



**BLACKPOOL**  
**supporters trust**

# BST Survey Results

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ONLINE MEMBERSHIP SURVEY 2019



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- **Survey method and responses**
- **Summary**
- **Pre-programmed closed questions**
  - Season Tickets
  - Fan representation
  - Share ownership
  - Travel
- **Open questions**
  - What key initiatives would you like to see from BFC?
  - What key initiatives would like to see from BST?



# Online survey: Survey method and responses

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- Our online survey ran from Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June until Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June. We were delighted to receive **797 responses** (44% return is statistically high) – it is good to find members so interested and willing to share their views
- We heard from a broad cross-section of fans:
  - 57 % from the Fylde coast
  - 16 % from the North West
  - 22 % from out of the area
  - 5 % from overseas
- This implies that even distant members remain engaged and want their voices heard
- The location spread strongly correlates with information from our membership database, so we believe we obtained a representative sample of responses



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## Summary: specific insights for the Club

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- **Realistic expectations** – Fans recognise that there have been years of neglect of the infrastructure at the club and prioritise these areas before expecting on pitch investment and success. Suggestions include:
  - Training ground development and stadium maintenance
  - Targeting of young supporters to grow the fanbase
  - Building links and engaging with the local community
  - Improving the matchday experience: food, drink, entertainment and opportunities to socialise
- **Communication and fan engagement** – Fans are looking for two-way communication through a number of channels. The vast majority support fan representation on the board
- **Flexible ticket options** – Segments of the fan base (exiles, shift workers) find it difficult to commit to full season tickets and would welcome other flexible ticket options
- **Safe Standing** – 89% would support a safe standing area with 41% saying they would personally use it
- **Maximising revenue opportunities for the club and local business** – fans have a number of suggestions on how to find synergies with local business and leverage the town's tourist trade



## Summary: specific insights for BST

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- **Continue to represent the Fans' interests** – By having good dialogue with the board, ensuring the voice of fans is heard, while at the same time maintain independence, challenge where necessary, “be a critical friend”
- **Fan representation on the board** – A clear majority of members want the Trust to lobby for formal fan representation on the club's board of directors
- **Minority shareholding** – The majority of members believe the Trust should seek to purchase a minority shareholding in the club
- **Lobbying for change in governance** – many members encourage the Trust to continue lobbying at a national level for change in football governance. Some are also keen to support the Trust’s work in continuing to provide assistance to fan groups at other troubled clubs
- **Reunite the fan base** – Members would like the Trust to take a leadership role in putting the struggles and differences behind us and being a unifying force
- **Support the club with community initiatives** – Members encourage BST to support the club in building community links and improving the match day experience
- **Fans travel** – Some members are requesting BST facilitated coach transport and assisting exiles in linking up to help with travel arrangements



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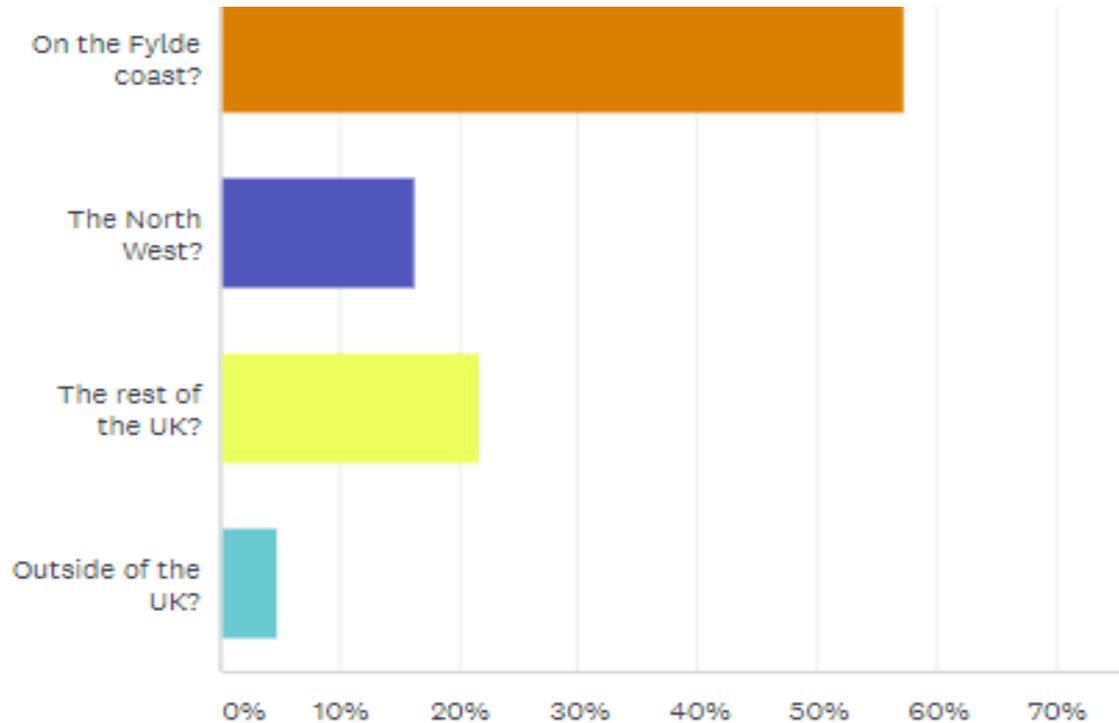
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## Where are you located?: members are geographically spread

