Where We Stand is a five-part series setting out what the BFCISA sees as good, long-term stewardship of Burnley Football Club. Each part takes a value from our Constitution and Statement of Values, and draws on members' views, what the Football Governance Act 2025 and the Independent Football Regulator (IFR) expect of clubs, and guidance from the Football Supporters' Association (FSA). This is part two, on Participation. Part one, on Connection, is here.

One of the aims in our Constitution is to encourage the club's directors and management "to appreciate, welcome and value the support and participation of all Burnley fans". In part one of the Where We Stand series, we discussed participation, informed by what members told us in October: they feel disconnected from their own club and worried about its future. Much of that comes down to who gets a say.

In this season's Fan Engagement Plan, the Chairman, Alan Pace, writes about "making decisions for our fans, with our fans". For that to mean something, it matters who the club asks and when it asks them.

Although the club does meet with supporter groups, ourselves included, currently, the club's only formal consultation process runs through one group, its Fan Advisory Board (FAB). It was set up in 2023 under Premier League rules and kept on in the Championship, even though EFL rules do not require one. The club's own FAB summary records that "formal advice and consultation will only occur via the FAB", and by club policy a FAB member now sits in on every meeting with supporters' groups, including ours. We have challenged this and members tell us consultation with the club can feel like a closed shop.

Any fan who puts themselves forward to represent supporters wants the best for the club and are, more often than not, well-meaning, passionate individuals who give their time in good faith. FAB members are no different and credit where it's due: their work helped freeze season ticket prices for 2025/26 and keep the 2026/27 rise to 2.9%, just below inflation.

The problem often lies in the fact that the club decides who sits on the FAB and what they can discuss. The club's own Fan Engagement Plan calls the board "an independent panel" in the same sentence that says members were selected through a process "involving senior Club leaders and Chairman Alan Pace". It is co-chaired by a club official and a fan chair, with no record of how the fan chair was chosen, even though the Premier League standard it was set up to meet says chairs should be "elected from the FAB membership group".

The club will point to FAB members who belong to fan groups, and its plan says the FAB "comprises representatives from a broad range of Supporter Groups". But they were selected as individuals, and the club has previously confirmed to us they do not fill seats reserved for those groups. Should they step down, there's no guarantee their place goes to an elected representative.

Nor are there any published rules. Many clubs publish terms of reference, setting out what the club and the FAB each sign up to, so fans can hold both to account. Burnley do not, even though the Premier League's own review of their FAB, reported in February 2025, listed "creating a Terms of Reference for the board" as an area for improvement. More than 20 months on, none has been published. Fan representatives at other clubs serve fixed terms, and guidance from the Independent Football Regulator (IFR) suggests terms of three years, with no more than nine in total. Burnley publish no terms of office at all.

By way of contrast, our own committee, and many others like us, are elected by our members. Every place is up for election each year, and any member can stand or vote. We have a written constitution and equality and complaints policies, and our accounts go to members at the AGM. The FSA sets tests like these before a group can become an Affiliate member and is the highest standard they set. We became Affiliate members in the summer, and have agreed to regular governance checks by the FSA to make sure we keep meeting them. Our constitution, policies and committee meeting notes are all published on our website https://www.burnleyfcisa.com/.

It is not just about who is asked however, as when fans are asked matters just as much. The Football Supporters' Association (FSA) says fans should be consulted "when the proposal is still at a formative stage", and the IFR says clubs "should consult with fans before making decisions that affect them". Too often at Burnley, fans are asked afterwards, if at all. When the badge was changed to a monochrome look, the club's August 2024 FAB summary said "we did not require a consultation as we were changing the colours only". In our summer survey of fans, 57% disapproved of the badge and just 13% approved. A change like that would now face a much higher bar: under the Football Governance Act, a club cannot make "material changes" to its crest or main home shirt colours without taking "reasonable steps" to establish that a majority of its fans support it.

Supporters elsewhere have the same complaint. In its State of the Game report, the IFR found some supporter groups felt engagement "could become a tick-box exercise", with groups "informed of decisions only after they had been made".

Putting this right starts with who represents the fans. The FSA recommends 6-12 members appointed according to a democratic process, independent of the club as well as reserved seats for representatives from key supporters groups such as trusts, democratically structured, independent supporters groups, and equality and diversity groups. Alongside that, there should be stated terms of office for all elected members and an agreed and published Terms of Reference document. At Cardiff City, groups with reserved seats choose their representative through their own democratic process, and other places go to a verified election. At Swansea City, the club has "no power of appointment or veto" except in a few listed cases.

The FSA will help clubs set this up free of charge, and offered that help to every EFL club at the start of this season, Burnley included. Fellow Championship clubs have taken it up: at West Brom, the FSA sat on the panel that shortlisted applicants anonymously, and at Southampton it supported this year's FAB elections alongside independent panel members.

Whoever fills those seats is there to bring other fans' voices into the room or, as the FSA puts it, "as representatives of fellow supporters, rather than to further their own personal opinions". All of this feeds into connection. Most fans cannot, or do not want to, stand for these roles, but we all want to know that someone is speaking for us and, if they are not, that there is a way, independent of the club, to change that.

For the first time, the regulator provides one. In its licence application, due by 26th February, the club is asked to tell the IFR who its formal fan group is, whether they were elected or appointed, and how. If they are appointed, the process should be explained to fans and "free from manipulation or undue influence by the club", and if there is any doubt they speak for the fanbase, the regulator has the final say.

In August, we asked to be involved in the club's licence consultation. On 11th September, the club replied: "If we require the assistance of the BFCISA we'll be in touch." Five days later, the club told the FAB its work would "form an important part of the Club's evidence".

We believe Burnley fans should choose who represents them, through a process the club does not control, with the rules published for everyone to see. And they should be asked while decisions can still change. That is what "with our fans" should mean. The FSA's help is free, and we would encourage the club to accept it.

Asking fans is only half of it. Next week, in part three, we will be looking at Accountability, what the club does with what fans tell it, one of the three principles in our Statement of Values.