

The Jags Foundation Census Results and Way Forward



Season 2023-24
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Overview

The TJF Census 2023 ran for a fortnight between Tuesday 24th October and Tuesday 7th November. It was a survey of TJF members, seeking to better understand their association with Partick Thistle and their views of the matchday experience.

We based the survey on [a similar one previously carried out by the English Football League in 2022](#). We did this to allow us to draw some comparisons with the experiences of fans of other football clubs, and to put TJF members’ views into wider context.

This survey is intended to form the starting point for further, more specific, forms of consultation with TJF members. We want to understand your priorities, both for TJF and the Football Club.

The Census link was sent to **1527** unique email addresses out of (as was then) **1661** members. Some members share an email address with a partner, parent or guardian, which explains this discrepancy. A total of **762** members responded to the survey, and we are extremely grateful for the time taken to do so. This represents a turnout of **45.9%** of all members and just under **50% of unique email addresses**.

To place this turnout figure into context, it is worth looking to the fan surveys carried out at other football clubs. Exeter City has ranked in first place on an independent Fan Engagement Index four years on the trot in England and Wales. Their most recent supporters’ survey, carried out in 2022, attracted a 28% response rate from Exeter City Supporters Trust members. The strong response rate in our Census is therefore extremely encouraging, and means we have an important evidence base from which to better understand our members.

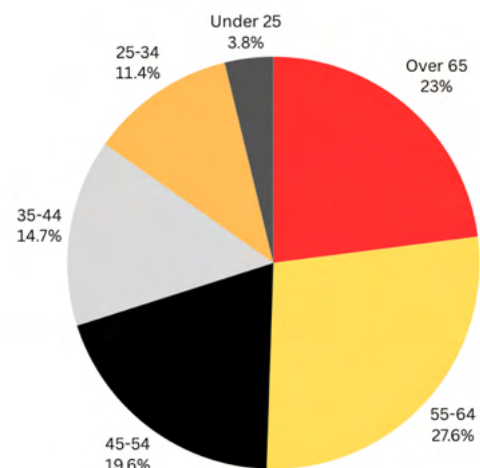
1. Core Demographics

We asked a series of demographics questions. First, we looked at the age profile of our respondents.

Age

Just under **85%** of those who responded to our survey were **over the age of 35**. This figure is slightly higher than that seen in the EFL survey (81%).

Whilst these kinds of survey can skew towards a higher age demographic of respondents than the support at large, this illustrates the challenge of bringing through new generations of Thistle fans, and the sustainability of Football Clubs in the longer term. Notably **just over half of our respondents were over the age of 55**.





Gender

The gender split of respondents was slightly more skewed towards male fans than the details disclosed by TJF members when joining the Foundation.

According to our membership records, **just under 12% of our members are women or girls**, whereas they make up **slightly over 7% of survey respondents**. Both figures are notably lower than those in the EFL survey, where 18% of respondents said that they are female.



LGBTQ+ and Disability Inclusion

Fewer than 2% of respondents positively identified as **belonging to the LGBTQ+ community** and **7.5% of respondents** indicated that they consider themselves to **have a disability**. Both of these figures are slightly lower than the typical reported responses for the population at large.



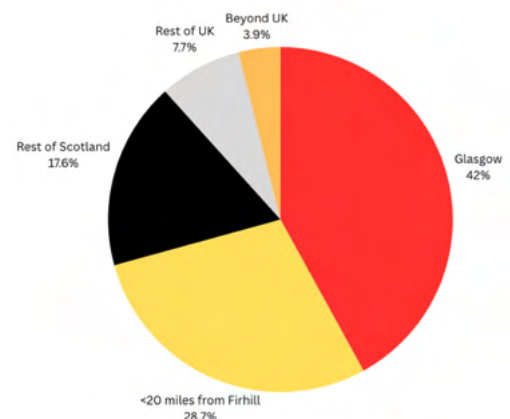
The sub-sample sizes of these groups are too small to draw statistically significant conclusions in our survey, but key themes from comments have been included, wherever possible. We are keen to work with Proud Jags and the DSA on any specific areas of concern.