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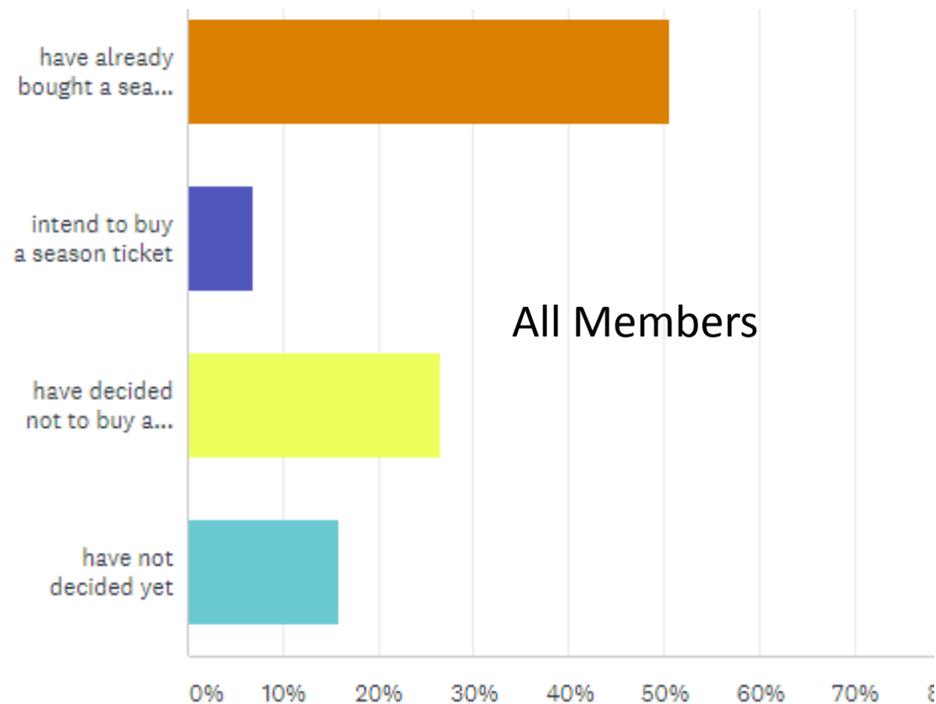
- Only 57% of members live on the Fylde coast
- 38 % of members are either spread across the rest of the North West or elsewhere in the UK
- If this sample is representative of the wider supporter base, a large proportion of fans may not be able to commit to full season tickets due to distance



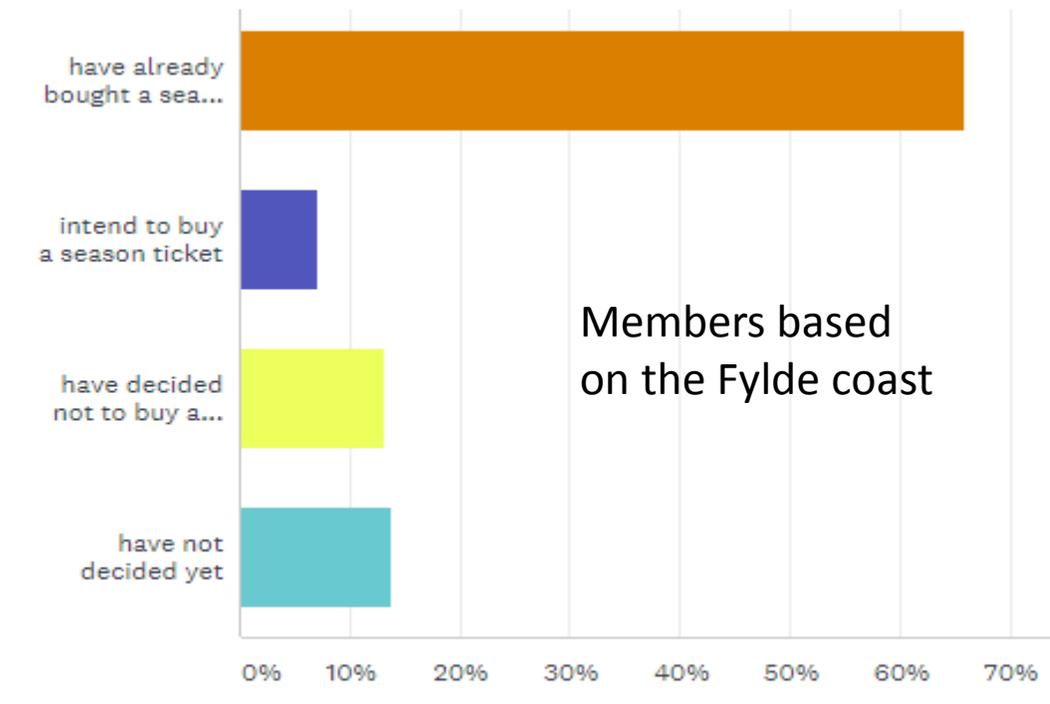
# Season Tickets: purchased and intentions to purchase

- 57% of members have either purchased or intend to purchase season tickets
- When looking at members based on the Fylde coast, 73% have either purchased or intend to purchase season tickets, with 14% yet to decide

For the 2019 / 2020 season, you ...



