



Candidate Statement



Simon Colebrook

Three years ago, I decided to put myself forward to become a Board Member of the PST. Little did I realise how tumultuous the next three years would be or the momentous decision that we would be making.

After being elected, my focus was primarily on acting as Treasurer, ensuring that the finances of the Trust were sound and that all of the processes and procedures were robust. I'm pleased to say that I believe that is now the case. I hope that is evidenced by ease with which our new Treasurer Donald Vass took over once I moved to become Chair of the PST.

The other primary task I focussed on in that time was to look at setting up a new share scheme. This was progressing well until, as we all know, we received the interest from Michael Eisner and Tornante. Given my day job as a Chartered Accountant and experience in these areas in the past, it was perhaps natural that I became part of the negotiating team that handled the takeover discussions. In addition to that, I was also the lead author of the information pack and organised much of the process for the vote that followed.

Since the completion of the sale, I have also run the Community Share Withdrawal Scheme that has so far returned £2.2m to shareholders as well as donating over £66k to Pompey in the Community and over £30k to the Pompey History Society. It's been a fantastic success and has underlined the amazing story of the rescue of our great club by ensuring that it was effectively done without costing any of our fans money. A unique achievement.

It's time now, though, to look at the new future for the PST. This started last year, as we realigned ourselves to be the representation of the fans with the new owners on the Heritage and Advisory Board. I was honoured to be chosen as one of the representatives for that Board and have met with the owners 3 times in that setting as well as having met them and spoken with them on several other occasions. I believe that it is important that the PST keeps a close relationship both with the club and directly with Tornante. By doing this, we ensure that the fans stay at the heart of everything the club does.

I also believe that now we no longer own the club, the PST should be about more than just the club. We should look to see how we can make a meaningful impact on the city and our community as a whole, within the bounds of the objects and mission that we have set ourselves.

It is for that reason that the PST has identified working with Pompey in the Community as a key part of its future strategy. This is something I am keen to carry on. PITC has an amazing impact on the city and its community. From the 1,000s of children that receive sports coaching every week, to the outreach programmes that empower young people to find their place in a chaotic and busy world, to the sports activities that enable older people and people with disabilities to participate in football – PITC is having a meaningful and positive impact on thousands of people's lives.

But this all comes with a cost. The charity is funded by grants and sponsorships – it does not receive funding from the club. Most of this funding is specific to a project and costs are tight. Particularly in the coaching run by the charity. Having no pitch facilities of its own, PITC has to ferry kids all over south Hampshire to rented pitches, which are costing them thousands of pounds a week. This is something that I believe the PST can make a difference to.

The Trust itself has some money left over from the sale of the club, and if we can acquire some land and build a modern 3G all-weather pitch then we can create a facility for PITC that would save them money and provide a facility for kids, adults and older people to use. What an amazing legacy from the saving of our club that would be.

There's also more we can do in the wider football landscape. Safe standing is a hot topic of debate currently and I firmly believe that all clubs should have the ability to create a safe standing zone within their stadium. Not everyone wants to, or is able to, stand for the whole

game, but at every club there is a section of the ground where fans stand for the whole game. There should be a choice.

The current system is untenable, standing in seated areas is inherently unsafe with nothing to prevent surges causing people to topple over the seat in front. This is particularly bad in stands with a steep rake to them. The new rail seats that provide a barrier along every row prevent this and make it impossible for surges to cause a cascade effect with the danger that poses. I am keen for the PST to play its part in effecting change to make this option a reality. These are just two examples of how the PST can continue to have an impact on the local community and improve the fan's experience of supporting Pompey.

In conclusion, I believe that the PST has a very bright future. Whether it's continuing its mission to be the voice of the fans to the club, or creating legacy impacts for our community, or working to change the wider football landscape for the better, we have a role to play in preserving the fan involvement in the club and benefitting the wider Community.

It has been a genuine privilege to serve the members over the last three years, as Treasurer and as Chairman. It would be an honour to continue to serve the members for another 3 years.