Geography

Unsurprisingly, the largest segment of respondents to our Census live in Glasgow (**42%**). Just over **7 in 10** respondents live within 20 miles of Firhill.

However, **almost 12% of respondents live outside of Scotland**.

These stats are an important reminder that the Thistle support is geographically quite dispersed, despite having its roots in the North West of Glasgow itself.



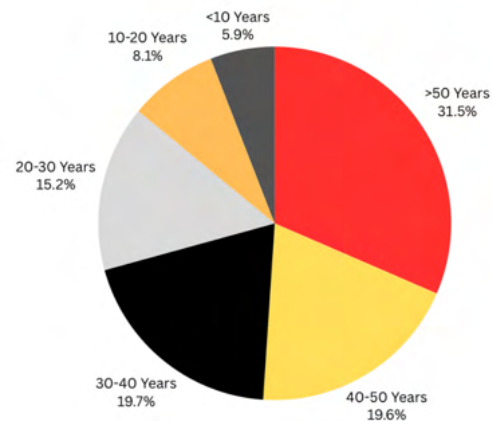


How long have you been a Thistle fan?

Our respondents skewed heavily towards those who had been Thistle fans for a long period of time.

A staggering **70%** of respondents indicated that they had been following Thistle for **more than 30 years**.

This compares with 62% in the EFL fan survey in terms of fans who had followed their club for at least three decades.



2. Football in the lives of supporters

We asked a series of questions about respondents’ relationship with football and Partick Thistle. The comparable figures with the EFL survey are shown in the table below

Statement	TJF respondents agreeing	EFL respondents agreeing
Football allows me to feel part of my community	61%	65%
Football is an important part of my family life	76%	75%
Going to watch football is a big part in my usual weekly routine	64%	67%
My Club plays an important role in its community	84%	85%
My Club’s results mean more to me than the performance of my national team	58%	79%
Nothing can beat the live football matchday experience	83%	89%

One interesting theme here is that the performance of the national team seems to be relatively more important to TJF members than those who responded to the EFL’s survey. However, a clear majority were still club first, country second.





3. The Club in the Community

One of the questions the EFL survey asks is to do with how important a football club is to its town or city. We asked this question for both Maryhill and Glasgow.

80% of respondents said that Thistle was important to the fabric of **Maryhill**, with **65%** saying the same of **Glasgow**. This compares to 89% of EFL fans saying that they believed their Club was important to the social fabric of the town or city it was based in.

Respondents were asked **whether they agreed or disagreed** with four related statements:

Statement	TJF respondents agreeing	EFL respondents agreeing
It is important that my Club is a focal point for its local community	86%	85%
My Club welcomes all away fans	75%	78%
My Club's matchday crowd is representative of the local community	50%	70%
My Club provides an inclusive, accessible and enjoyable matchday experience for all supporters	85%	70%

The main difference here seems to be that TJF members are less likely to think that the matchday crowd is representative of the local community than their EFL counterparts.

By contrast, TJF members are more likely to believe that the matchday experience is inclusive, accessible and enjoyable.

We also asked **how aware our members are about the community activities the Club is involved in**, on a scale of 1-5 (1 being not at all aware, 5 being very aware).

Club	1 Not at all aware	2	3	4	5 Very aware
Thistle	2%	13%	30%	42%	13%
EFL teams	6%	10%	26%	31%	27%

In the EFL survey, female fans indicated greater awareness of their Club's community activities (65% compared with 58%). This appears to be even more pronounced at Thistle, with **75% of female respondents indicated positive awareness of community activities** (the figure for male respondents is just **53%**).

Two particularly important community-focused organisations associated with Thistle are [the Partick Thistle Charitable Trust](#) and the supporter-led [Jags For Good](#). The Charitable Trust does some amazing work in North Glasgow, including its highly successful disability football programme. Jags For Good are the volunteers you'll often see pre-match at Firhill, helping to collect donations and supplies for Glasgow North West Foodbank and other good causes.



4. Supporter Liaison Officer

One way that Clubs increasingly seek to link-up with fans is through their Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO). The EFL survey noted an increase in awareness of this role from 2019 to 2022.

The TJF responses to our SLO awareness question suggest the Club is doing well on this metric, but there is still a large segment of the support to be reached-out to.