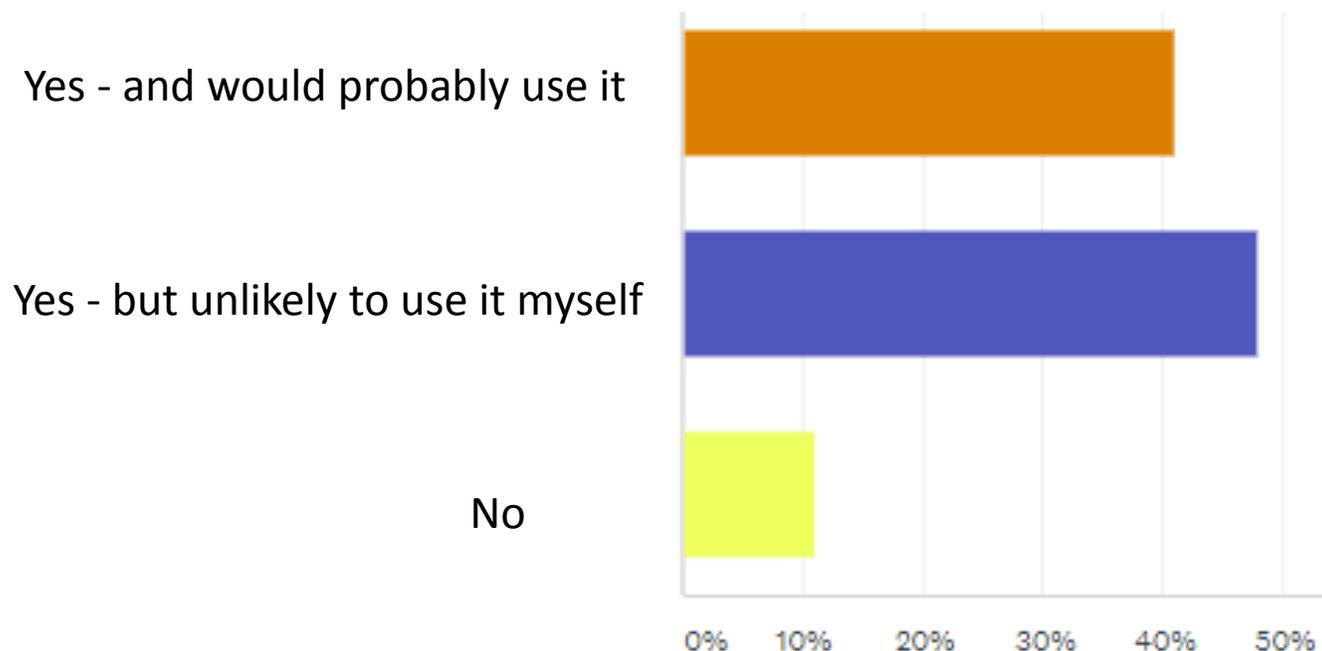
For the 2019 / 2020 season, you ...



## Safe standing: supported by the vast majority of fans

- The vast majority of fans (89%) are in favour of the introduction of safe standing
- 41% would use it
- 48% support the introduction safe standing but wouldn't use it themselves

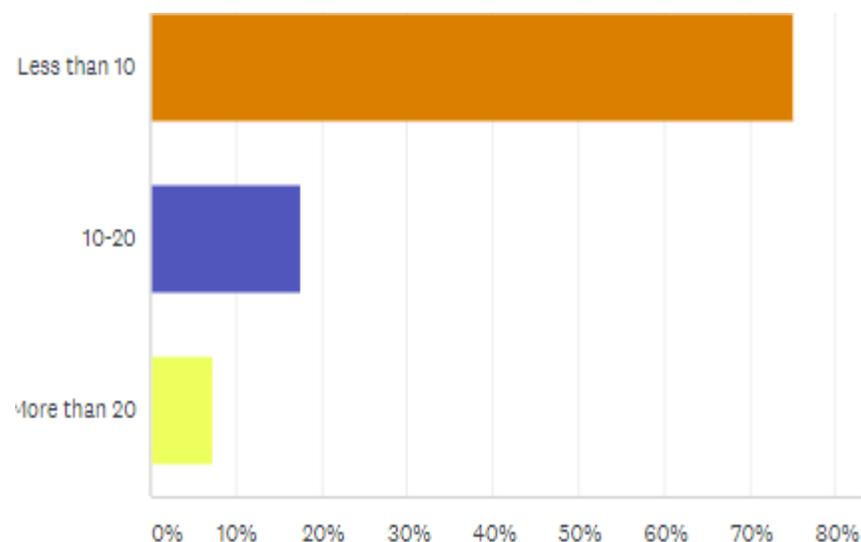
Q. Would you like to see a safe standing area at Bloomfield Road?



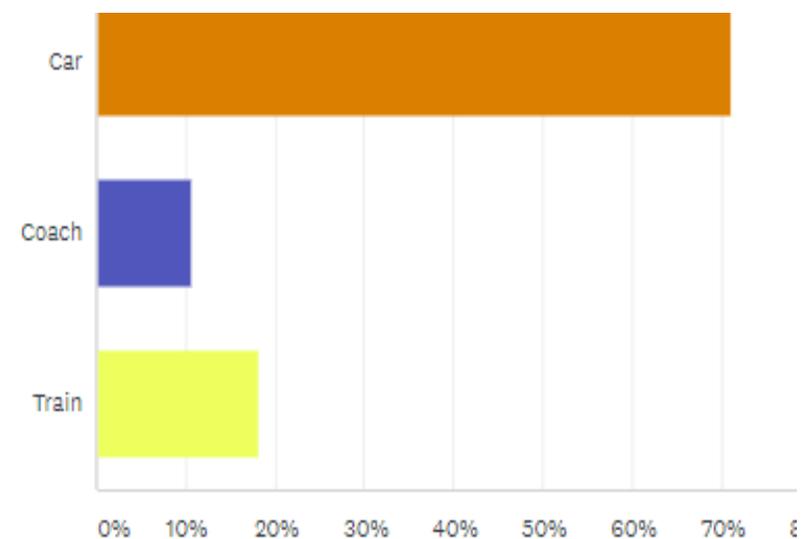
# Travel to away fixtures: Few members currently use coach travel for away games

- Many members plan to travel to away games in the 2019/2020 season
- Only a few members currently use coach travel
- A number of the verbatim responses (see later) suggested either BST or the Club get involved in providing coach travel

