

“I’m a Wanderer!”

Prospective new Chairboys owner Rob Couhig answers questions from Wanderer readers about about his proposed takeover.

What made you choose to invest in Wycombe Wanderers? Ben

RC: Tradition, potential, and geography. As Trevor and I spoke, I came to believe that the combination of my experience and management team along with Wycombe’s historic relationship to English Football could create a great synergy that will allow us to develop a fantastic club in a very special area.

Will there still be Trust/supporter input in the running of the club, at least at board level? Also, you’ve agreed to give the Trust first refusal should you choose to sell the club, but if the Trust do not take this option, would Legacy Members have any say in who you then sold to? Via the Gasroom

RC: Yes, as part of our agreement the Trust will have 1/3 of the members of the board. I have found that client and customer involvement (in this case, fan involvement) is critical to the successful operation of any business. Until I saw the question about the Trust not exercising a potential right to purchase, I never considered another option. The idea of selling any time soon is not something I have contemplated.

You mentioned in the meeting that there wouldn’t be a huge increase in the playing budget because of the Salary Cost Management Protocol (SCMP) which dictates that clubs cannot spend more than 60% of their turnover. However, in League One, that turnover can include donations from owners and injections of equity. To that end, are your plans to attain Championship football based on increased revenue and a sustainable budget, or increasing the club’s turnover and playing budget through donations? Via the Gasroom

RC: One of my first discussions was with Gareth about this very thing. Candidly, I am not wealthy enough to annually donate enough money to give the club a championship level budget. In fact, if you look at some clubs around the league, I think that’s how other teams have gotten in trouble. Rather, we will put enough money up to support Gareth this year and probably next year as we build a sustainable business model of fan support that will create the necessary revenue, we will need to be successful and sustainable.

Please can we sign Fred Onyedima? Via the Gasroom

Yes! Gareth, Trevor and I agreed on an enhanced budget. Fred is signed. It took some intricate manoeuvring by Trevor and Gareth. It was similar to a complicated chess maneuver in which one piece being moved caused a reaction: Sometimes a piece has to be sacrificed for the greater good. Finding the right combination was critical. Hopefully, all involved will be happy with the way things turned out.

Prior to your arrival, Gareth Ainsworth said he'd released a few players due to the budget that he would have otherwise retained. Michael Harriman was likely one of those players and is currently still a free agent, is there any chance he might now be offered a new deal? Via the Gasroom

RC: Unfortunately, preseason is almost over and with many players already under contract or having been offered a contract, I suspect it's unlikely. We all hope for the best for Michael and we never say never when it comes to a player of his talent. I am excited by the team that Gareth and Trevor have put together.

Do you have any plans to invest in the reintroduction of a youth set up and if so, how long do you think it would take to put in place? Via Facebook

RC: Once the sale is completed, we expect to put into place an under 23 team to assist Gareth and the first team. Hopefully, down the road, we will also re-introduce an Academy. I would be surprised if that took place within the next two years.

What action do you feel is your first priority at the club? Clare

RC: We have set about to make the fan experience at Adams Park second to none anywhere else. There will be changes in the ticketing; improved concessions and merchandise; we are installing a state of the art Soundsystem; we are committed to having the cleanest restrooms in the league; and we are busy working with the staff to make sure everyone understands we are here to serve the fans.

At the meeting you spoke of your ambition to see Wycombe Wanderers become a sustainable Championship club. What sort of investment do you think would be required to make that become a reality? Via Facebook

RC: It is going to require a minimum of £2,000,000 to pay off all the associated debt currently affiliated with the club, stadium, and training facility. In addition, we have agreed to fund up any necessary losses from this year and an increased budget for player spending. We anticipate that amount to be between another £250,000 - £1,000,000. In my conversations with Trevor and Gareth, it's become apparent to me that we will ultimately need to have a significant increase in the SCMP to realistically compete for promotion. We are committed to achieving that over the next two years. In the meantime, we are making investments that will build sustainable revenue streams. These will get us to that amount. You will notice changes in the ticketing, concessions, merchandise, use of the facility, online sales and the like. While progress will take time, it will happen. The total amount will be whatever is required that can be sustained over time.

If we fail to progress in League One, or should the worst happen and we are relegated back to League Two, would you still be happy to continue investing in the club? Via the Gasroom

RC: My business model is not dependent on promotion or relegation. While I would not be happy if we fail to get promoted or if we get relegated, it will not affect our investment nor continued involvement with the club.

What is your current valuation of WWFC and what would you project the value to be in two- and five-year's time if you became majority shareholder? Via the Gasroom

RC: Under any reasonable business model an entity that has lost in successive years £400,000 and then £700,000 and was well on its way to losing over £1,000,000 has no value beyond the sentimental. However, as a member of the EFL with great fan support and a commercially responsible lease with the stadium, I believe that the club can become sustainable. At that time, I would expect that a valuation would be some multiple of net revenue. I have no projections as to what that will be.

You talked in the meeting about improving attendances quite significantly from the current average. How do you intend to do that, and do you think it would take a long time to achieve? Via the Gasroom

RC: I believe that we must make the fan experience so good that regardless of what takes place on the pitch, fans will want to return and bring others with them. This can and will happen. We will also work on the infrastructure to make transportation to and from the stadium easier. I believe this first year we can make important steps toward increasing attendance but it's going to take 2 to 3 years of continual work to get us to where we need to be.

