

## The United Trust Q&A – with the Cumbrians.net

By way of introduction

My name is Nigel Davidson and I am responding to the questions posed by members of the Cumbrians.net message board for The United Trust (UT). I felt it was important for me to respond to these questions as a relatively new member of the Trust Board. Other members of the board have seen, agreed and contributed to these answers, however the content below comes mainly from my own perspective as a recently appointed board member who joined the Trust with the specific aim of 'making a difference'. I also wanted to add a little more information about the Trust, where it is now and where it's going as well as dispelling some of the spurious rumours that have circulated over the years. I have seen a lot of the social media comment and although I understand where it has come from I can also say that it really is without foundation. We have a really fantastic opportunity here as supporters to become totally involved in our club and I wouldn't want to see us miss that opportunity.

I have been involved with the Trust since returning to live in the area again approximately 2 years ago. I have supported this club since I was about 5 or 6 and I simply love it. Wherever I have lived in the UK I have always made time for Carlisle games, whether that was taking the national express coach down to London to play Fulham on a Tuesday night when I was about 16 or cycling all around the Isle of Man to watch the team in the pre-season tournament in around 1985 or more recently driving from Milton Keynes to Hartlepool for a Tuesday night game and still getting back in time for work on the Wednesday (That was a great 4-0 away win and a happy trip back!). However, when I moved back to the area once again I found that I wanted more than to just turn up at games, I wanted to contribute, to be more involved in Carlisle United. As a supporter of any club, the obvious way to become involved is through its Supporters Trust, particularly if that trust is a major shareholder and has a seat on the board of directors as is the case at Carlisle United. However, I had noticed over the years that the UT seemed to be a largely silent and somewhat static organisation, I hadn't heard much from them directly or in the press and I was keen to find out why. Soon after returning to the area I noticed in the News & Star a small reference to an open meeting of the Trust that was to take place at the Club and I decided to attend.

Supporter's Trusts are in themselves generally the voice of the supporters and unlike in countries such as Germany where they exist as the norm, here in England many tend to have been formed out of adversity or necessity – our own Trust is a case in point. I attended the reasonably well attended open meeting but I was left with more questions in my head than answers and as such I contacted Norman Steel the following day sending him an email with a number of thoughts, observations and constructive criticism. I have to say that Norman and later the rest of the board were very engaging with me after my approach. I arranged a meeting with Norman to discuss where the Trust was and what it was doing. I then began to attend board meetings in an external capacity until such time as it felt appropriate to run for election to the board, which I did last July. It was clear to me that the Trust needed some kind of impetus and development, goals and aims along with the ability to speak out without fear of the unfathomable abuse it so often received from certain quarters – 'why are some supporters so anti their own supporters trust' is a question I just couldn't fathom at that stage. I joined The UT because I wanted to make a difference and to have a say in how my football club was being run; I'd built up a wealth of experience in various areas in my working life that I felt could be of use to the Trust and the Club,

so offered that to the Trust and I hope that this will benefit the club also down the line. A supporters trust is the perfect vehicle for supporters to get involved in the running of their club and as such I would urge all of Carlisle United's supporters to join the Trust, give some time and a little money and receive that all important voice, forget what has happened in the past, look forward, have your ideas heard and tabled to the club with the backing of the Trust's strong position. It is 'Your City, Your Club, Your Trust' so make sure you have your say.

I think it's also important at this stage to talk a little about Supporters Trusts in general. A Supporters Trust is the voice of the supporters in any club; that is why it exists in the first place. According to Supporters Direct (SD), the government backed organisation that assists in setting up Supporters Trusts and provides advice guidance and governance for Trusts there are (as at April 2014), 147 Supporters' trusts/community owned clubs in England and Wales; 76 of these have a shareholding in their club and 56 of the 147 have a director on the board of the club. SD have been instrumental in assisting to set up many Trusts and it is important to point out that the voice a Trust gives to the supporters isn't just required in times of difficulty, but through the good times as well.