Q. How many away fixtures do you expect to attend in the 2019 / 2020 season.



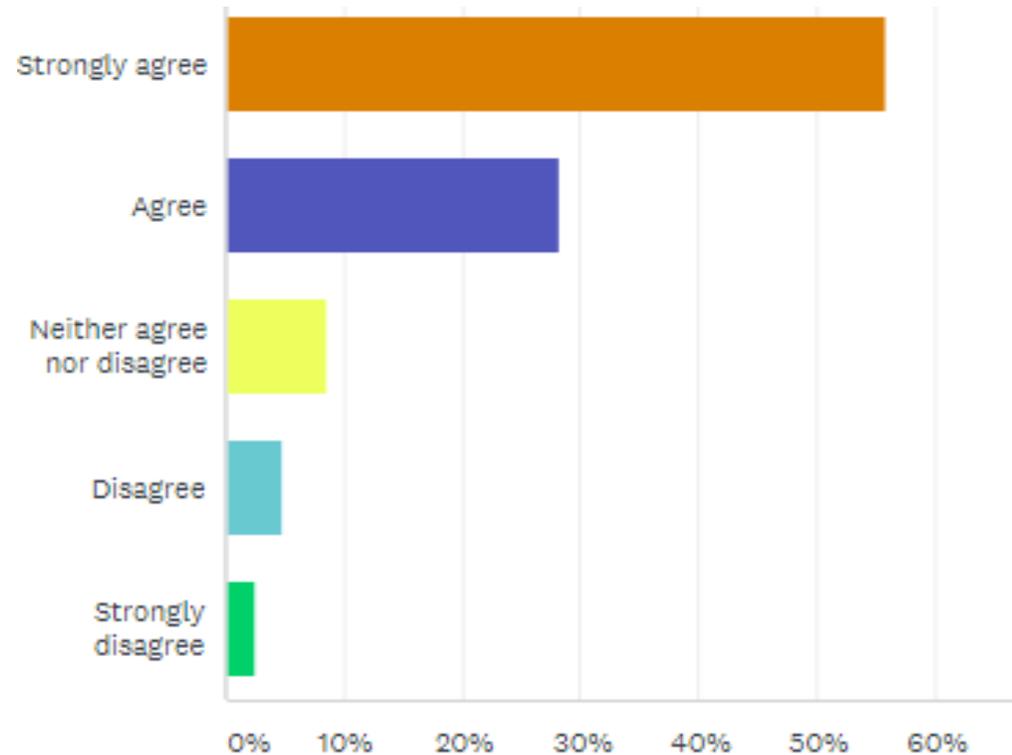
Q. Which mode of transport will you mostly use to travel to away fixtures?



# Fan representation on the club's board of directors: : Majority support this

- The vast majority of members (86%) either strongly agree, or agree that there should be some form of fan representation on the club's board:

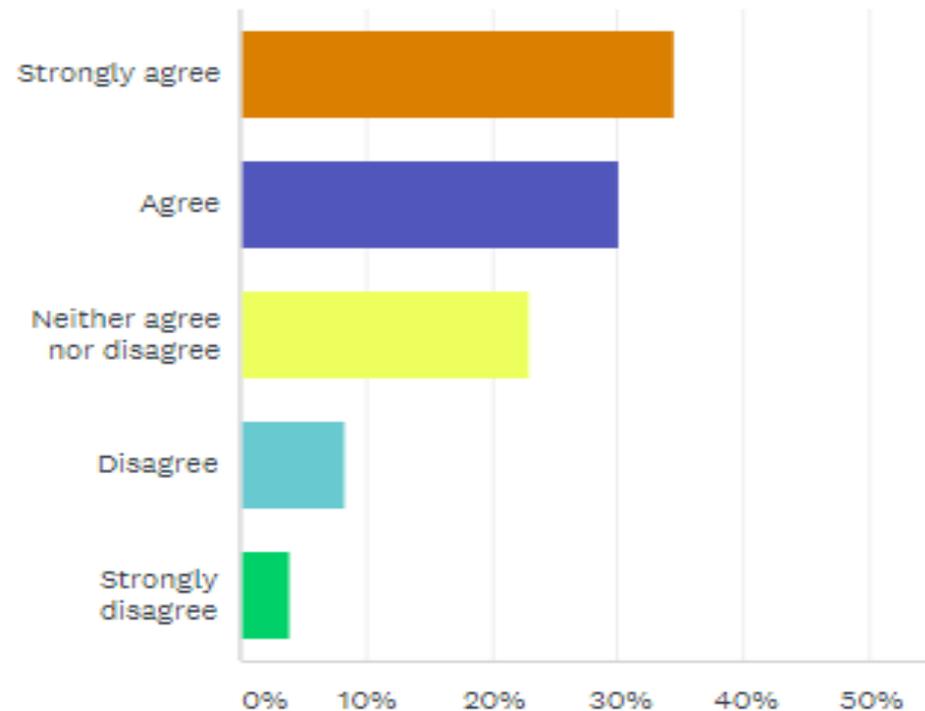
Q. I think the Trust should try to convince new owners to have some formal fan representation on the club's board of directors:



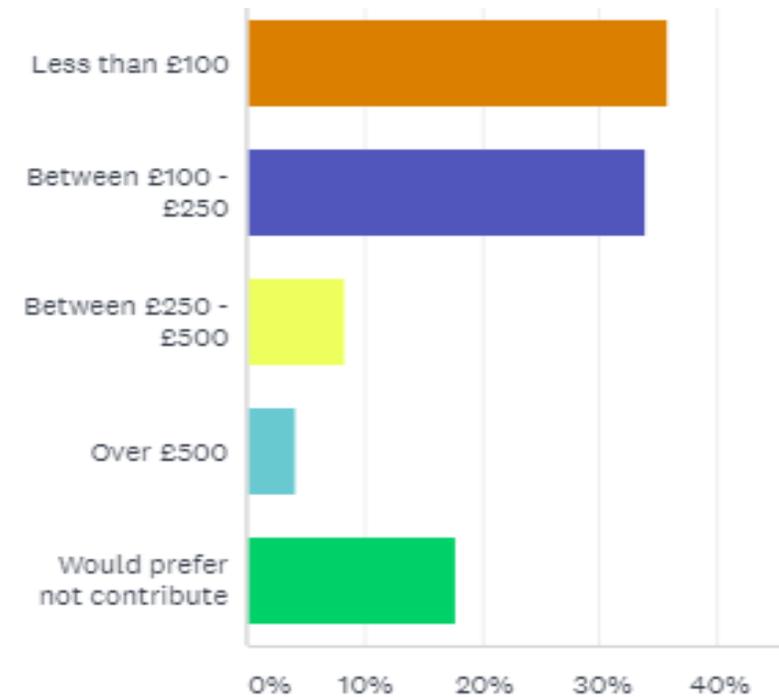
# Minority shareholding : Support for the Trust to take a minority shareholding