Statement	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
I am aware of my Club’s SLO and know how to contact them if needed	26%	21%
I am aware of my Club’s SLO but I’m not sure how to contact them	27%	16%
I am unaware of my Club’s SLO but have heard of the role before	30%	28%
I have not heard of the role before	17%	35%



For those who don’t know, the Thistle’ SLO is Norman Wilson. The role of SLO is a bridge between the fans and the Club and is an important point of contact to help pre-empt and resolve issues supporters might have around the match-day experience.

Norman is someone you can contact to raise any problems you might have had on a matchday, for instance with facilities, stewarding or safety. The SLO can be contacted at slo@ptfc.co.uk. Norman is also a volunteer at most matchdays, and always happy to help fans on the day.

The Club also has a dedicated Child Wellbeing Officer. This is currently Fiona Atkinson. She helps to ensure that Firhill is a safe place for younger fans. If you would like to raise any child wellbeing or safeguarding issues, you can get in touch with Fiona at childrenswellbeing@ptfc.co.uk.





5. Being valued by the Club

The EFL survey asked a series of questions about **how valued fans feel by their Club**. We asked the same questions of TJF members.

On a scale of 0-10 (0 being not valued at all, and 10 being extremely valued) the average score at EFL Clubs is **7.4** (this improved from 2019 to 2022). There was some variation by league, with the EFL Championship averaging 7.3, the EFL League 1 averaging 7.6 and the EFL League 2 averaging 7.4.

By contrast, TJF respondents’ average response is **7.1**. This suggests that there is potential room for improvement at Thistle in terms of making feel fans feel valued.

The EFL survey also asked about different ways that Clubs engage with supporters to make them feel valued, and how effective those efforts were

Engagement activity	Effectiveness (TJF)	Effectiveness (EFL)
Players acknowledging fans	58%	65%
Regular communications with fans on Club matters	61%	42%
Upholding and understanding of heritage and community	35%	38%
Updates from Club’s senior decision makers	45%	35%
Interaction on Club social media	77%	48%
Seeing that the Club has a clear and transparent mission statement and values	31%	26%

The positive news here is that TJF members, on the whole, feel they are **more regularly communicated with on Club matters** than the EFL respondents, and are **more likely to feel they get adequate updates from the Club’s senior decision-makers**.

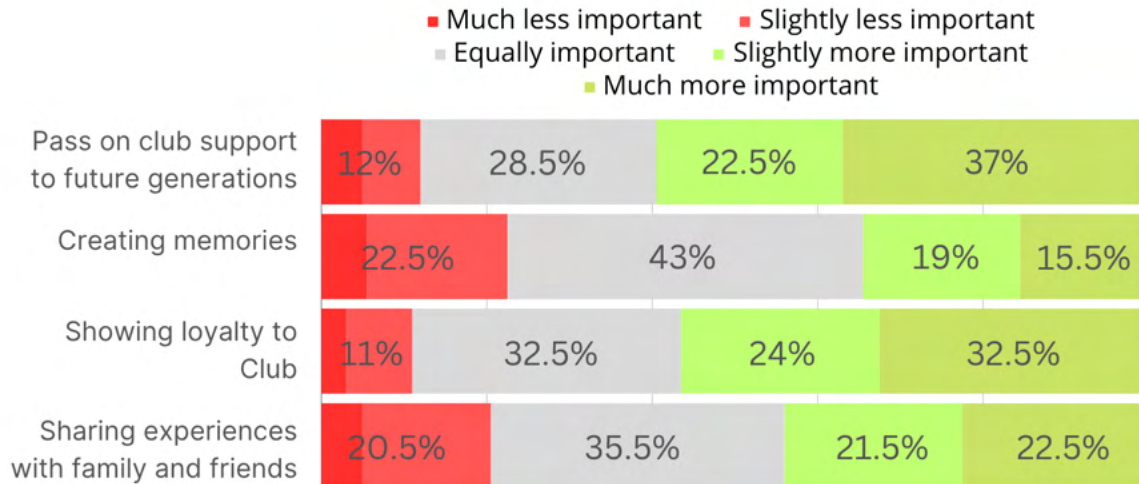
The Club also **performs very strongly** for its **social media engagement**.





