

Rob addresses season ticket feedback

A note from the chairman.

Chairman Rob Couhig writes to fans at the end of the first day of sales of 2020/21 season tickets.

Dear supporter,

At around 6pm UK time on Friday, I came off a Zoom call with the team in the office at Adams Park delighted to learn that we had sold over 500 season tickets on the very first day of sales. I'm told that we sold 36 in the same period last year, and although the circumstances are very different, I have to say that – after a frankly disheartening period of no football, uncertainty and loss of revenue – I am humbled but not surprised by the dedication to Wycombe Wanderers of so many fans.

24 hours earlier I had learned that of all the season ticket holders who had responded with their preferences on rebates for unfulfilled fixtures, more than 90% had generously opted to waive their rebate and allocate the money to Gareth's playing budget instead. We felt it important to address outstanding issues from the current season before selling tickets for the new one, and it was terrific to see such a response from fans who appreciated the tough challenges we have had to overcome and were able to forego their refund to benefit the club.

However, I have some admissions to make and I have reflected with the team that we perhaps didn't give enough prior warning or explanation of the changes that were about to come in relation to season tickets. Please allow me to paint the picture.

The process to draw up next season's ticketing strategy began in the winter, with some real thorough research into our own historical sales data as well as benchmarking our prices against other clubs in League 1 and the Championship. On my last visit to the club in early March, we reviewed our findings and came up with a model that we believed represented good value for our fans and a financial framework that would enable us to be sustainable year on year.

That model was placed on hold until such time that we felt it right to launch our season ticket packages. Very quickly, the coronavirus pandemic swept into the UK, forced the suspension of the season, and any thoughts of next season were put towards the backs of our minds. At no point did we feel it appropriate to ask for financial donations from fans, appreciating the challenging economic climate for everyone during lockdown at the peak of the pandemic.

Once we learned the outcome of the EFL vote on how to resolve the season, which confirmed our place in the play-offs, we were able to kick back into gear and pick up those plans once again, moving forward with our refund policy and season ticket packages.

First of all, the prices are the same as we agreed in March, and we stand by our affirmation that these prices are not dependent on the division we play in. I am a bigger believer in the value of the fan experience rather than the level of football on the pitch.

We know that our prices stack up very reasonably in League 1, and even more so in the Championship, when compared to other clubs.

No longer are we willing to offer free tickets to children, or any fan for that matter. I don't know of any organisation in the entertainment or leisure industries that welcomes children for free. How can you teach anyone the value of a ticket to an experience if that ticket has no price attached to it? What's more, many free tickets were in high-demand areas of the stadium, which meant we were unable to sell them for the more popular matches of the season even if those ticket holders didn't come to the game.

So we have attached a price to every child and junior ticket in the stadium, and we have reflected today that the junior price in the Family Stand is too expensive. This is being amended from £190 to £95 and each of the fans who have already purchased this ticket will be contacted to make arrangements for £95 to be returned to them.

We have received feedback that tickets for children and juniors in the Frank Adams Stand are too expensive. Let me explain that we have a real vision for the Family Stand to be an incredible location for young fans to enjoy the game and contribute to the atmosphere by being altogether in one stand, right up close to the pitch where they can almost touch the action, see the players and collect autographs and high fives before and after the match. The Frank Adams Stand, by contrast, has steep steps, a concourse area selling Rebellion Beer and also happens to be our most sought-after area of the stadium. We have priced this accordingly and already this is the stand with the most season ticket sales so far.

In previous years, where there has been relatively small price increments (if any) in season tickets each summer, the prices have been based loosely around fans getting seven games 'free' compared to them buying match tickets for each individual game. Our match ticket prices, which will be published after fixtures for the new season are announced this summer, have not changed significantly, but no longer will season ticket holders be receiving such a level of discount – it just doesn't work for our sustainable business plan.

We have also ensured there is a payment plan to enable fans to spread payments over three monthly instalments. In previous years, third-party lenders have operated this service and charged an 8% fee to our supporters. This year, we have taken it in-house and won't be charging you a fee. We hope this service will help lessen the financial burden for those who may not be able to afford one lump sum.

Today's feedback also revealed that a number of fans didn't receive the email which carried instructions on how to renew their ticket. This is the first year in which we have sold season tickets using the TicketCo platform, which was introduced at the end of last summer, and it is apparent that during the migration of data from the old system to the new, some email addresses have been lost along the way. If this applies to you, please email tickets@wwfc.com and the team will resolve this for you as soon as they can.

We have been asked if our process is fair, granting priority access to matches which may have a limited capacity to the first fans who buy a season ticket. Naturally we hope to accommodate everyone who wants to attend, and are hopeful that this will be

the case when the new season starts, but we need a policy if the demand outweighs the supply and this is the approach we have taken. Fans who weren't able to buy early, due to not receiving their email from TicketCo, will be accommodated as best we can – we will work on a solution once we have a clearer idea of how many people are affected and how many fans might stand to lose out.

We have agreed to loosen our originally stated policy on fixtures that you may be unable to attend due to limitations on capacity. Initially we had said that only an iFollow pass would be issued in this instance, but today we have agreed that we will be happy to offer a pro-rata rebate – either by way of a voucher to spend with the club, or a return of funds – for fans who buy a season ticket but are not permitted to attend matches as a consequence of capacity restrictions.

On the subject of rebates, it has been suggested that it was not fair to ask fans to waive their rebates on Thursday, only to announce inflated season ticket prices on Friday. It was not our intention to be unfair or mislead any fan, and the opportunity remains for supporters to re-submit their form if they now wish for a rebate having previously chosen to waive their balance.

This is an exciting time for everyone at the club, with the play-offs taking place in two weeks, and preparations being made for the new season. I am proud of the efforts of those who have carried the club through these most challenging of times, and would like to thank everyone in the office for their outstanding work today in managing the season ticket process. Many of their colleagues remain on furlough leave as we cannot afford to carry our full operation at this time, but their dedication to helping supporters renew their season tickets and answer queries has been exemplary.

I hope I have met your expectations of honesty and transparency from your chairman with this message, and thank all who have purchased a season ticket as well as those who have expressed their views on why they may not be renewing their seat. We are always learning and will not always get everything right., but we will always have the best interests of the football club at heart.

Thanks for your support,
Rob

Rob will be taking part in a video Q&A with fans early next week; full details to follow.