- The majority of respondents support the idea of the Trust taking a minority shareholding in the Club, with 68% strongly agreeing or agreeing with this initiative
- Of those in agreement, 82% would be willing to contribute to funding some form of shareholding

Q. I think the Trust should seek to purchase a minority shareholding in the club.

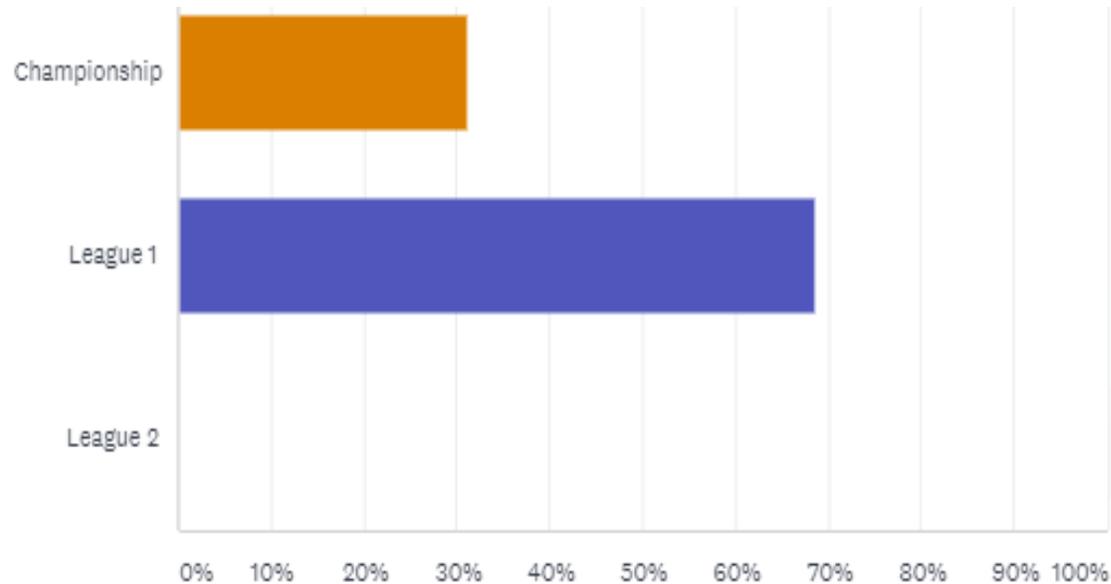


Q. If you agreed or strongly agreed , how much would you be willing to contribute personally



# Where do you expect BFC to be in 12 months time?: Quietly optimistic

- The majority of fans expect the club to consolidate and be in League 1 in twelve months time
- A sizeable minority even believe the championship is achievable
- Two respondents believe the club will be in League 2. Owen and Karl?



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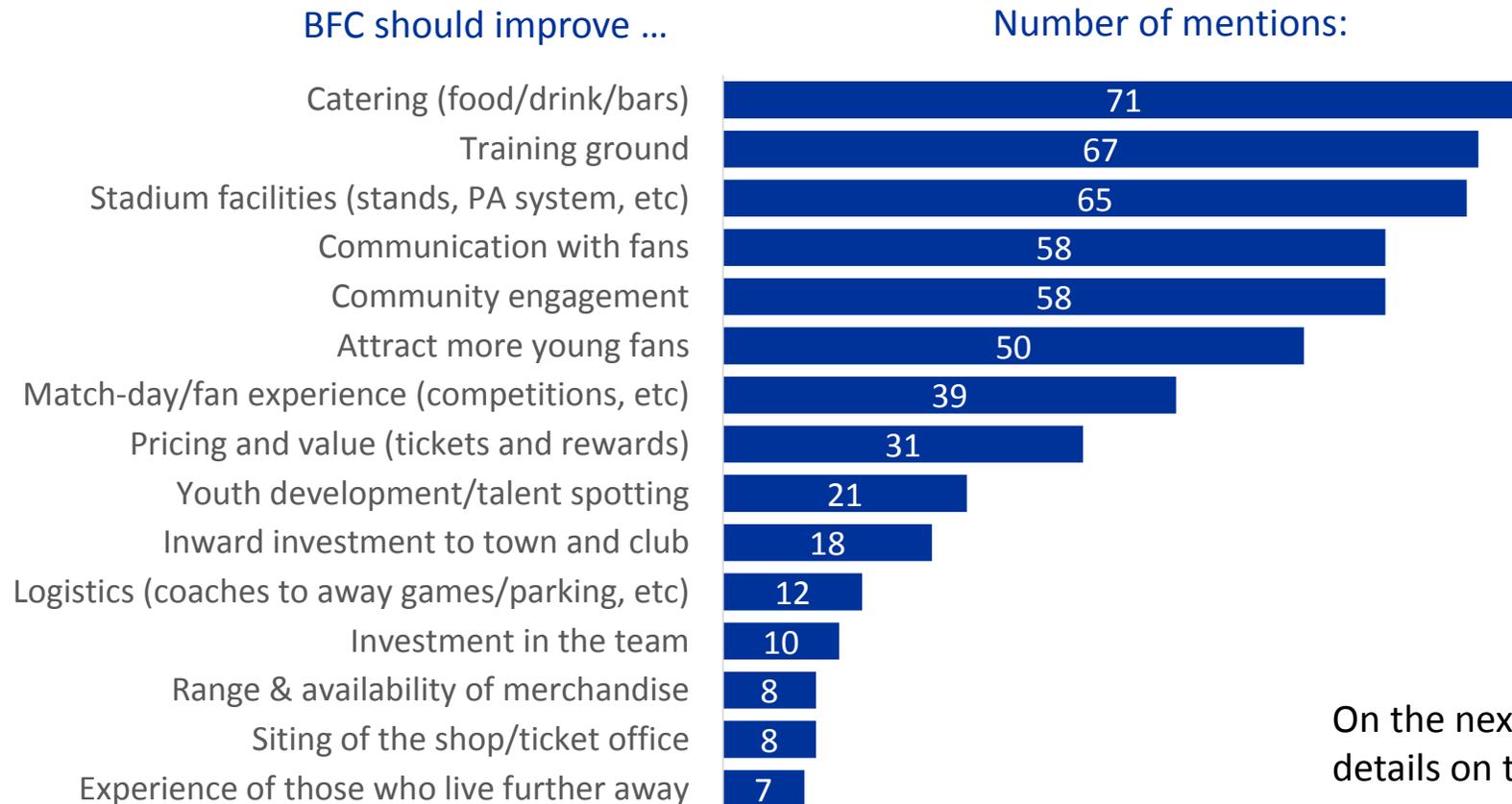
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# New initiatives: What key initiatives would you like to see from BFC?