The United Trust not only has that director on the board of the football club, but its position is further strengthened by having a 25.37% shareholding, which is fairly unique and actually gives the supporters a very strong base from which to engage with the club. All the hard work undertaken in the past by the likes of Norman Steel, Kate Rowley and others ensured that the Trust was formed and that the club remained in existence and that the supporters retained that all important voice. This shouldn't be underestimated. I have seen it said that the Trust's 25.37% gives what has been termed 'Negative Control' in the boardroom. I really don't agree with that terminology, because rather than giving the Trust 'negative control' what the shareholding really does is act as a safeguard to the club and the supporters, it stops any one owner procuring 75% of shares which would allow them to do just as they please and avoids such difficult situations as have been seen at clubs such as Hull & Cardiff, to name two, where Assem Allam and Vincent Tan respectively have been able to push through changes that the supporters simply didn't agree with or where they have had to resort to extreme action to get these changes overturned.

I've also heard it levelled at the UT that it has been a bar to investment as a result of this strong position. Well I personally believe the debt was a major stumbling block and I, along with other board members, only want what is in the best interests of Carlisle United. Thanks to the very generous gesture by Story Construction in writing off Carlisle United's debt, talks with investors, the Club and the Trust have picked up a significant pace in recent weeks; for that we are all hugely grateful. If a potential investor wants overall control and/or doesn't want to work with the supporters then alarm bells should be ringing in all supporters heads and the question 'what are they hiding' should come to the forefront. The single most important asset at any professional football club is the support; no supporters means no club, therefore if any investor/owner doesn't place the supporters at the top of their list of important assets then there is clearly going to be a significant problem in the future.

So we have established that the UT has a strong position, is a safeguard to investment and is the potential voice of the supporters, however, what I haven't been able to get my head around is that there seem to be a number of supporters who are dead set against the Trust. This just makes no sense whatsoever because what that effectively means is that they are against the

supporters and against the supporters having a say in how their club is run. Now, I have supported Carlisle United for long enough to know that there has been a history between the club and the UT (there very often is where Trusts are concerned in this country due to the nature of their formation, often as a response to the threat of losing their club as happened at CUFC in the dark days of the end of the Knighton regime). A lot of the vitriol seems to refer back to the disagreement with previous owner Fred Story over the land issue at Brunton Park. However, the fact remains that everything I referred to earlier about the Trust being the voice of the supporters, having a strong position with a significant shareholding and having a director on the club board remain the same. Yes, there has been some inevitable baggage collected along the way, however, 'purely' in the best interests of Carlisle United Football Club we as supporters need to 'focus on the big picture' and 'the future of our club, not the past'. If ever there was a time to lose that baggage then it is now when we have a fantastic opportunity for the Club, the Trust, and most importantly the Supporters to move forward together – United! It really is the only way and I am determined that The United Trust will now and in the future be an integral part of the Carlisle United set up working, assisting and contributing alongside the club and the supporters.

Moving on to where the Trust is now, where we intend for it to be in the future and how we intend to achieve that:

It is clear to me that there are some supporters suffering from a confused mixture of some correct, but a lot of misinformation about the UT. In part the fault for this can be laid at the Trust's door, for not being as open and communicative as it could have been over the years. There is a reason for that of course, but going forward it is more important for the Trust to improve communications and be as open as possible. I along with the other members of the board are determined to change the perception of the Trust, to move on from the baggage that had been collected, to dump that and change the way in which the Trust both functions and is perceived to function. The current Trust Board includes two recent additions in myself and John Kukuc; John and I, along with the rest of the board are all firm in our belief that this is the way in which supporters can achieve a say in how their club is run and have a collective voice in the boardroom. There really isn't any other tangible or realistic way in which that can happen and we are urging all supporters to use the Trust as the vehicle for that irrespective of what they may have thought about it in the past.

Over the past number of months The Trust Board have been working hard to change the way in which the UT works, what its aims are and basically driving it forward. This hasn't been as quick or as straightforward as I would have necessarily liked and I have had to reign myself in from time to time, but believe me it is going forward now and the links with the club are as strong as they have ever been. Unfortunately, when an organisation is mid-change like this it isn't always easy to let the world know what exactly is happening. With the assistance of Supporters Direct, the Trust has been producing a 5 Year Plan which aims to make the organisation more professional, more effective and more representative of the support. This plan will very shortly be distributed to the membership for amendment & ratification. Of course in order to achieve these goals not only does the Trust have to follow these aims and goals, but the supporters and members need to buy into the plan also. I'm sure when you see the aims outlined in the 5 Year Plan you will realise that this really is the way to go and that we will all be stronger together,

making for a stronger support, a stronger Trust, a stronger club and by extension a stronger team on and off the pitch.

