

# Impact Statement

## By the Everton Fan Advisory Board

*Response to further charges laid by the Premier League,  
relating to Profit and Sustainability Regulations (PSR)*

Following the charge against Everton, for the second time, of a breach of the PSR, the Fan Advisory Board (FAB) believes it is important for the Premier League (PL) Commission to consider the implications a further potential points deduction would have for supporters, Club staff, the local community, and indeed to the broader football family.

In doing so, we wish to highlight two fundamental issues that we would ask the PL Commission to give due consideration to:

- a) **Lack of any transparent process or framework addressing PSR breaches and subsequent sanctions in a consistent and fair manner.** We see no evidence of any agreed PL structure or procedure and are now in the bizarre position where some Clubs have been referred to a PL Commission without a clear understanding of how any penalties are assessed, whilst other Clubs are yet to have had their case presented to a Commission, despite having been charged, or being subject to, investigation for some time. This fuels fans' fears of the introduction of a two-tier League within the PL, where it becomes almost impossible for anybody outside of the six ESL breakaway clubs to be financially viable, let alone successful. Additionally, the Premier League now appears to be prioritising a rapid transition from the current PSR to a new policy altogether, potentially as early as this Summer. This indicates a recognition by the Premier League that the current policy is not fit for purpose. The sensible course of action would therefore be to suspend all current proceedings and sanctions, until any system can be subject to proper oversight by an Independent Regulator.
- b) **Application of a potential second sanction covering a time period for which supporters and the Club have already been penalised.** We believe that this "double jeopardy" approach is contrary to natural justice and from a supporter's perspective, lacks common sense, particularly in the absence of any agreed PL and PL shareholder rules or sanctions policy. This does not reflect any attempt at "sustainability" for the Club or the PL at large.

### The Fans

We wish to state from the outset that Everton supporters acknowledge that Everton Football Club has not been managed well in recent years.

Those unfamiliar with events preceding the PSR charges may not have known that the strongest critics of the way the Club was being managed, were the fans themselves. Owners and Directors come and go, but the fans remain the true custodians and the ever-present support in good times and bad. Nothing demonstrated this more than their hard

work and campaigning in recent years, which resulted in the Club reflecting on its practices and decision-making and making changes at the top of its organisation. To punish these fans seems like an unforgivable act of apathy on the part of the PL.

Inasmuch as the FAB welcomes the reduction in the points sanction ordered by the Appeal Board for the first charge on 26 February, we strongly disagree with its statement that “appropriateness and proportionality of any sanction imposed cannot be affected by the understandable strength of feeling of the Everton supporter base”. This directly contradicts one of the guiding principles of the Government’s Fan Led Review of Football Governance, which will form the basis of upcoming legislation to introduce an Independent Regulator, and which the Premier League and its disciplinary panel will be obliged to consider, when it says that sanctions should “avoid impacting fans, where possible”. In the absence of any clear guidelines, fans have also been left to their own devices in attempting to understand, analyse and translate what are complex issues. This can only serve to further fuel the lack of trust so many fans now have in the PL, which is overtly demonstrated at many games.

Furthermore, the flawed practice of laying a second charge as described above, without having heard the results of the appeal against the first charge sanctions, demonstrates that the PL has failed to give the Club and stakeholders the breathing space needed to consider a way forward, including what necessary controls need to be put in place to mitigate against further breaches. This results in the PL undermining the very cause it exists to protect. It puts any club, not just Everton, at risk of beginning a downward spiral of perpetual motion from which it becomes almost impossible to escape. It saps the joy out of the game for its most important stakeholders, the fans.

## **The Community**

Those for whom the shadow of Goodison Park casts a large, historical, cultural and protective net are a diverse group, including local residents, small businesses, Club employees and users of the Club’s community-based facilities, such as the wellbeing hub, the free school the people’s hub and the Blue Base, which caters for disabled supporters on matchdays and on other days becomes a foodbank pantry and assistance hub for disadvantaged families.

The area of North Liverpool, where the new stadium build is progressing is a very deprived area indeed and the prospect of the stadium brings with it jobs, regeneration and opportunities for the residents that were not possible only five years ago. For all Everton has got wrong in its Club management and finances, it has always remained true to its promise to engage with the heart of the area and build a community which includes schools, meeting hubs, wellbeing centres and social enterprises benefitting the entire region, including partnering with local organisations, such as Fans Supporting Foodbanks, to support critical social issues such as food poverty.

Everton is not just a football club; it is the very epicentre of the community, and many people depend on it on a daily basis. When, therefore, the PL talks of ‘sustainability’, how does punishing the Club, by threatening its very existence, fit that brief?

## **The Players and Club Employees**

To believe that the players have not been affected by the uncertainty brought about by the sanctions and threat of further sanctions, would be naïve and wrong. They cannot be immune to the dire constraints such punitive sanctions and the lack of clarity of any rules or process places on the Club. They not only have to consider whether they have a viable future at the Club, but whether the hard work they put in every day on the training ground and during a match will be cancelled out through matters entirely beyond their control.

The uncertainty also places a huge burden on those individuals employed by football clubs across the football family. These are people who dedicate their professional lives to supporting and playing a part in helping realise the dreams, hopes and aspirations of all supporters.

We think that Brentford player, Christian Norgaard, summed up the situation perfectly:

“Somewhere, someone is sitting with a calculator and putting in points, taking away points. I don’t know. It’s people’s jobs, people’s lives they’re messing with.”

**Everton Fan Advisory Board**  
**March 2024**