- Over half of members surveyed (55%) put forward some suggestions, with many having several good ideas
- The overview below shows that a better match-day food and drink experience, an improved training ground and stadium, plus more community engagement / with young people are all hot topics. There is also a request for improved dialogue with fans
- Perhaps surprisingly, investment in the team itself seems a lower priority



On the next few pages we drill down to provide more details on the meaning behind these scores ...



# Catering & match day experience: both could be more appealing

- While we've reported these scores separately, the two are closely linked as they are all about what happens on the day of the game
- Most popular comments about **food and drink** were suggestions for a fan zone (29 mentions), the re-opening of the Seaside bar or some kind of supporters' bar (20) or general improvements to catering (24), such as meal deals, better beer, a happy hour before the match and healthier food choices
- As for improvements to the **overall experience** (cited by 41), ideas generally revolved around ways of making the day out more fun and engaging, through competitions, give-aways, half-time entertainment, a fan giving out the 'man of the match' award, etc
- Some felt that engagement could extend beyond the game itself, with pre-match family activities, somewhere to gather after the game, or more social events generally
- A few ideas include ...

*They could have face masks of players distributed at matches at home games - one player each Saturday so you could build up a team set*

*Great catering stalls (not the usual rubbish), a band playing and a festival atmosphere. Get a local baker to create a top class signature pie for match days. Something that away fans will talk about when mentioning BFC*

*Being one of the first clubs to get behind 'sustainability' and zero plastic usage ... Healthier food options - a tasty veg burger for instance. Introduction of a few locally sourced real ales. I don't want Blackpool to look like a dinosaur, an old club stuck in the 90s*

*Pre match entertainment for kids. Better quality pies and food with a meal deal option. A free draw each home game, where junior season ticket members get to meet the manager and players*

*We need a bar. Maybe a fan zone area, but it would have to be covered ... an after-match social facility as some people want to meet, chat and drink before heading off*



# Training ground & stadium: both are felt to be sorely lacking some TLC

- Improvements needed to the **training ground** were the second most commonly mentioned item (noted by 67). Some go as far as saying a whole new facility is needed, rather than just an upgrade
- Several feel it would also be important for any new/refurbished facilities to be open to the local community (9 mentions)
- Upgrading of the **ground's facilities** is equally deemed a high priority (by 66). Though all have their own opinions on what needs most attention, or speak more widely about just 'getting the infrastructure right', the East Stand is often highlighted, as is safe standing
- A few have grander ideas, suggesting a BFC museum should be part of longer term plans for the club (suggested by 3)
- And a minority (5) cite a need to improve facilities for the disabled
- Illustrative comments include:

*Sort out the sound system ... Underfloor pitch heating. Sort out the training ground once and for all. Move the ticket office and shop back to where it was. Build a new East stand.*

*Moving disabled supporters higher up the stands. They have the worst view and always get wet first, that just isn't right nowadays. Fans getting excited will stand in front of them - completely blocking their view*

*I'd like to see them improve facilities such as the training ground before investing heavily in the playing squad*

*1 Regular ground maintenance 2 New sound system so fans can hear in any part of the ground what's being announced. 3 New training ground. 4 Completion of the East side of the ground*



## Communication with fans: Several ways to do this are suggested

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- Better communication with fans is also an area for improvement, say 59 members. Though a minority say 'keep up the good work' or 'continue to engage with fans', many others feel that more could be done to keep them in the loop. Suggestions include disseminating information via:
  - Newsletters
  - Fan forums
  - An improved website
  - Match programmes
  - Social media
  - A BFC app
  - Meetings/Q&A sessions
  - Supporter's Liaison Officer (SLO)
- Fan groups are also undoubtedly a way of keeping supporters informed, though one mentioned that BFC should not be seen to single out a particular group for favouritism

*Engage with the fans ... The SLO role is very important, to get some useful feedback from fans. One of the previous regime's main failings was that they potentially had a wealth of fan experience/expertise in various fields that they could have tapped into as a free resource and stupidly chose to ignore*

*The historic lack of engagement with the supporters was shameful ... I'd love to feel a part of my club again, not just someone they grudgingly allow to spend money at their facilities*