6. Importance of winning

The survey asked respondents to indicate how important various outcomes are, compared with Thistle winning football matches.



We crunched these numbers into a “net importance rating” so they could be compared with the EFL survey’s results.

Factor	Net importance rating (TJF)	Net importance rating (EFL)
To pass the support of my Club on to future generations	+47.5	+14
Creating memories	+12	+18
Showing loyalty/support to my Club	+45.5	+18
Sharing the experience with my family/friends	+23.5	-7

Overall, TJF members attach significantly more importance, relative to winning games, on:

- **Club loyalty**
- **Passing the Club onto future generations**
- **Shared experiences with family/friends**



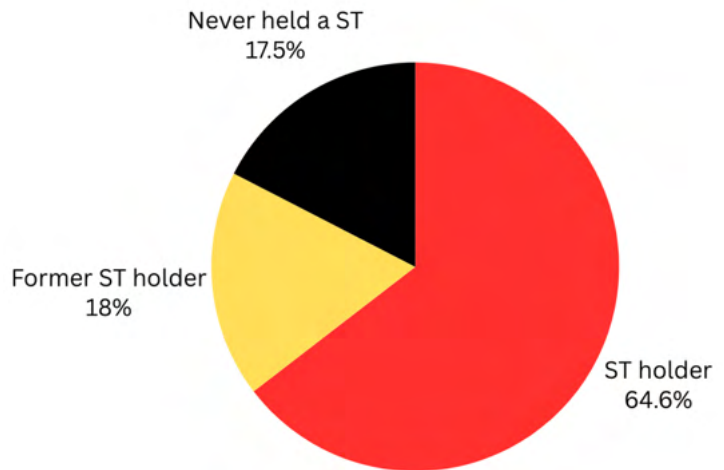
7. Season tickets

About **64.5%** of the respondents to the Census were Thistle **men’s team season ticket holders**.

A further **18%** were **lapsed season ticket holders**.

The remaining **17.5%** **have never held a season ticket**.

This split was almost identical to that seen in the 2022 EFL survey.



Season ticket holders

We asked those who hold a season ticket to indicate the main factors that influenced their decision to buy a season ticket:

Reason	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
It demonstrates loyalty towards the Club	88%	67%
It gives me priority booking access for cup/away games	21%	49%
It guarantees me a seat for all league home games	45%	76%
It’s cheaper than buying tickets individually	27%	60%
To spend time with family/friends	42%	50%
To watch/support Thistle live	73%	84%

There are three notable differences here.

- The **cost savings appear to be drastically lower on the list of priorities of existing season ticket holders** than their EFL counterparts.
- **Loyalty to the Club** also appears to be **more important**.
- **Priority access/seating also seems to be less important**, presumably because it is rare for Thistle games to have restricted access, given Firhill is rarely full and those without season tickets rarely have difficulties securing a place for away fixtures.



Lapsed season ticket holders

We also asked lapsed season ticket holders why they don't hold one any more:

Reason	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
Dissatisfaction with Club ownership	3.5%	13%
I no longer live close enough to the stadium	32%	29%
I prefer tickets for individual matches instead	27%	29%
Lack of disposable income	20.5%	16%
Season tickets are too expensive	4.5%	13%
Work/family commitments	47.5%	40%

The main obstacles are therefore the obvious ones for TJF members: **other commitments and proximity**, followed by **financial circumstances**.

Buying a season ticket next year

We then asked all respondents what factors would have the greatest positive influence on making a decision to purchase a season ticket in season 2024-25:

Reason	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
Better team performances	38%	15%
If I lived closer to the stadium	21%	30%
Cheaper season ticket prices	19.5%	32%
If I had more time to attend	19%	34%
If I had more disposable income	18%	24%
Improved stadium facilities	17.5%	11%
Fixtures not being moved for broadcast as frequently	16.5%	13%
Having the opportunity to stand at matches	12.5%	11%
Change in Club ownership	3.5%	13%
Other	6.5%	7%

On-field performance therefore appears to be the most important influence for deciding on future season ticket purchases, significantly more so than for EFL fans.

