

B.I.A.S. ATTENDS FEEDBACK FORUM ON LEVY'S CATERING, HELD AT BRENTFORD COMMUNITY STADIUM 30 NOVEMBER 2021 @ 6.00PM

1. In Attendance

Club For those recognised, in attendance were James Parkinson (Commercial Director), Rhys Weston (Head of Venue Sales and an ever present at the Ticketing Working Group meetings), Lewis Blake (Operations Manager), Sally Stephens (Fan & Community Relations) and Sophie McGill (the newly appointed Fan Relations Exec). (The (female) employee who is primarily responsible for the Dugout was also there, as the Club are planning a similar forum for Premium Seats and Dugout in the New Year).

Levy Representing Levy were James Nolan, General Manager, based in Kingston, their employee, Mikele, who gave the presentation, and their Head Chef at the BCS.

So all in all quite a "heavy weight" presence from the Club.

Fans As well as two from BIAS, there were around a dozen other fans. In terms of diversity, there were only two women, there was no BAME representation and BIAS would hazard a guess that no one was under the age of 30/35.

2. Levy Strategy, Vision and Sustainability

Mikele was given ample time to talk to a number of screens in a presentation about Levy's background. This was all highly professional with ethical strap lines to the fore and very relevant for the Board room, but less so for the punters present.

Nevertheless, there is no getting away from the fact that carbon neutrality and educating the public in better eating habits will not go away. On the other hand, a decision to move away from traditional offerings overnight is unlikely to find support from fans, which both the Club and Levy need to recognise.

3. Challenges Faced, General Fan Feedback and Immediate Feedback on new Food Offerings

Before Mikele had a chance to summarise the challenges, the debate began about customer feedback, so the two subjects are interlinked almost inevitably. The following are the key points that emerged. Reaction to some new food offerings is also included where relevant below.

- "Dirty" burgers and chips and fried food generally BIAS raised the results of the survey where a substantial number of comments were requesting the return of burgers and chips. BCS does not have the facilities to enable frying to take place, a decision that was taken by the Club.

Given that building work around the stadium has yet to be completed, it is not yet certain whether external franchises (e.g. burger vans) may be able to take advantage of free space on match days, but it is something that will be considered. Indeed Mikele indicated that street food vendors were an option here.

(See below for comments on chicken burgers under “Dried out food”)

- Pies In terms of food quality, there was good support for the current Balti pie option, which some felt has come to be seen as a new staple.

A chicken and mushroom option as a new variety received support, but not at the expense of the Balti, if choices were limited.

The forum was told that supplier shortages had curtailed the availability of the vegan pie option, largely because it was one of the least popular.

- Hot Dogs and Sausage in a Roll There was not a great deal of discussion on these options, but a new Cumberland sausage in a roll found favour from those present.
- Bovril As the BIAS survey had shown and with further support from other fans present, there was a demand for Bovril. This will be available in the future, dependent upon (I think this is right) pre-filled cups supply (and a similar problem with Hot Chocolate too)?
- More Vegan and Halal options and how to satisfy “low demand” Although by no means a given, the Club and Levy were exploring the idea of **an online app**, which would enable punters to order food up to nine hours in advance of a match. Food would then be available at certain collection points within the stadium.

The app would cover all items that could be ordered on line, but would feature some products that would not be available directly from the BCS counters, such as low demand items.

- Dried out food Levy acknowledged that certain items (and chicken burgers were highlighted as a prime example) had been left on the warming trays for too long before they were offered for sale. There needed to be greater quality control over this, or accept that more food would have to be cooked to order which could result in delay.

The main lesson for Levy and the Club was the need to ensure that quality of food was not compromised by a desire to deliver items quickly. Now that a number of games had been played at BCS and with more experienced staff, this would be addressed.

- Poor Quality Beer Again it was acknowledged that pouring pints that sat on the bar for too long was not good service.

If the quality of beer were improved, then there was a good chance that more revenue would not only be created from selling more pints but also from ancillary food sales too.

- Keg v Bottled: Communicating to Fans what is available and where Not everyone was aware, that certain bars provided bottled beer (e.g. London Pride) as an option which might be preferable for some to the keg alternative.

There was a general discussion around communicating to fans what food and drink options were available and where in advance of match days, because not everyone was aware that certain outlets were selling different products.

- Pricing In response to criticism over prices generally, Mikele said that Levy regularly benchmarked their charges against similar outlets in London. He said that their price for a pint of Grolsch was one of the cheapest in London.
- “Happy Hour” Some acknowledged that they had taken advantage of the happy hour up until one hour before kick off, whilst others felt that this was too early: why not half an hour beforehand?

BIAS asked whether a happy hour could be offered after the match to encourage fans to stay before they either went home or off to a pub.

- Limiting the purchase of a number of alcoholic drinks BIAS raised the concern of a fan who had been told at a recent game that he would be limited to buying only four beers during the half time interval and that he would not be permitted to purchase any others.

In response the Club said that this was not their policy and that the sales person concerned may have been following the procedure that was prevalent amongst other establishments in London.

4. Further Meetings

Although nothing has been set, the Club considered that a follow up meeting would happen at some stage in the New Year.

A meeting for the Premium Seats and Dugout members will take place in ?January and BIAS should consider pressing for invitations.

(Signed) Richard Nabarro and Ronald Mansveld
on behalf of BIAS 2 December 2021