

Trust Statement – 8th November 2023

We have been waiting for this news for what seems like an eternity, and until recently it still seemed unbelievable that it would happen, but the Shrimpers Trust is delighted that the creation of an independent football regulator by the UK Government was announced in yesterday's King's Speech at the State Opening of Parliament.

The sport that we love is on a path to disaster in England. Finances across the board are in a disgraceful mess, and our clubs and their assets are at the mercy of unaccountable and potentially unscrupulous owners.

We hope that the independent regulator will strengthen the ties between our football clubs, along with their facilities, and the fabric of their local communities, helping them to realise their potential as centrepieces of local pride and identity. We also hope, as a result of the regulation, that supporters will be treated as key stakeholders who can enrich their clubs through formal engagement and by having a say in important day-to-day decisions, rather than as customers and cash cows. The outdated and redundant "Martin Model" of football club ownership must end, and the existence of football clubs must be safeguarded.

Yesterday's announcement is a significant step, but only the first on what could still be a lengthy road ahead before full implementation. What we would really hate to see is a stripped-back and watered-down version of what has been proposed off the back of lobbying by those in our game who have selfish vested interests, as opposed to having the best interests of the entire pyramid at large at heart. Now is the time for the football family to come together and give an almighty push to get this regulation through, intact, on a tidal wave of fan support. There is still plenty of work to do.

The Shrimpers Trust continues to engage regularly with key stakeholders including Anna Firth MP, the Minister for Sport Stuart Andrew MP, and policy officials in DCMS. We stand ready to use our unique recent experiences as supporters of one of the most at-risk football clubs in the country, to feed into the creation of robust and far-reaching policy and to play our part in ensuring that the mismanagement that has plagued our national sport comes to an end.

We have updated our paper "Dereliction & Decline: The Story of Southend United under Ron Martin" to include preliminary impacts of the paper, including recent conversations with Stuart Andrew and responses to it from Anna Firth MP, the FSA, FairGame, ResPublica and football finance expert Kieran Maguire. You can find this updated version of "Dereliction & Decline" on our website.

The Shrimpers Trust Board.