Are there any plans to improve the season ticket offering, aside from the current early bird discount offer? Via Facebook

RC: Probably the most important improvement will be the ease of purchase through a new ticketing system. It's a little late to look at change in pricing and the like for this season.

In terms of improving spectator experience at Adams Park, are there plans to get decent WiFi coverage in all areas of the ground? Via the Gasroom

RC: Yes. We've already begun work on completely changing out the sound system and have initiated the change in the ticketing and payments for concessions. We are actively looking at the Wi-Fi situation.

Can we have Balti pies back please? Via the Gasroom

RC: When I'm back in Wycombe for the Bolton match, I'll have a Balti pie and do a taste test. We will then make a decision. Seriously, we are looking at all aspects of our concessions to make sure we serve what the fans want. I will let Pete know of your desire for the Baltie Pie.

Are there plans to introduce more green initiatives at Adams Park, such as vegetarian/vegan food, recycling bins and a reduction in single use plastics? Uncle T

RC: To say that there are plans would be an overstatement. It is certainly our intention to expand concession selections and reduce non-recyclable trash.

Is it your intention to maintain a standing terrace behind the home goal? Via the Gasroom

RC: Yes.

Have you tried the famous Adams Park 'Beefy Drink'? Bluey the Swan

RC: No. I will have Mark and Peter each try one and if they survive, I will go next.

The single access route to Adams Park is seen as an inhibiting factor when it comes to improving attendances. Are there any plans to create a secondary route? Via the Gasroom

RC: Mark Palmer and Peter Couhig are working with other members of the club and supporters to try to solve this perennial issue. It would be irresponsible of me to promise a solution until they have looked at all options. However, we hope to solve the problem and that solution may include a secondary route.

If you become majority shareholder, Adams Park will remain under the ownership of Frank Adams Legacy Limited (FALL). To that end, who will be financially responsible for any maintenance/improvement work that is required/carried out at the ground? Via the Gasroom

RC: While the exact lease agreement has not been finalized, it is my expectation that the club will be responsible for the maintenance and improvement work.

If you fail to secure a 75% vote, how to you envisage the club paying you back the money you'll have invested? How long a period would the Trust have to repay you? Via the Gasroom

RC: Under the agreement I have with the board, the club has 120 days to repay me which can be extended by an additional 90 days.

Given that you have to secure a 75% yes vote from the entire Trust Legacy Membership, not just 75% of those who vote, do you have a plan to encourage voter turnout? Via Facebook

RC: Yes.

Is there any danger you might get the 75+% vote, but then decide not to proceed with the acquisition after all? Via the Gasroom

RC: No. I will have a signed agreement requiring me to close, subject only to the vote of the trust, by the time the vote goes to the members of the Trust.

Given the Akinfenwa factor, do you think there is any scope for promoting the club in the States? Tom Hancock

RC: Yes. Peter and I have already discussed this with Matt Cecil. By the way, while Akinfenwa will be a significant attribute, many of the other members of the team will be as well. In fact, one of the new signees, Giles Phillips, is from Chicago. Hopefully, a lot of people in that region will follow him on iFollow.

Where would you like to see Wycombe Wanderers in five years' time? Jack Dolan

RC: I would like to see the Wanderers as regular members of the Championship league with a sustainable business model creating lasting memories for the fans and families.

From a business perspective, how do you hope to see a return on your investment? Via the Gasroom

RC: At some point in the distant future, if and when we decide to sell, we will hopefully get money back that we have invested and if done right, there will be a multiple on net revenue that should give a responsible return.

Do you have an ideal exit strategy and what sort of return on your investment would you consider to be successful? Via the Gasroom

RC: No. With respect to a return on the investment, please see above.

How far do you think you could take this club? Daniel Brion

RC: My goal is to build a sustainable business model that will allow us to compete in the Championship league. I would not have a goal that I did not think we could achieve it.

Can you assure fans that key parts of the club's identity, such as the badge, team name and club colours remain the same? Via the Gasroom

RC: Yes. In fact, that is written into our preliminary agreement and I expect it will be memorialized in the final agreement.

Has there been any thoughts about staging Wycombe Wanderers Ladies games at Adams Park directly before first team games to encourage more support? Via the Gasroom

RC: While we have discussed ways to assist the ladies, we have not tried to figure out how to have a game immediately before the lads play. As you know, there are groundskeeping issues, but we will work on it.

You've been involved in American politics as a member of the Republican Party. What is your opinion of Donald Trump's presidency and have you ever met him? Via Facebook

RC: I don't recall meeting President Trump. I am in favor of many of his policies of economic freedom, strong national defense and reduced taxes. His public statements sometimes are a disappointment. I don't think it's necessary to be crude.

What do you feel makes up the core identity of Wycombe Wanderers? Via the Gasroom

RC: An understandable pride in a team that embodies the history, hopes, aspirations, and occasional disappointments of the community.

What is your favourite type of cheese? Chris

RC: Blue.

What's your spirit animal? Jonny

RC: I was unfamiliar with the concept, so I looked up a test on the internet. It gave Dolphin as the answer. My wife would say it's my dog, Buster (pictured below, or you can see him on his Facebook page at his job at our bookstore in Louisiana.). The real answer is that my animal spirit is that of a Wanderer. As my friend Dion would say, "I'm a Wanderer. Yeah, a Wanderer".



Buster's Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/busterthebookstoredog>