For a community club such as Carlisle United it really is the only way forward as we're not a Manchester City or a Chelsea. Clubs are nothing without their supporters as they are the lifeblood of the club, the reason that club exists. When the club is successful a feeling of wellbeing embraces so many local and far flung Cumbrians, even a fantastic group of Norwegian Supporters, as well as some people who aren't supporters of Carlisle United as we have seen before at various times. However, when the club is in free-fall those same supporters are disparate and not united and that makes life unnecessarily hard. If we come together as one, via the strong position and vehicle of the Trust where we can all contribute our ideas to the Trust and the Club, in conjunction with the owners and investors then we surely cannot be beaten – that is the recipe for success; the same recipe that has seen Cambridge United, not so long ago out of the football league, yet this season doing well in League 2 with a great draw against Man United in the FA Cup and a replay at the Theatre of Dreams to look forward to, with a significant cash injection as a result – at Cambridge this has all been achieved by the Club, the Supporters & Trust, along with other investors working closely together to achieve success on and off the field in just the way I have described above. They had their dark days also in the recent past, but through pulling together and building relationships between the Trust and the Club they have achieved a model that works off the pitch and this is now reaping the rewards on it. On speaking with their Trust Board members the single most important factor that they said made this possible was the building of relationships and the level of mutual trust that was built up as a result. Cambridge actually have a smaller shareholding than The UT, but it is the relationships that make it work there – that's what we must strive for now with the current &/or new owners of CUFC.

We are at a perfect juncture from which to re-launch and reaffirm the Trust and of course we aren't starting from scratch here because the Trust already exists, it owns shares for the supporters in perpetuity, protected by the 2006 Shareholders Agreement. The aim of the Trust is and always has been to protect the club (This is Trust's legal responsibility to ensure everything that is done, is done so in the best interests of the club and its most valuable asset - the supporters) and I can't tell you how annoyed I get when I hear people slating what is and will continue to be a great, worthy and essential organisation at Carlisle United. A supporter recently suggested on social media that the Trust should give away its shares to the fans – well what that supporter needs to understand is, that those shares, which the supporters of Carlisle United paid over £800,000 for, are 'already owned by the supporters' – they belong to you, to me, to all of us...

So I am saying this now as a rallying call for all supporters of Carlisle United, we HAVE to leave the past behind and move forward together. I understand some of the reasons why people have questioned the Trust, but those reasons are now old news and totally irrelevant to the current position. Believe me the Trust board and members are good people who only have one thing at heart and that is Carlisle United. The only way forward for the sake of the club is with a 'UNITED FRONT' of supporters - it is 'Your City, Your Club, Your Trust' – Carlisle United'

The 5 Year Plan will be distributed to existing UT members shortly for comments and ratification. Once it has been ratified by the members it will become publicly available for all to view.

However, in the interim, for those of you wishing to know more about the Trust and wishing to join I, along with other Trust Board members, are more than happy to meet with supporters on a 1:1 basis to discuss and explain the current position and explain why it is the best idea to join the Trust to have your voice heard and to contribute to the Trust and Club. We are always available at Brunton Park on match days and can be available at other times to sit down and discuss issues with you and explain how the club and the supporters can move forward together from this point.

The club has given us as supporters some great memories over the years, but it isn't always about what the club can do for us as supporters. There are so many things that need to be done at Brunton Park to keep the club going and we always need volunteers to help – it's like the old adage 'ask not what your club can do for you, but what you can do for your club' – the more we can do for our club then the more our club will reward us with its success. I'm certain that working truly collectively we can make this one of the most successful community clubs in the country, with our geographical position and catchment area it would almost be a crime if we didn't succeed. The Trust is looking for additional volunteers as mentioned in our most recent newsletter (available to view online at [www.united-trust.org.uk](http://www.united-trust.org.uk) ). If you are able to offer your services on match days or other times please contact us at:

- **Email:** [info@united-trust.org.uk](mailto:info@united-trust.org.uk)
- **Tel:** Norman Steel (Chair) 07796260522
- **Tel:** Frank Beattie (Media Officer) 07801428505
- **Tel:** Nigel Davidson (Board Member) 07960889671
- **Twitter:** Follow us [@TheUnitedTrust](https://twitter.com/TheUnitedTrust)
- **Facebook:** Like us on [www.facebook.com/TheUnitedTrust](https://www.facebook.com/TheUnitedTrust)
- **Postal Address:**  
Write to us / join the Trust at  
The United Trust  
C/O Fifteen Rosehill  
Montgomery Way  
Rosehill Estate  
Carlisle  
Cumbria  
CA1 2RW
- **Face-to-Face:** Speak with us directly at the club on match days. We have representatives from the board available at every home game (most away games) and they are usually to be found at the entrance to Legends Bar in the main stand up until just before kick off.