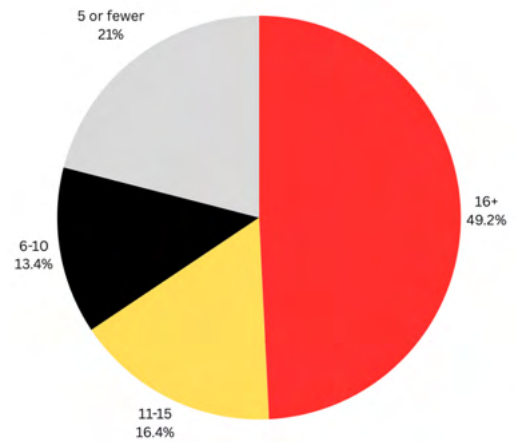
Proximity, cost, other commitments and stadium facilities also appear to be important factors.



8. Going to games

Home games

The figures below (and pie chart to the right) show how often TJF respondents attend home games. It should be noted that direct comparisons between Thistle and EFL Clubs against this metric may be misleading, as the league campaign in the EFL includes 23 home fixtures, rather than 18.



Even so, the overall proportion of fans attending **more than 10 home games per season** is broadly the same.

Number of home games attended per season	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
0-5	21%	20%
6-10	13.5%	11%
11-15	16.5%	8%
16+	49%	61%

Which stand?

In terms of which Stand fans prefer to watch games in at Firhill, TJF members split **63%** in favour of the **Jackie Husband Stand**, compared with **30%** in the **John Lambie Stand** and **7%** have no preference.



63%



30%



Away games

We also asked about away games attendance, with the following results:



Number of away games attended per season	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
0-5	56.5%	73%
6-10	22.5%	17%
11-15	10.5%	5%
16+	10.5%	5%

Respondents to the TJF Census are **more likely to attend away games** than their EFL survey counterparts.

What influences attendance?

We asked about factors that influence people's decisions to go to home and away games. The equivalent figures from the EFL survey are in brackets (where available):

Reason	Home games	Away games
If friends or family are attending	39.5% (25%)	45% (22%)
What day of the week the match is played	39.5% (23%)	43% (28%)
My Club's performance	19% (18%)	23%
Kick-off time	27% (16%)	23%
If it's a big game	22.5% (15%)	39% (16%)
The distance to travel to the game	18.5% (14%)	62% (46%)
The cost of travelling to the game	9.5% (8%)	28% (24%)
Ticket availability	3.5%	10.5% (23%)
The cost of buying a ticket	8.5%	17% (14%)
Other	15%	1.5%

Thistle fans seem to be **much more heavily influenced by whether friends/family are attending, the timing of the match, and (especially with away games) travel distance and whether the game is a significant one**, than their EFL counterparts.



Who do you go to games with?

We also asked about who people typically go to games with:

Who do they go to games with	TJF respondents (Home)	TJF respondents (Away)	EFL respondents
I attend alone	21%	21%	10%
My children/other children	27%	24%	33%
My friends	50%	49%	51%
My immediate family	33%	27%	34%
My extended family	13%	10%	8%
My partner/spouse	11%	11%	20%

TJF respondents are **more likely to attend games alone**, and **less likely to attend with their partner or spouse** (compared to the EFL survey). This indicates that there are opportunities to grow the fanbase by encouraging more partners, spouses and friends along to games. The Club may wish to think about how to incentivise bringing along new fans to games.

There also appears to be no significant difference between home and away games, when it comes to the people that Jags fans go to games with.





9. Ticket purchasing

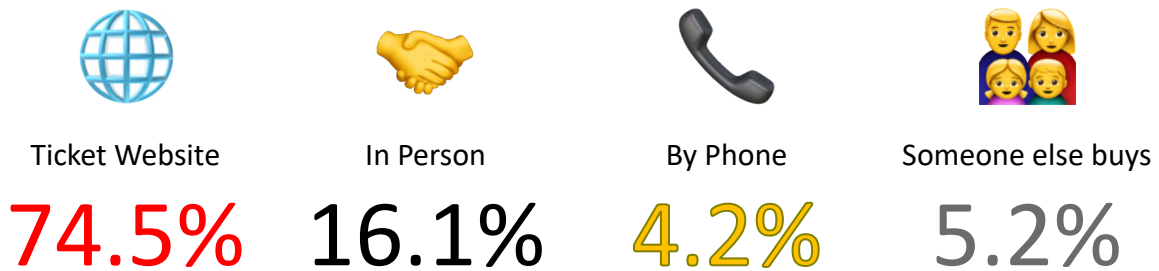
We asked a range of questions about **fans’ experience of purchasing tickets for games**. We asked them to rate various aspects of this experience on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very poor and 5 being very good. The average scores are shown below:

