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Tracey Crouch MP
Minister for Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
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29th October 2015

Dear Tracey,

Further to my previous letter sent earlier this summer and following a request for further information from your team, I am writing with an updated response in regard to the issues you raise about Blackpool Football Club. These relate to your correspondence with Graham Stringer MP, following the letter he received from his constituent Mr Lee Johnson, a Blackpool supporter, and a number of other constituents.

The issues Mr Johnson raises relating to the FA's Disciplinary proceedings regarding Mr Oyston are a matter for the Football Association rather than The Football League.

With regards to the comments made about the ownership and management of the club, it is important to clarify what authority The Football League has to involve itself in such affairs. Our mandate to govern is enshrined in our regulations which, having been voted through by clubs, provide a clear objective framework under which clubs are required to operate.

Where we have evidence that any club has not complied with our regulations we will act, as indeed we did when charging Blackpool for failing to fulfil the club's fixture with Huddersfield Town on 2nd May 2015.

It therefore follows that what the League cannot do is intervene in club matters in instances where there hasn't been any breach of regulations based on subjective judgements about the management of individual clubs. This is particularly relevant in the context of the application of the Owners' and Directors' Test, which is deliberately objective in nature rather than being a subjective 'cut of their jib' type test that would require the League to make a judgement about an individual's characteristics. As such, it is a test of their eligibility rather than their suitability.

The reason this approach has been adopted is that any decisions made by the League can always be challenged in law and a test based on clear criteria will always be more legally sustainable than one based on opinion. Additionally, any money spent by The Football League on defending its decisions in Court will be from funds that would otherwise be distributed to clubs for the good of the game.

We recognise that there is currently a poor relationship between Blackpool and its supporters. This has not always been the case during the Oyston family's ownership of the club, which has seen the Seaside work their way up through the divisions to the Premier League and substantially re-develop the stadium at Bloomfield Road. Nevertheless, it is the case now following the club's subsequent relegations.

For reasons outlined prior, The Football League has a limited remit to intervene in a dispute of this kind, however we continue to monitor the situation and remain engaged with both Blackpool Football Club and Blackpool fans who contact the League with any matters they wish to raise.

In March 2014, the League liaised with the club directly to ensure that a Supporter Liaison Officer was appointed and through the latter half of 2014, the League worked closely with the club to advise on its club charter obligations and fan communication procedures.

Throughout 2015, the League has remained in contact with fans during the FA's investigation into comments made by Blackpool Chairman, Karl Oyston to a Blackpool fan. Similarly through the summer of 2015 the League corresponded with individual fans and the Blackpool Supporters Trust regarding the abandonment of the fixture against Huddersfield Town and the ensuing disciplinary hearings held by the League and the FA.

The League continues to engage with both parties and continues to advise fans on queries relating to League regulations relating to ownership and club acquisition.

More broadly, the issue of how football clubs should engage with supporters will be debated by the Government's Expert Working Group in due course and we will seek to make a positive contribution to that discussion.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SHAUN HARVEY', written in a cursive style.

Shaun Harvey

Chief Executive Officer
The Football League