*Ask the club to take the initiative in creating an umbrella structure through which communications with all Fans' Group can be conducted. This will allow them to retain their individual identities whilst ensuring that all are communicated with on an equal basis*



# Engagement with the community/young people: Also deemed to be key

- There is strong feeling from many (59) that it's important to build **links with the wider community**, beyond even those who are interested in football, as BFC has an impact on the whole town
- Some (36) just speak in general terms about the 'need for more engagement', while others mention more specifically how and with whom. Most often suggested is connecting with schools (15 – e.g.: player visits, competitions, freebies, etc), but also local businesses (6 - see later examples) and charities (2)
- 56 respondents talk about the importance of **connecting with young people** and getting them excited about the game. Of these, 20 say cheaper tickets, e.g: 'quid a kid' occasions could help, while others just recognise that many have lost several seasons due to boycotting, and need to be re-engaged – after all say some, 'they are our future'
- Engaging with younger people also extends to ensuring **young talent** is spotted and developed (mentioned by 23)

*Decorating the under-stand areas with murals, possibly designed by students at the Blackpool College of Tech & Art. Volunteer painters. Get rid of the grey*

*Reintroduce kids' incentives. Ie £15 membership and you get a calender, Xmas party with the players and chance to win being a mascot. I don't like the idea of charging huge amounts for kids to walk out with their heroes*

*Develop strong links with the local community, to include all age groups and also extend charity initiatives to help the homeless/hungry. Other clubs have successful projects underway and BST members have a strong base of solidarity on which to build similar efforts*

*Massive community engagement – and players should share the load*

*Meet the player events, maybe training sessions in schools, to excite and entice children into supporting the club. Q and A events with the players, where the children write and read questions themselves, and the player answers*



## Pricing and value: It's not just about cheap tickets, but other rewards

- There is less emphasis on ticket pricing being something that needs addressing, though it *was* brought up by 31 members (as well as those who wanted more incentives for youngsters to get involved, as mentioned earlier)
- Most notably it is less frequent visitors who'd like some sort of deal for a block of tickets or 'flexi-ticket', (11 suggest something of this kind) in acknowledgement of the fact that they may be loyal fans but just can't make it to all games, due to distance, shift work, etc.
- Others simply hope prices could be reduced to swell the stands, or state the case for favouring OAPs or families, while some would just like some sort of perk or bonus for their loyalty, eg: a free cup ticket for season ticket holders, discounts at the shop or catering concessions, etc
- Some 'exiles' who live further away and can't attend all games would not only love a deal if they buy a block of tickets, they'd also appreciate greater interaction with other distant members (mentioned by 7, eg: via a forum)

*A discounted flexi-ticket for those that can't attend all matches. For example, Lincoln City did a Baker's Dozen ticket. 13 matches for the price of 12 and you could select the 13 matches*

*I just want the game to be affordable. Football is generally far too expensive. Furthermore, I believe the big increase in season ticket pricing is an error. This was a chance to fill the stadium*

*Highly competitive pricing policy, particularly for younger generation. Blackpool desperately needs to build a stronger fanbase now that the Oystons have gone*

*There are lots of exiles. I live in Bolton. It would be good to be able to connect more easily – a database which we can sign-up to, where you can privately contact people re: sharing cars etc*



# Inward investment: Some feel revenue opportunities must be maximised

- Though receiving fewer suggestions (18), this topic attracted some interesting comments about the importance of trying swell the coffers of either the club or the wider community
- 10 suggest that more could be done to maximise the use of club facilities, e.g.: encouraging early arrival to increase bar takings, using the venue for concerts, trying to attract shirt sponsorship and more local advertising, etc
- A further 8 mention that local businesses could also benefit if more were done to promote the local area as a tourist destination, for example offering hotel and attraction discounts to away supporters

*We are based in the entertainment capital of northern England. With the Council/tourism department on board the possibilities are endless and it gets the name of Blackpool out to a more international audience, both in terms of the football club and the town in general ... making more of our local quirks - fish and chips at half-time? Sticks of Blackpool rock handed out to visiting journalists? They take it home to their kids and we might become someone's second team...*

*I'd like the club to engage fully with local businesses and organisations. Local food and drink sold in the stadium, packages for away fans which encourage tourism in Blackpool, local bands performing in a fan zone, local artists used in the stadium and to develop club merchandise etc ... Partnerships with Myerscough, UCLAN, Lancaster Uni etc for staff and projects. The club must use the resources available locally to its fullest in order to punch above its weight*

*I'd like the club to be part of the tourist industry for the town e.g. people buying football tickets which give them access to the Tower etc*