I've seen the same faces at so many games over the years and I know you all feel the same way about CUFC. That little bit of extra pride when you've gone that extra mile to make it there, when the team has won and your work colleagues think you're mad – well it feels great! I couldn't bear to see CUFC go out of business; it pains me for days when we lose, yet it lifts the mood in equal measure when we have a great win. Fond memories of the great days of recent times such as winning promotions, promotion from the conference against all the odds including the weather, the League 2 title, the Wembley/Millennium Stadium trips again and again. I know that this club could be a regular challenger in the second tier of English football if we all pull together and get down to the basics of supporting our club. Once we achieve that then who

knows where we could go, we've been there before and many other smaller clubs have made it to the Premier League, so why not us? We do have a fantastic support when things are going well, but when things aren't going so well and when we probably need that extra support even more, it seems to fall away. Our first Wembley trip saw a crowd of over 76,000 and of that a staggering figure of over 25,000 were Carlisle fans. The Deckchair Army had descended on the home of football – even if we had half of those people supporting the team at Brunton Park regularly we would have fantastic attendances for League 2 or League 1. Our away support has always been amazing and continues to be, but we need to work on the home support. So where are those people now? I want them back, the club wants them back, the supporters want them back and the team wants them back filling Brunton Park and ensuring that the great days of Carlisle United are not left in the past with the 74/75 season in the sun, but are awaiting us in the future and ahead for us to look forward to...

So, on to the questions... I have answered these questions as openly and honestly as possible. As you are all aware there are discussions going on right now regarding possible investment in the club and therefore there are some areas where it wouldn't be prudent to comment given the position of these talks, but with everything else I have given a full and frank answer.

**1) Can you confirm exactly how many members the Trust has, and the number of memberships awaiting renewal?**

Currently the membership stands at 301, with approximately 180 due to renew at the end of May 2015. We want this to be significantly higher and we have plans through the 5 Year Plan to achieve this ASAP

**2) How best do the Trust feel they can better engage with the clubs supporter base?**

As I have already alluded to, the Trust could have done better at communicating and engaging with supporters over the years. There have been reasons for that, those reasons are no longer relevant and therefore within the outline of the 5 Year Plan the Trust is aiming to do this a lot better in the future. Relations with the club are currently very good, which also significantly helps. A mixture of openness, engagement and improved communications will all lead to an overall improvement in this area. For example, members will have recently received a copy of the re-launched Newsletter (this is also available for non-members to download from the Trust website at <http://www.united-trust.org.uk/downloads.shtml> 'Newsletter January 2015')

Within the 5 Year Plan we have covered 5 main areas (To be ratified):

- 1. DIALOGUE** - improve communications with Carlisle United Supporters, ensuring their views are represented to the club
- 2. PARTICIPATION** - Increase the supporter's voice within CUFC by becoming more actively involved in club activities
- 3. COMMUNITY** - Strengthen the bonds between Carlisle United Football club, its supporters and communities
- 4. CONNECTION** - Make and enhance connections with all stakeholders and interested parties, including opinion formers, other supporter's trusts, national and international supporter's organisations, local businesses and all others with a strong interest in CUFC and its supporters

**5. PROFICIENCY** - Run the Trust efficiently and cost effectively to serve the Trust and its members in the best way possible

As you can see from this the crux of the plan is about communication and interaction and once the document has been fully ratified by the membership we will continue to drive the aims and objectives of the plan forward.

It is also fair to say that this is a two-way street and relies on supporters communicating effectively with the Trust as well. We want supporters to use the Trust as the means of getting their views and opinions across to the club and increased regular open meetings along with specific 1:1 meetings with supporters will take place with this in mind. We are open to constructive criticism but let's be honest here, if a supporter batters us with obscene abuse on social media we aren't going to engage with that and why would we, we are a family based Club and Trust and just as the club do with that type of abuse, it won't be engaged with. It's about mutual respect and professionalism; that is the way to get things done, not through hurling pointless abuse over the internet or in the ground. So, if you have genuine constructive criticism or a point to raise to go to the Trust &/or Club Board then we are all ears, we'll sit down with you and discuss it, no problem – just see the contact details above

