

## **Notes from Sheffield Wednesday Supporters' Trust Youth Forum Meeting 1**

**4<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

### Introduction

Shay O'Grady, Supporters' Trust Youth Ambassador, introduced the meeting. Shay has been a Wednesday supporter for all of his life, and is a member of the Ball Crew at Hillsborough on match days. Shay explained that a gap has developed in the City following the problems at Wednesday over recent years; there is not much incentive for young people to decide to go and watch the team. The Youth Forum will provide an opportunity to gather the voices of young people around things like what might encourage them and others to go and watch Wednesday, and how the club can better connect with young fans.

Paul Taylor, the Trust's Community Director added that SWFC have an aspiration to create a Junior Forum at the club. They have made clear that representation from the Trust Youth Forum will be sought for any group they create. The views of the Trust Youth Forum will be systematically fed back to both the club and the Trust Board. The Forum will meet with the full Trust Board at least once per year.

Shay added that with new owners on the horizon it is important that a Youth Forum can help to gather the voices of young people to pass through to them.

### SWFC Players visit

The meeting was very pleased that Pierce Charles and Ernie Weaver were able to join the meeting. Both explained that they had come through Academy set-ups from a very young age (Pierce at Man City from the age of 8, and Ernie at Wednesday from the age of 7). Ernie explained that he has been a Wednesday fan since childhood and attended every game up to the age of 16, when footballing commitments made this difficult. For him, playing for Wednesday is a dream come true. Both players stressed the importance of young fans coming to games.

Both players were happy to answer questions, including about their recoveries from injury, and about recovery times between matches.

### Discussion points

Is a Youth Forum a good idea? It feels like a good idea to get young people involved, in football and in everything else. Other organisations always take the views of young people on board. Kids see their mates at the match, but sometimes can't if their parents won't go, and their friends don't go. Things like prices for kids at college need looking at.

What is it like being a young person supporting Wednesday In the City? It's hard at the moment getting stick from Unitedites. One attendee has removed Wednesday photos from his Instagram. It's not the norm now to go to Wednesday. Unitedites are "busy spitting out the facts".

How do young people feel they are treated by the club? Young people are not recognised enough by the club; they are the next generation. The norm is for young people who do go to "dress hard" and get into fights. The club should put something in place to give young people something else to do. The Family Zone has been shut and kids aren't allowed in The Wednesday Tap. Young fans sometimes feel more welcome at away games.

What can be done to encourage young people to come along? Things need to be opened up for families. Could car park areas be used for activities? There should be more pre-match activities such as games and competitions. Young fans travelling to away games see other clubs who are much better at this. Examples include Morecambe, Plymouth, Hull and Southampton. The Trust and the Forum itself can be used to pick up ideas. Ideas include getting bands to perform and selling churros, nachos and doughnuts. Better use should be made of Tiktoks (Coventry are a good example of this). Podcasts like Wednesday Til I Die and Wednesday Week have no real interest to younger people and are seen as overly negative; a youth podcast should be started.

Anything else people want to discuss? Some kids don't want to talk; there is nothing for them. Currently Wednesday doesn't have players who are legends but it does have characters— Ingelsson is an example. More use could be made of these. Everyone says we are "such a big club"; we need to start showing it. When Wednesday are in League One, what will make young people want to come along? We need to get non-season ticket holders on board.

#### Taking the Youth Forum forward

Paul Taylor explained how the Forum will operate . The age range is 11-17. Forum members will need to join the Trust, for a reduced membership fee of £1. The next few meetings are planned to happen on a monthly basis. There is no limit on numbers at this stage. Shay(assisted by Paul) will oversee the Forum, with Shay regularly reporting back to the Trust Board. There will be opportunities for members to meet with the Trust Board and with SWFC.

Venue, date and time of next meeting to be confirmed.