



THISTLE FOR EVER

Since Thistle For Ever was launched there has been a lot of interest in it. Over 250 have already pledged support in the form of a regular donation and some sizeable once off donations. Many others have, rightly, posed a wide range of questions which we have endeavoured to answer as best we can.

What we have identified from the comments and questions received it is clear there needs to be more information about what community ownership means, what Thistle For Ever is, and what it is proposing. If any misunderstanding is a failure on our part then we apologise and hope that the following helps to clarify.

Thistle For Ever is not proposing something new in Scottish football and in football generally.

Community ownership is increasing with Motherwell, Hearts, St Mirren and Dunfermline being well known examples in Scotland as well as others. It is an approach that is widely recognised with fans across the game and just as we've had support from fans of other clubs, we know that there will be some Thistle fans that have pledged support for other clubs when they started their journey to community ownership.

What Thistle For Ever is seeking to do is to buy the shares that are currently on sale so that the club is ALWAYS owned by its supporters.

Community ownership is just that. It means that the club is owned by a community and not by individuals who may, for many reasons, decide at any point to sell to someone else. That is the foundation of what Thistle For Ever is all about: to ensure that the club is controlled by those who have the greatest interest in it – the fans.

What a community owned club is not is one that is run on a day to day basis by the fans. This appears to be one of biggest areas of misunderstanding. In the cases of Motherwell, Hearts, St Mirren and Dunfermline, they have professional and skilled people running the club and this would be the same for Thistle.

To be clear – being fan owned is an entirely different concept from being a fan-run club.

What we are proposing would mean that the normal club structure continues to operate as usual but would sit alongside a fans board.

The latter would agree the objectives with the directors on the club board, who would then set the strategy and monitor the day-to-day activity of the club, in the same way the current board does. For example, Thistle has been financially well run over the last number of years using a break-even model, under fan ownership there's every reason why that would continue.



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There are other recognised benefits of fan ownership that can only be good for Thistle:

- Allows the club to develop deeper and more long-term strategic partnerships with the local community and businesses making it easier to align agendas with public or private strategic partners and seek additional finances
- Develops a greater sense of shared agendas and partnerships between local authorities, clubs and business at a time where there is significant focus on community projects and activities
- As fan-owned, with a structure that means it reports directly to its members, this will build a level of trust with the fans and a shared sense of responsibility. There is also an automatically increased transparency, which helps build trust

There are also a number of benefits that result from fan ownership that's not always seen in a traditionally commercial operation:

- Community ownership creates a greater sense of financial responsibility; an increased recognition for the club to live within its means.
- Fan-owned clubs can raise finance in other, less conventional, ways. For example, through community shares or through longer term funding initiatives and membership schemes.
- Greater transparency in terms of club's finances as relevant information is more accessible to fans.
- Sponsors are attracted to fans-owned clubs due to the more complete buy-in that supporter have to these clubs. It has added a new level of loyalty and responsibility when the stakeholders owning the club.
- There is also evidence that shows an increase in the level of season ticket sales after community ownership and an increased commitment from sponsors for a longer term than normal.
- A deeper association can be built that allows for the reputational value of sponsors being associated with a club owned by its supporters as well as providing added value. Just a few weeks ago, Motherwell secured the largest ever sponsorship deal in their history - and one of the reasons cited by the sponsor was that the club was a fans-owned club.

There is absolutely no reason why the day to day operations of the club or the team would change as a result of Thistle becoming community owned. This is not what Thistle For Ever is about and never has been. If in the future the members decide they do want change then that is up to the fans who have been elected to sit on the Fans Board to decide. It is certainly not the aim of Thistle For Ever.

There are also lots of other questions and answers on the Thistle For Ever website (www.ThistleForEver.org) which we hope answers many other questions that have been posed.



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We welcome questions and hope we have demonstrated a willingness throughout to answer them wherever we can. Having a clear understanding of what is proposed is important to everyone.

What is the Fans Board?

This would be voted for by every member and represents the views of the ordinary supporters, who choose who to represent their interests. Its main task is to govern, not run the club, as well as growing the fans organisation and to be the conduit for two-way dialogue between the fans and the club board.

What is the Club Board?

This is the small group of individuals who are suitably qualified to run the day-to-day operations of a full-time professional football club.

In the case of Motherwell, and indeed Hearts, all the Club Board Members become members of the fans' organisation showing a united approach to owning and running the club. At Motherwell, for example, this has grown to a position where most of the staff, including the players, have become members in the Well Society and have a very direct influence on how the club is governed.

If we were to follow the Motherwell model, then there would be two elected members of the Club Board who would have served and been elected from the representatives on the Fans Board, ensuring the group has a loud, clear voice in the Boardroom. What is essential is that is to understand the difference between fans owning the club and fans running the club. The successful combinations are that the fans (owners) empower the Club Board and ensure that it has the right skill sets to manage a professional football club.