**3) Given what the present owners are doing to the club don't you think it's about time that the Trust should do what they were originally set up for, to protect the club for the fans from the likes of Michael Knighton. It is now patently clear that the present owners are not only out of their depth but are the stumbling block to any new ownership/investment that could save the club from disappearing altogether.**

Now this one is a little tricky as you will appreciate from the widely reported discussions that are taking place behind the scenes with the current owners, of which the Trust is one and other potential investors. Obviously things haven't gone well on the pitch for the past few seasons. Football has its peaks and troughs and both on and off the pitch it's fair to say that we have been in a bit of a trough of late.

What I can say is that we aren't in a situation that is anywhere near as dire as that we were faced with when Michael Knighton's reign came to an end. The current owners have guided the club through some choppy waters over the past few years. What Andrew Jenkins has done in particular goes above and beyond and clearly shows his lifetime of dedication to CUFC and can only be loudly applauded. However, the time is now right for that new investment. There isn't really a bad time for investment of course, but we have to face facts, we are the most northerly club in the English leagues, currently in the bottom rung of that league system and we haven't exactly had genuine investors beating down the door. Carlisle United is a passion for so many of us including the current owners, who rightly would like any new investment to come from local sources (& as they have said recently only want what is best for Carlisle United), which is another way of protecting the club from the dangers of spurious international or some home-based investors whose business plans wouldn't be aligned with what we as supporters would be happy with.

The fans certainly made their feelings known at the last home game with Cambridge United and although in certain circumstances 'protests' are warranted, I really don't think we're at that stage

just yet, purely because over the past few weeks and months discussions have been going on, most notably so far with Businessman Andrew Lapping about new investment into the club. I think it is important for us as supporters to 1. Wait to see the result of these discussions, which are now at an advanced stage and 2. See what the end of the January transfer window brings in terms of options on the pitch. I think it's fair to say that Anthony Griffith has been a solid addition to the spine of the team so far, Charlie Wyke showed some nice touches in his first few minutes on Saturday and I'm certain that Keith Curle is be looking at other experienced, solid and exciting players as we speak, in the last few days of the window.

**4) As fans representation on the board, what do you intend to do about the petition asking for the removal of the current custodians? And when do you plan to do this?**

Supporters have the right to create a petition if they wish on any matter; however, given the current position referred to in the previous question and answer I think it's just that little bit premature. That said, by having the discussions with potential external investors the current board are actually already trying to effect that change which those who have signed the petition are asking for. However, and I'll reiterate what I have said previously, I think the prudent thing to do at this precise point in time is to see what comes from the discussions that are going on as we speak before instigating any further action. We need to afford the current board the time to effect the change they are currently looking at.

In terms of any concerns and questions, I would urge supporters to speak to members of the Trust Board about this directly. It's 'Your City, Your Club, Your Trust' and we welcome any supporters who want to air any issues with us and/or pass them onto the club board – again, just see the contact details above.

**5) Has the trust considered raffling the seats it gets in the directors box for each game amongst its members as an incentive to increase membership.**

Yes; this has been considered as part of a package of ideas that form part of the 5 Year Plan – more details to follow after its publication.

**6) Can the Trust confirm if it owes any money to anyone and if so, how is this being paid off?**

As has been widely reported, in order to make the final payment for the 25.37% of shares Norman Steel, totally committed supporter that he is, was able to arrange a loan secured against his home to cover the shortfall to complete the payment for the shares. The loan has been substantially reduced and it is important to stress that all the money raised for those shares (£800k+) actually went into the football club and the Trust stipulated that these monies could only be used for the benefit of the football club and what is happening now is simply recompensing Norman for his fantastic gesture at the time.

**7) There are quite a few people who would be interested in joining the Trust to try and effect the way the club is run, but are sceptical about where their membership fee would go and what power they had if they joined. What assurances can you give to those people about how they can first and foremost change the way the Trust is run, and then improve the club as a whole? Why should they join?**

**14) Similar to Q7: I am interested in joining, can you confirm how much of my membership fee will go to the club and how much will go to servicing the Norman Steel debt?**

I have combined questions 7 & 14 into one answer here...

