



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

15th January 2021

Dear Conifer,

RE: FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of football governance; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

I agree that football governance must keep evolving if it is to keep pace with the challenges of the modern game. The global commercial attractiveness of English football is something to be celebrated, but not at the expense of supporters and their communities.

With regard to the ownership of clubs, it is a priority for the football authorities to ensure a robust 'Owners and Directors Test' is in place and that due diligence is carried out on owners. New owners are obliged to meet the Premier League or English Football League board and provide detail on the sources and sufficiency of the funding they have in place. Clubs must submit information on their financial structure, any proposed investment and a business plan demonstrating that all liabilities can be met for the next twelve months, and independently audited accounts each season.

Taken together, the measures within the existing regulatory framework have helped to curb club debt and greatly improve the financial state of our football clubs. While I am satisfied that the existing regulatory framework makes the establishment of an independent regulator unnecessary, this should not be an excuse for the football authorities to become complacent and I believe the rules must be kept under constant review.

I was pleased therefore that the manifesto I stood on at the General Election pledged to establish a fan-led review of football governance, which will include consideration of the 'Owners and Directors Test', and will work with fans and clubs towards introducing safe standing. Ministers have confirmed they will liaise closely with fan representatives and the football authorities as they decide the scope and structure of this work.

I know many fans will be worried right now about the survival of their teams. It is true that we are all going through incredibly hard times as a result of COVID-19, but I am encouraged by the support made available to all businesses, including football clubs, to help them weather this storm.


Unprecedented support has been provided to businesses throughout this period, including a comprehensive and sizable package of direct fiscal support for businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support. Many football clubs have benefited from these measures.



I appreciate that many fans have concerns about the Premier League's most recent set of proposals, headlined as 'Project Big Picture'. I agree with my ministerial colleagues that the Premier League needs to use its own wealth to support the sport at other levels, and 'Project Big Picture' risks distracting from that aim. I am therefore glad that the Premier League clubs have unanimously rejected the plan, while also agreeing to create an emergency financial package for clubs in League One and League Two.

I believe that this situation goes to show the wisdom of the Government's proposal for a fan-led review of football governance, and I look forward to its progression. You also raise the specific issue of Newcastle United Football Club and I wanted to let you know I have relayed your concerns about this directly to Ministers, to help inform their thinking and work on this ongoing issue.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,


**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**