining, the Trust is a stronger entity with more members therefore, logically, if we have more members we have a stronger and louder voice in the running of the club.

The reason for the existence of the United Trust and other Trusts across the country and further afield is primarily to protect the best interests of the club, to safeguard against unscrupulous ownership such as is being displayed at a number of clubs and most recently at Cardiff City just last week. The dispute

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you refer to in your letter was resolved in the best interests of the club; had the Trust not existed to challenge the decisions made at the time, then they would not have been resolved in the manner they were.

The aims of the Trust are to improve the running of the club (Governance) in conjunction with the club, and to strengthen & promote bonds between the club & the community.

The critical point about Trusts is that they exist to safeguard, they attempt to ensure the club is run properly, to improve working relationships, challenging any questionable actions/decisions by owners and done so for the community in the best interests of the club and the community. Individual owners, custodians of clubs, managers, players, coaching staff will always come and go in professional football, but critically the 'Supporters' are bound to their club, most supporting one club, often their hometown club, for life and through thick and thin; they therefore have a stake-holding and an interest in that club and a right to have a say in how it is run. By way of an example Cardiff City's owner has recently changed the colour of the club's playing kit from Blue to Red, for his own reasons and this is in direct opposition the supporters' wishes. Can you imagine such a scenario happening with a new owner at Carlisle and how we would all feel about it? Even worse, if it happened and we had absolutely no say in the matter whatsoever? With the revelations that have appeared recently about Cardiff's owner and his relationship with the club's manager reaching rock-bottom despite the excellent work he has done to get the club where it is, fans must be left thoroughly bewildered. Furthermore, if the owner suddenly decides he's had enough of the criticism he is receiving and pulls out lock, stock & barrel, then where does that leave the club? Thankfully at Carlisle the United Trust has an improving working relationship with the current Club board.

The United Trust representative on the Club Board is a fully functioning Director along with the other 5 members, therefore, he/she will take a full and active part in ALL board decisions large and small, reporting back to the Trust Board on all matters other than those deemed confidential to the Club. The United Trust Director played a full part in the process surrounding decisions made recently regarding the Manager. This also includes discussions and decisions regarding 'Project Blue Yonder' and United Trust Member views will be passed on to the board on this matter and any decisions voted for or against by the United Trust Director will be done so with the best interests of the club at heart. There will at some point be a more public forum for fans to

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air concerns about any potential new ground, but at this stage many of the discussions are commercially sensitive and therefore confidential.

The United Trust works closely with a number of bodies and organisations such as Supporters Direct (our governing body), The Football Supporters Federation and a number of other Trusts, looking at Best Practice and learning from situations that have occurred elsewhere.

You state in your letter that there should be a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the CUFC board which outlines to fans exactly what the Trust will be involved with, and how far its influence reaches. There is an agreement between the Club & the Trust which covers almost all of the areas in which the Trust is involved with the Club and the terms & conditions of this agreement are legally protected (25.37%). There are also details on the Trust website about various areas of involvement with the club

Since successfully investing over £800,000 in the club for the return of 25.37% of the total shares in Carlisle United the ability to directly invest further has been limited. In fact there is actually no requirement for the Trust as a shareholder to directly invest further cash sums in the club and indeed we believe that this should only really be necessary for specific projects designed to help to grow the football club as a business and organisation concerned with developing its role in the community such as the Business Club.

Lowering membership has resulted in fewer funds and that is why the Trust is currently exploring, developing and planning new ways to bring monies into the Trust and the Club. The Trust has recently joined the Club's new 'Business Club' as a fully paid up member and as previously stated has also sponsored a player for the season.

There has been no official direct approach to the United Trust from any potential investor in Carlisle United in all of the Trust's 12 year existence. The United Trust's board stance if an offer were to be received would be to approach it in the correct and professional business manner, assess the details and if the offer was too good to refuse then put their backing behind it.

The shares owned by the Trust are owned by and for the community, not by any one individual, they are legally protected so the interests of the wider Carlisle United supporting community can be maintained and protected in the running of the last remaining League Football Club in Cumbria.

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The United Trust, given the opportunity, would work with new owners if an offer were to be tabled that was too good to turn down and would do so in the interests of the club and the community and would seek to retain its share of ownership. Trusts are not and should not be seen as a bar to investment because any genuine potential new owner who has the best interests of the club at heart should be more than happy to work with and alongside a Trust and the community to ensure good management, good governance and a positive, healthy and successful relationship going forward. If a potential owner does not see the value in this then alarm bells should start to ring for all concerned.

If a new investor were to approach the club &/or the Trust and indicate that they were willing to invest in the club then the Trust would be more than happy to work with the investor provided they met the requirements of the Club, the Trust, the 'Fit & Proper Person Test' and any other essential conditions and legislation.

The Chairman of the United Trust and Director on the board Norman Steel works very closely with the Club's Commercial Director Dick Young. As an example, the Trust has recently held meetings with 'Cumbria Tourism' with the intention of raising the Trust's profile and by extension that of the Club in the Cumbria area and further afield.

With regard to the suggestion of a Supporters Night with the Manager Graham Kavanagh, we are already some way down the line with this idea. Graham has agreed to come to the Trust's next open meeting and do a Q&A session. The evening is agreed in principle, but as yet a date has to be agreed around his very busy seasonal schedule, although it is hoped this will be before the end of January 2014.

Various other functions are currently being explored such as Race Nights, Dinner Dances, Evenings with... etc. As previously mentioned we are also in discussions with a number of famous local faces and ex-players about such events. We are also going to provide a stand at each game to sign up new members, discuss issues etc.

We are in discussions with Supporters Direct at the moment about a Trust-focused event which will include speakers from other Trusts, Supporters Direct and other organisations, which we hope will take place between now and the end of the season.

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You make a good point about a 5-a-side tournament and we are going to give this further consideration and exploration however, in relation to your other suggestion of putting on a friendly game against top class opposition, unfortunately the costs involved in doing so in the current financial climate would be prohibitive in the extreme.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for contacting us with some points and ideas and I hope the response above answer most if not all of your initial questions. Please feel free to contact us if you are able to meet with Norman Steel in January as suggested above.

Kind regards

Norman Steel – Chair
Alastair Woodcock – Secretary
Frank Beattie – Vice Chair
For and on behalf of the Board of The United Trust



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