If you read my opening paragraphs then I think I have made it pretty clear why I joined the Trust, why I wanted to become a board member and why I wanted to have some say in the running of the club. As far as the membership fee is concerned, as it currently stands this is £5 per annum, £1 of which has legally got to go towards share fund. Of the remaining £4 this is and will be used for a number of purposes. One of the main ideas in the 5 Year Plan is about generating more income, all of which will go towards the club or some inevitable administration costs associated with the running of the Trust. The current repayments to Norman Steel are predominantly covered by regular monthly donations by particular individuals, so although we couldn't categorically state that 'none' of the £4 from a membership fee would go towards this, it is unlikely to due to these regular donations.

The production of the 5 year Plan and the developments within the Trust over the past 1-2 years demonstrate that the way in which the Trust functions is going to be different and that certain barriers that have been in place before are no longer there.

In terms of power associated with joining the Trust; it is a democratically run organisation using governance provided in the main by Supporters Direct. Each member has a vote on major issues, has a vote towards election of Trust Board Directors and has the facility to utilise the Trust's strong position when tabling ideas or comments to go to the club.

As for you asking why should you join? Well, I would ask you, why would you not join? It's the Supporters Arm of the football club and it has the club and the supporter's best interests at heart. The baggage that has existed has gone and the Trust is moving forward in a more professional, effective and representative way – 'Your City, Your Club, Your Trust' – so be a part of it!

**8) Why has Norman Steele been on the Board for most of the life of the Trust and why hasn't there been a democratic cycling of other Trust members into this position?**

**15) In an interview with the News & Star, Norman Steel stated that he would not be standing for re-election around June/July 2016. Is this still the case, and does Norman have any intention on standing down sooner?**

I have combined questions 8 & 15 into one answer here...

There has been a recycling of members onto the board and as I have said previously, both John Kukuc & myself are new additions to that board. Before that Jim Mitchell, David Steele, Don Beacock, Carol Wilson and Frank Beattie were relatively new to the board. At the last AGM in July 2014 Alastair Woodcock, Damien Steel and Keith Elliott stood down from the board although Alastair remained involved directly as Secretary and Damien & Keith remain active members. In total approximately 40 people have served the Trust board in some capacity since it began in 2001, demonstrating that there has always been a good turnover of board members.

As far as Norman's position is concerned, the wealth of knowledge that Norman has from being a part of the Trust for so long is not something the Trust would be easily able to dispense with. In the time he has been in the Chair/Director role I understand that it was felt that he was doing a good job and that nobody else on the Trust Board wanted to run for this position.

Norman did state himself that he would not seek re-election at the 2016 AGM (The position is elected on a 3 yearly cycle). However, he does fully intend to remain a member and to be involved to some capacity and I think the Trust would be much the better for his continued presence after 2016. Clearly this position will fall vacant no later than the 2016 AGM, at which point I am sure that one of the current board members will have the experience to take on the mantle of Trust Chair/Club Director.

**11) The Trust represents the fans and is in turn represented on the CUFC board by one member. How much autonomy is this person given when making decisions or concessions on behalf of the Trust? What mechanisms are in place to prevent that person from acting above his/her level of authority?**

This is another difficult one with some grey areas; purely because of the nature of the role in comparison to the other club directors who are directors in their own right. The Chair & Trust Representative on the Club Board is answerable to the Trust Board and Members. On many matters he will have to table the opinions of the Trust Board &/or membership, but he is also a Director on the board of the football club which brings along with it responsibilities as a director. Some matters in the recent past have caused some difficulties in his role as Trust Representative, namely Project Blue Yonder, where the club directors had to sign a lockout agreement with the developer at the outset, this of course means he is unable to inform the Trust Board, until such time as is agreed with the developer, about the possible location of any new stadium.

Membership & Board feelings can certainly be channelled through the Representative, but in some cases the timing and practicalities don't necessarily allow for the membership or the board to get involved such as when the decision is taken to remove a manager. On such matters The Trust is required to trust the judgement of the Representative and the Representative is required to act in the best interests of Trust & Club. This is an area in which I personally think there is room for discussion going forward to ensure the Trust Board and membership where possible can be involved as much as possible.

In my opinion there can be no question about Norman Steel's personal integrity and he has never acted above his authority in his capacity as Director/Chair of the Trust.