## Other suggestions: we can't include them all!

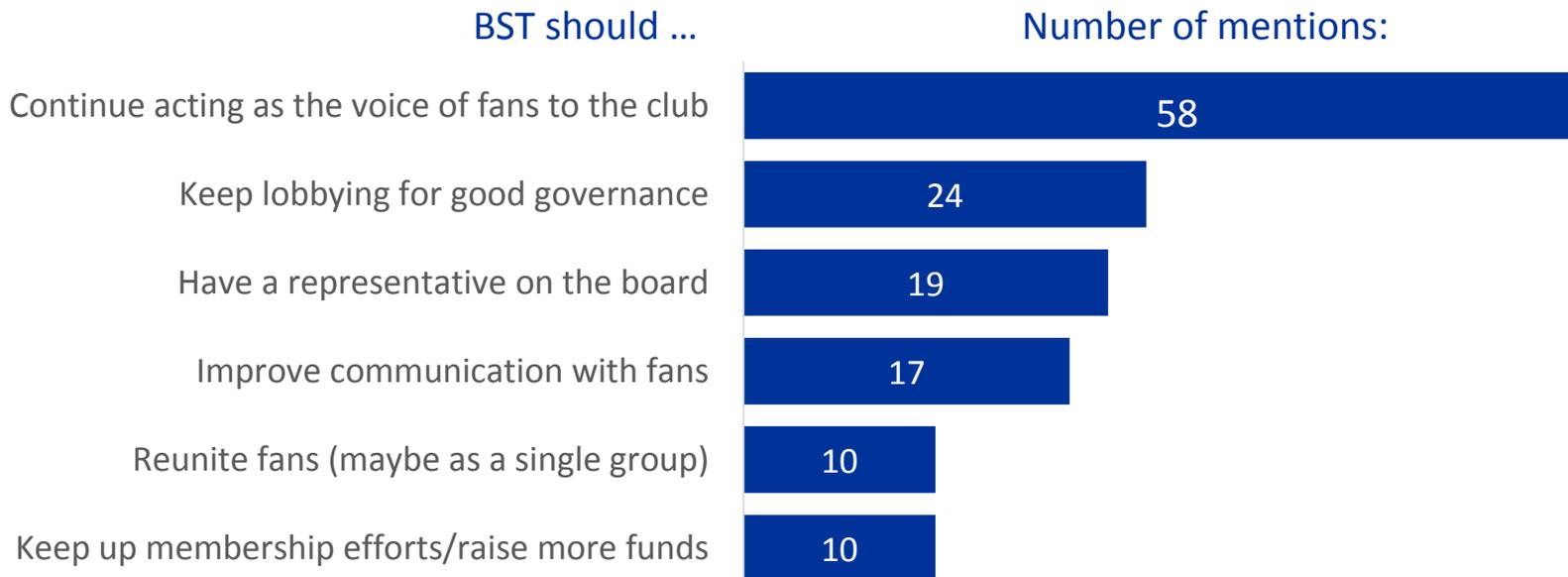
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- We are grateful for all the other ideas put forward, which rest assured will be thoroughly reviewed. We can't include them all here given the hundreds of responses, but hopefully the examples shown help illustrate the key points
- Finally some other less common suggestions should not be forgotten. These include:
  - Ensuring more honest and open running of the club in future (5)
  - Reinstatement of a reserve team (3)
  - Stamping out bad behaviour (2 – flares on the pitch, swearing, etc)
- And touchingly, several thought we should not forget some of our previous heroes from the Club, including two mentions each for ...
  - Ensuring 'a regular collection for Parky to help his family'
  - Some kind of tribute to Belokon – be it a statue or at least an invite to the first game of next season
  - Bring Charlie back!



## New initiatives: Members were also asked about further initiatives from **BST**

- Fewer members (260 – 33%) answered this question and many of those encouragingly just urged BST to keep up their good efforts (57), as the group is seen by many to have done some excellent work and given hope to fans suffering issues at other clubs  
As one said: *'I appreciate the work everyone who runs the Trust has done - it is time consuming and often thankless'*
- Others simply reiterated their earlier ideas for club initiatives as a whole, eg: safe standing, working with the community, etc (51)
- However some came up with new suggestions, aimed specifically at BST, most notably around good communication:



Again we have provided more detail on these scores in the next few pages ...



## Communication: A two way effort, speaking up for fans & also updating them

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- Continuing to **represent fans' needs** was the most common request of BST going forward, cited by 58. Respondents envisage this being in the form of working with the new owners and having good dialogue with the board, ensuring the voice of fans is heard, etc
- Yet there are different views on how exactly how BST should be positioned – a minority feel it is important to maintain independence to ensure there is not too much '*cosying up to the new owners*', while others (19) feel BST should have some **board representation**
- It is not only about upwards collaboration, some BST members (17) feel that more could be done to ensure news filters downwards. Better communication was cited as something for BFC to improve too (see earlier), but here suggestions were more about getting a better understanding of BST activities/progress, eg: via more on social media, newsletters, etc

*The Trust should continue to be an important link between the Club and the fans and should continue to communicate the fans' feelings and challenge any decisions that have a potentially adverse effect on the relationship between Club and fans/community*

*I believe the trust will have a representative on the board which is Ultimately fans should have a stake/share in the ownership/running of Blackpool FC. I am not a lover of so called tycoons buying football clubs just to make money*

*Explanations and proof of ongoing gossip. Be ahead of the media and keep us fans abreast of the facts, eg. New signings & transfers*

*More opportunities to meet up with the Committee and a chance to see what they do, by being invited to committee meetings*



## Other initiatives: Increasing membership, lobbying and reuniting fans

- **Lobbying** activity was another aspect of BST work that should continue, say 24. In the main, this was about fighting for regulation reform, taking on EFL and supporting other clubs going through what BST has, etc, but a few feel that efforts to hold the Oystons to account and to ensure the new owners stay on track are also important
- For some (10) there are concerns that now the club is under new management, BST's role may be seen as less necessary, so they feel it's important to **continue attracting new members** (eg: through prize draws, member perks, lifetime/junior membership, including it in season ticket price, etc). Such efforts would also ensure BST has some funds to draw on as needed
- Others wonder if BST should try to **reunite fans** (10), perhaps joining forces as a single group (suggested by 6 of those)

*The Trust has done some sterling work in promoting better governance. Hopefully the Club has turned a corner, but the exposure of the inadequacies of the EFL, FA and EPL should not be forgotten. The respect the Trust has nurtured from within the game nationally should continue to be used to strive for more transparency*

*We should build up a fund. The days will come again when we need to make a major protest/fight owners or the EFL. The fund can't be run on cash balances of a few hundred pound*

*To increase membership numbers. Or at least stay level. Make sure BST aren't seen as having done their job now Oyston is gone, which could lead to reducing numbers ... Merger of all fan groups into one, there are too many groups*

*All supporters working together and create an atmosphere to be proud of. Let bygones be bygones*

- And finally, one suggested that Christine and Tim should be rewarded with an OBE for all their efforts – now there's a thought!