Aspect	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
Attitude/helpfulness of Club staff	4.1	4.3
Ticketing information provided (e.g. pricing options, ticket availability)	3.7	4.1
Ticketing/seating options within the stadium	3.9	4.1
The ticket purchase process (e.g. refund process, print at home option etc)	3.9	4.0

The obvious area where there is room for improvement is on ticketing information, but all four scores are **slightly worse than the EFL average**.

Purchase methods

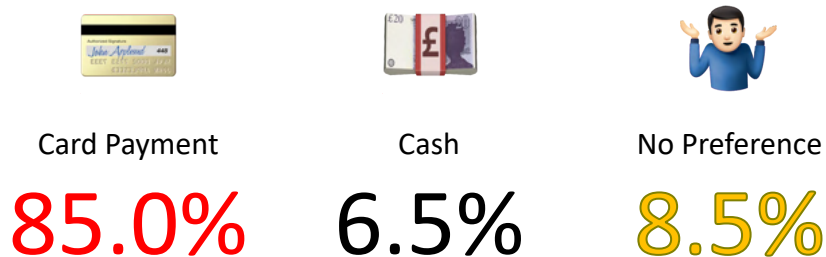
We also asked about preferred methods for buying tickets, with the following results



The EFL survey had indicated that those under the age of 35 were drastically more likely to prefer to purchase match-day tickets online via the club ticketing website (a 13 percentage point gap). **This is not reflected in our survey** (where **the gap is only 5 percentage points**).

Payment methods

We also asked about preferred payment methods for purchasing tickets.





10. Match travel

We asked questions about how members would typically travel to games.

Home games

By far **the most popular method of travel to home games** is by **car or taxi**, followed by the **train/subway** then **bus** then **on foot**. This broadly correlates with the experiences of EFL survey respondents, though Thistle fans appear to be **slightly less dependent on car travel**.



Car/Taxi

54.3%



Train/Subway

16.9%



Bus

17.5%



On Foot

11.3%

Away games

We also asked which methods of travel fans would typically use to go to an away game. This clearly varies depending on the location of the other side's stadium. However, **private transport dominated the responses here (68%)** with **only 34% saying they would use public transport** and **23% saying they would use a supporters' bus**.

On your bike!



Some respondents to the survey noted that there was no option to indicate a preference for cycling to games (especially fixtures at Firhill). Some helpful observations were also made about the availability of suitable facilities to store bikes at the stadium. We will explore these with the Club as part of its ongoing review of stadium facilities.



11. Pre-match routines

We asked a number of questions about members’ pre-match routines. Firstly, we asked about **when, before a home match, members normally arrive at the stadium:**

How long before kick-off	TJF respondents	EFL respondents (home)	EFL respondents (away)
Less than 30 minutes	71%	44%	29%
30 minutes to 1 hour	23.5%	30%	33%
More than 1 hour	6.5%	27%	38%

The striking aspect about this is that **our respondents, on the whole, arrive at the stadium much closer to kick-off** than their EFL counterparts.

We then asked **what people do when they arrive at the stadium, or in the stadium vicinity:**

Activity	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
Go to a local Pub	34.5%	35%
Purchase food or soft drinks at the stadium	39%	45%
Purchase food or drink from a nearby independent vendor	5%	26%
Visit the Club shop	6.5%	30%
Visit the Club bar/hospitality	18%	19%
None of these – I go straight to my seat	32%	18%

The time spent in the stadium vicinity before games appears to be connected to these priority activities. Thistle has a much larger proportion of fans turning-up to Firhill very shortly before kick-off and going straight to their seats. The figures for **visiting the Club shop** are **especially low** compared to EFL counterparts and worth exploring further.



