

## TRUST MATTERS

# Fantastic to see hard work pay off at new Roko training ground

Michael Saunders is an architect and executive board member of the Pompey Supporters' Trust (PST) for stadium and infrastructure.

Saunders advised the design element of the impending move to the Blues' new training ground at Roko Health Club in Hilsea, and procured the necessary planning application package to begin working on the site.

Earlier this month, Saunders returned to the location to inspect the new training pitches ahead of the Pompey Academy's arrival last week.

It is expected the Blues' first team will move to Roko at the end of next month.

I became involved behind the scenes with the new training ground at the start of the year – the project had been going on for a while but the club approached me for some guidance in my area of expertise and I was only too willing to help in any way possible.

I put some drawings together to understand specifically what the club wanted and also gave my own advice on the types of fences we should put up and that sort of thing.

I then put together the planning application for two-and-a-half pitches and the surrounding fences and was able to provide those services free of charge – saving the club some money in the process!

There have been a few other little tweaks we have needed to iron out along the way in order to make sure everything has fitted together.

I've been advising and in close contact with the training ground group that consists primarily of Mark Catlin, Mick Williams, Ian Silvester and originally Richie Barker but now Andy Awford.

by **MICHAEL SAUNDERS**

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Andy had been involved in the process anyway as the Academy manager but since he's taken over first-team duties, he has stepped in and voiced what he wants from the site.

He's been thorough – I've had a few meetings with Andy, trying to work out what gymnasiums and treatment rooms are needed and what not.

It's part of my day job to take things from the drawing board and see them built but it is always a satisfying feeling.

And as a Pompey fan and season-ticket holder for 25 years it's been great to be involved in a project like this, which the club has needed for years.

To have had that input and be able to see it become reality is fantastic.

It was good to pop down a couple of weeks ago and see the changing rooms and everything coming together.

It was also nice to walk around and be able to see another community club-led initiative come to fruition prior to the Academy's initial arrival.

While I've been able to donate time and skills and other people at the club have worked tirelessly on the process, none of this would have been possible without the supporters' backing.

It is Pompey fans going through the turnstiles in their thousands, backing the Tifosy scheme and buying their shares that has allowed this to happen.

The presidents have also dug deep and it's more good news for the club – everything off the pitch has been good.

Hopefully the new training ground means good news on the pitch as well!



Michael Saunders, right, and Pompey chief executive Mark Catlin visit the club's new training ground, while the Academy, inset, sample the Hilsea-based site ahead of the first-team's expected arrival at the end of next month

PICTURE: JOE PEPLER

## Fratton Park will soon be flying flag for community ownership



The official club flag will be joined atop the North Stand by a Pompey Supporters' Trust flag

There's been so much going on this week I almost don't know where to start.

But what better place than the good news the PST logo, which represents all that is great and good about our beloved club, will be making its presence well and truly felt on matchdays at Fratton Park – alongside the official club crest.

It has been levelled by some that a trip to PO4 does not shout loudly enough about the fact we are a club owned by its fans.

by **JOHN KIMBELL**

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Many supporters were happy to see the Milton End convey the 'owned by the fans' message but a change in sponsorship means that has now departed.

Instead, I am pleased to reveal plans to unveil a flag featuring the PST logo and all that it represents erected on top of the North Stand and also have our logo on the official club programme.

We will also be looking at advertising and branding around the club because it's important we bring that association with the PST to the forefront.

We were also pleased this week to welcome sports minister Helen Grant to the south coast and launch The Supporter Ownership & Engagement Expert Group – led by PST member Joanna Manning-Cooper.

The group will see the government and football authorities work together to explore ways in which fans

can have more engagement in the running of the clubs they support.

Jo will be keeping us updated with its progress in Trust Matters in the Sports Mail in the coming months.

PST vice-chairman Ken Malley has also been busy this week, hosting a meeting at Fratton Park on Wednesday night for fans wishing to seek legal advice following the well-publicised kettling of Pompey fans at Shrewsbury in April last year.

Ken is passionate about

this particular issue and the meeting was another example of how the club, PST and fans are interacting with one another in a way that would not have been imaginable in years gone by.

I would also like to draw attention to a PST-supported fundraising event being organised by the Pompey DSA (Disabled Supporters Association).

A 'Spooky Halloween Disco' is being held at Fratton Park on Friday night (5.30-10pm) and everyone is welcome to join in the fun.