**9) The popular perception of the Trust is of a small, self-serving clique not interested in engaging with the majority of fans. Why do you think this has arisen?**

I'm not sure that it is necessarily the 'popular' perception, but I do know what you are referring to. All I can say on that is that as a new member on the Trust Board I have found it to be anything but a 'self-serving clique'. It most certainly isn't self-serving as everyone on the board has Carlisle United as their highest priority. Granted a number of the board members know each other from years ago, but that is probably inevitable considering the size of the city and the club. In recent years there have been new additions and in myself, younger additions. I think the reason it arose

was probably down to some of the 'baggage' I referred to earlier along with a degree of misconception and misinformation – my experience of this organisation and the good people involved in it along with the new direction, the 5 Year Plan, the loss of the baggage and the renewed vigour tell me that this is definitely not the case.

**10) Forgetting the current directors for a moment, what have the trust actively done to find new investors or to advertise the club as being up for sale?**

It needs to be clearly stated at this point that the United Trust as a shareholder of 25.37% does not have the right to effectively 'put the club up for sale' in its entirety – it is the responsibility of the collective board of the football club and efforts have been made over the years to seek new investment, with differing degrees of success, and indeed the Club and Trust are actively engaged in discussions with potential new local investors at this present time. It may not necessarily be what people want to hear, but it's probably important to state that although we as Carlisle United Supporters think that our club is the best thing since sliced bread, that probably isn't the view held by the rest of the country, who have their own clubs to idolise – so investment isn't necessarily as easy to bring in as we would like.

**12) As the Trust is supposed to represent one united voice of the fans, what are the benefits of one member constantly representing the Trust at these meetings? I understand that consistency and good personal relationships are useful, but what protection is put in place to prevent this selected representative from turning native?**

To date it has been the case that the Trust Representative has been the main contact with the club on almost all matters, however, as part of the 5 Year Plan, Trust Directors (2 for each area) have been allocated specific areas of responsibility to take forward. Along with this the club has invited the Trust Directors to become involved with their regular weekly management meetings. What this will do is widen the communication channels and create greater interaction between the Club and the Trust, developing working relationships, trust and cooperation in many areas as well as not relying on all communications going through one individual. The recently created Carlisle United Supporter Groups (CUSG) is another example of the Trust working well with the club and the other supporter groups such as The London Branch, Away Travel Group and of course yourselves Cumbrians.net. The cooperative working between these groups on the raffle to assist with covering some of the cost of the replacement floodlights at Brunton Park has been a real success. We're looking forward to the draw on Saturday evening (31<sup>st</sup> January), to seeing how much money has been raised by this collective effort and to utilising the relationship in the future for other causes.

In addition to this, where the Representative/Chair is involved in discussions with the club, regular Trust Board meetings and reporting of regular Club Board & other meetings to the Trust Board ensure that the representative is tasked with the collective will of the Trust Board and not their own personal agenda.

**13) The Trust works for the fan's interest in the club and not the current regime of the club. Can you please explain the process for fans (regardless of whether they have the ability to pay into the Trust or not) to get their voices and opinions presented to the club?**

It's really simple – I gave all the contact details out earlier in the piece and it really is a case of picking up the phone, emailing, arranging a meeting, seeing us at Brunton Park before/after homes games etc. We will listen to all supporters' voices and opinions; obviously when it comes to passing these on to the club there will need to be some level of judgement involved, so if it is a question which we already have the answer to we can let you know straight away and if it is something significant and important then of course we can pass that on to the club along with the backing of the Trust if required. If it is a question of why haven't we signed Cristiano Ronaldo, then I don't think we'd bother the club board with that one ;-)

In the future we expect the UT presence at the ground to be significantly increased in a number of ways making this process even easier for supporters.

### **16) Why doesn't the club endorse the Trust, thereby making Season Ticket holders an automatic member of the Trust?**

In my opinion this should probably happen and it may well do at some point. We have had discussions with the club about Season Ticket holders automatically becoming members of the Trust and the Trust actually being the Carlisle Based Supporters Club which it really could and should be - the supporter's arm of the club – this is up for discussion in the new regime hopefully...

In closing:

I realise that this has been a difficult time for the supporters of our beloved club, but I would like to close by saying that if we have faith in the discussions that are being undertaken at present, have faith in and support fully Keith Curle, his coaches and the team and we the supporters do our bit by coming together collectively, utilising the Trust for the reason it exists in the first place then I am certain we will be the stronger and the better for it. We all support Carlisle United and we all want the club to do well, to have good times back again, so join with us and help us all make Carlisle United the success we know it can be...

'You City, Your Club, Your Trust'

Get involved & Come on You Blues!!!!