More fans visit local pubs than the Aitken Suite/hospitality pre-match



12. The Matchday Experience

When asked to **rate the overall matchday experience at Thistle**, on a scale of 0-10 (0 being “very poor” and 10 being “excellent”, our respondents gave an average score of **7.4**. This compares to an average satisfaction score of 7.9 in the EFL survey. It should be noted that this figure improved drastically for both EFL League One and League Two between 2019 and 2022.

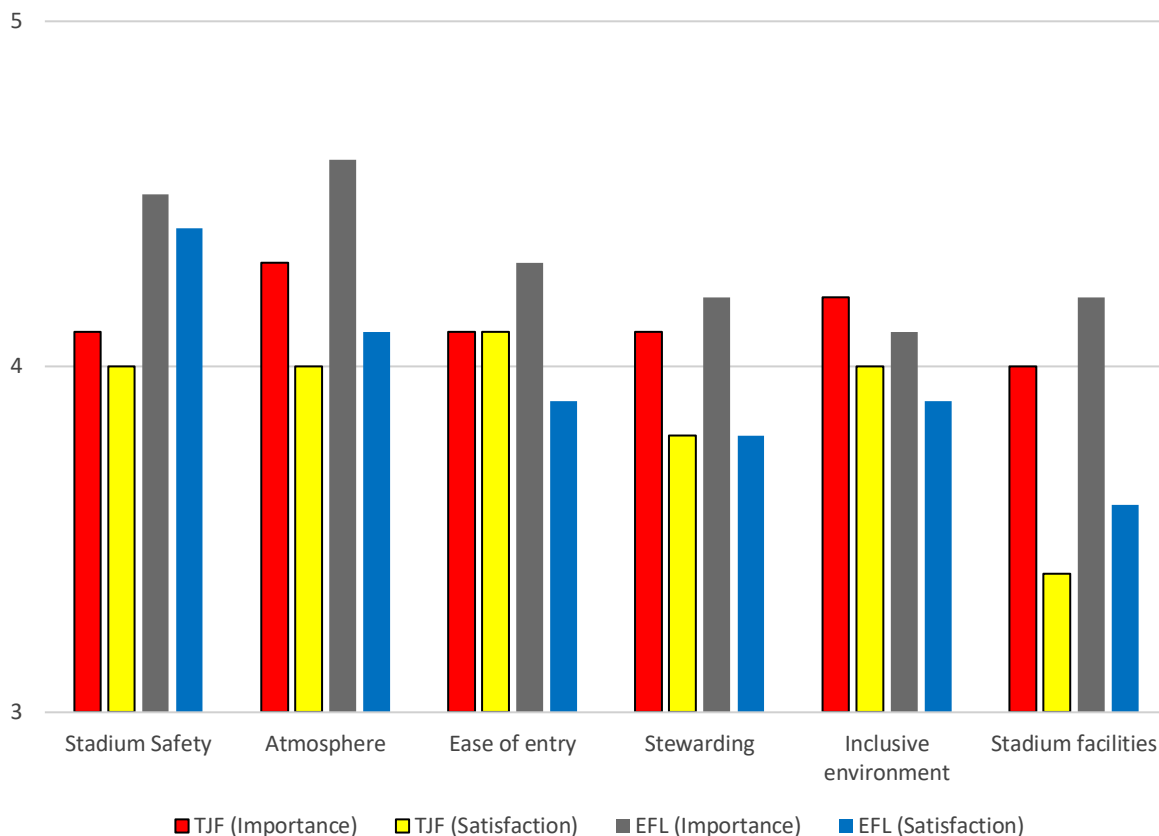
Broadly mirroring the experience of the EFL, the satisfaction rating given to the matchday experience is higher for female supporters (**8.1**) than male supporters (**7.3**). The figure for supporters who identify as disabled (**7.7**) is also higher than for respondents generally.

