



Oxford United Disabled Fan Forum Meeting Notes

Meeting held at 6:30pm on 21/01/2026

1. Welcome & Introductions

- Andy Taylor opened the meeting with a welcome to all attendees, thanking them for giving up their time and stressing that this forum exists as a safe, inclusive, and respectful space where supporters may raise challenges, concerns, and suggestions without fear of criticism.
- A reminder was given that abusive language, bullying, discriminatory behaviour, or targeted comments would not be tolerated and would result in removal from the meeting.
- Staff in attendance included: Aaron Kightley (Supporter Liaison Officer), who oversees supporter engagement; Tom Phillips (Operations Assistant and Disability Access Officer), who manages disability-related matchday operations and support; and Jim Goddard (Head of Safety & Operations), who holds accountability for matchday safety, stewarding, and stadium operations. Their presence allowed direct responses to operational, safety, and infrastructure-related topics.

2. Review of Previous Minutes & Actions

- Matchday staffing improvements were reviewed. Matt Clark continues supporting the DAO team on matchdays, although recent fixtures required him to assist with access audits and safeguarding shadowing. **His role will become more visible as resources allow.**
- EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) training has been recently completed by matchday staff and will continue to be embedded. **EDI items also remain a standing part of pre-match steward briefings.**
- New stadium update: The project remains on the same publicly advertised timeline. Staff confirmed that no new information could be shared beyond what is available via the club's dedicated stadium webpage.
- Car parking concerns from the previous meeting were revisited. Blue badge bays in the southeast corner will again be displaced for the upcoming Sunderland FA Cup fixture owing to full TNT/Discovery broadcast equipment. **Temporary relocation to the east car park will be used, mirroring previous Sky-broadcast arrangements.**
- Traffic management concerns remain due to high turnover in agency staff, leading to inconsistent instructions to disabled drivers. The club continues supplying written instructions, but these are not always followed through by individual operatives. **Further enforcement and quality checks will occur before forthcoming matches.**

- Half-time refreshment delivery for disabled supporters is not feasible at the current stadium due to staffing and logistical restrictions; however, it is recognised as a desirable improvement and is being built into new-stadium planning.
- Ticketing workshop between the ticket office, FAB representatives and disabled supporters has been completed, with discussions around accessibility improvements, awareness, and consistency.
- Media team improvements—such as adding accessibility links to social posts and boosting visibility of disability-support information—remain pending. **Internal discussions with Comms will continue.**
- Visibility of disability support staff: A commitment was made for Matt Clark to attend disabled platforms pre-match when operational commitments allow. **Supporters in both home wheelchair areas have requested direct introductions.**
- Level Playing Field (LPF) carried out both matchday and non-matchday accessibility audits. Results are pending and will be shared with supporters once formally provided.

3. Formation of a Disabled Supporters Association (DSA)

- A detailed discussion took place about creating a formal Disabled Supporters Association. The club emphasised that a DSA should be supporter-led, independent, and recognised by the club, similar to structures in place at many other clubs.
- A DSA would allow disabled supporters and carers to collaborate more closely, pool their experiences, provide peer-to-peer support, and communicate with the club as a unified group. It would also allow for social events, consultation on stadium development, and regular structured dialogue.
- External support for forming the group is available from the Football Supporters' Association (FSA) and Level Playing Field, who provide templates, constitutions, governance tools, and setup guidance.
- Next steps: Interested supporters were asked to email the club and copy in FAB representatives so that personal contact details can be shared appropriately under GDPR. **Once enough interest is gathered, a steering group may be formed to draft structure, aims, and membership.**
- LPF's Week of Action in March 2026 was identified as a potential launch point for a formal DSA event and awareness campaign.

4. Matchday Experience – Open Forum Discussions

- Car Parking & Exits: Several supporters stated that exit routes vary week-to-week, causing confusion. Some matches direct disabled vehicles via the VIP exit, others via the east gate. On at least one occasion, a gate was locked after directing supporters toward it, forcing them to turn around. This issue causes confrontation with traffic marshals. **The club will review and reinforce consistent instructions with the contractor.**

- Sensory Room & SEND: Many families and carers remain unaware of the sensory room. Users also noted that, unlike some modern grounds, it does not provide a pitch view. **The club confirmed that a full revamp is in planning, including improved signage and promotion, and that the new stadium design includes a pitch-visible sensory space.**
- Ticketing for Wheelchair Users: Because Ticketmaster automatically pairs wheelchair spaces with PA complimentary tickets, these seats cannot be automatically placed on Ticket Exchange. The ticket office can process resale requests manually, and **further exploration is ongoing to determine whether partial automation is possible.**
- Stewarding & Obstructed Views: Supporters noted that at half-time and during final minutes of matches, fans moving to the railings block wheelchair users' sightlines. Reduced numbers of long-standing, experienced stewards has contributed to inconsistency. **Club to reinforce training and consider additional signage, floor markings (e.g., yellow hatch zones), and clearer stewarding expectations.**
- Weather Exposure: Wheelchair users in front-row sections are often exposed to severe weather. Suggestions included club-provided ponchos, blankets, or other protective coverings. **The club will cost disposable ponchos and explore branded alternatives.**
- Toilet Cleanliness: Reports indicated that some accessible toilets, particularly in the Britannia Suite, have not been cleaned between matches. The club acknowledged that stadium cleaners focus on concourse areas, and that hospitality areas are sometimes missed. **Accessible toilet checks will now be added to pre-match audits, and concerns escalated to the Stadium Manager.**
- Reporting System: The matchday text alert number (675) appears not to be sending auto-receipts. **The club will investigate whether there is a system fault or subscription lapse.**
- Steward Training Needs: Supporters asked whether stewards receive formal autism, ADHD, or PBS-related training. Some staff hold external qualifications, but no club-wide programme exists. **A supporter with professional training accreditation offered to assist, and the club accepted.**
- SEND Support Example: A supporter shared a detailed experience bringing an autistic grandchild to a first match. While the ticket office support was excellent, it highlighted the need for clearer guidance on where to go, who can assist, and how to access immediate support if needed.

5. Closing Remarks

- The club thanked all attendees, emphasised appreciation for direct and honest feedback, and reiterated that these forums are intended to be ongoing and meaningful rather than token gestures.
- Minutes will be circulated by email and published on the club website. Attendees were invited to contact staff any time between forums for support or follow-up queries.

Date of next meeting: **TBC**