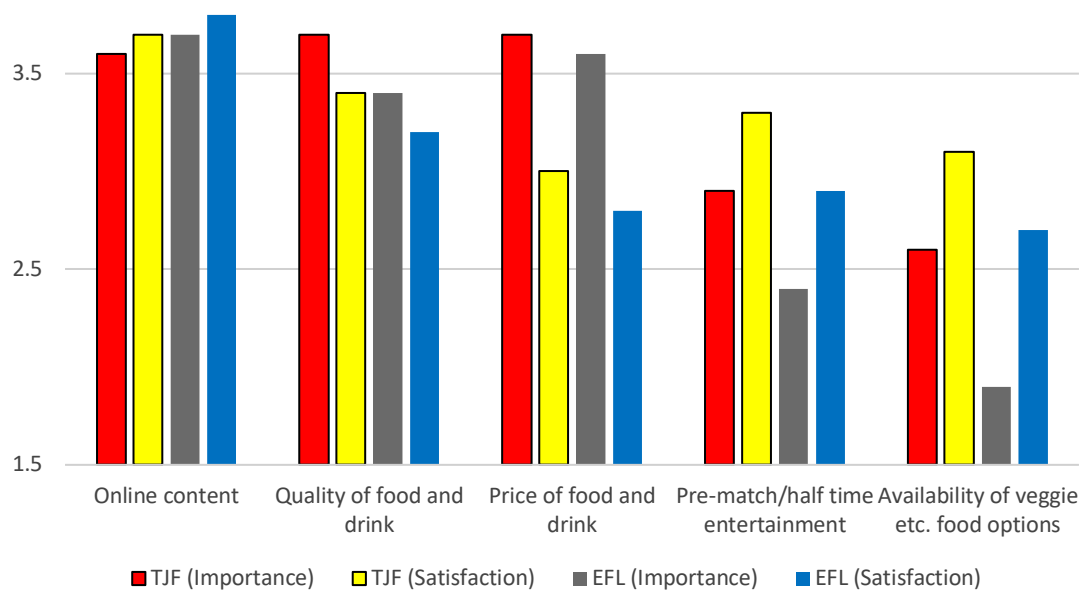
Factors influencing matchday experience

We also asked members to tell us how important they considered aspects of the matchday experience to be, and then to indicate how satisfied they were with those aspects at Firhill.

The importance rating is on a scale of 1-5, 1 being “very unimportant” and 5 being “very important”. The satisfaction rating is on a scale of 1-5, 1 being “very dissatisfied” and 5 being “very satisfied”. These results are shown alongside the equivalent EFL fan survey figures to indicate trends. **NB baselines in the graphs below are chosen to best illustrate differences:**

The Thistle Match-Day X-Factor





The first thing to note is that there are similar trends almost across the board. The things that TJF members and EFL fans care most about are broadly the same, as are the areas where Thistle and other Clubs do more or less well. The Importance-Satisfaction gap is also similar in many cases.

The stand-out problem areas for Thistle (i.e. those where there is a large negative gap between Importance and Satisfaction) appear to be **stadium facilities** and the **price and quality of food and drink**, and to a lesser extent, **stewarding**. This was also reflected in the open text comments at the end of the survey, and is something we will explore further in follow-on consultation.

13. Inclusion

We asked one specific question on inclusion, asking members to state **to what extent they agree or disagree that Partick Thistle provides an inclusive and enjoyable matchday experience for all supporters, regardless of their background, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity or disability.**

More than 85% of respondents agreed with this statement, with only 1.5% disagreeing. The average response rate to this was **more positive from female fans (91% agreeing)** compared with male fans (**85%**). **Disabled fans also have a slightly more positive view on this (88%)** than the respondents as a whole.

LGBTQ+ respondents had a less positive response to this (only 67%). Care should be taken with this figure, given the very small sub-sample size, but we will explore with the Club how best to address inclusivity issues for LGBTQ+ fans in light of this.



14. Safety and Stewarding

We then asked questions specifically about **stadium safety and stewarding**. The **vast majority of fans** felt either **“very safe” (66%)** or **“safe” (30%)** with only **1%** feeling **“unsafe”** and **none** feeling **“very unsafe”**. This is broadly comparable with the figures for EFL fans at home games.

Role of stewards

Beyond this, we asked specific questions about **the role and perception of stewards at games**. We asked you first **what you thought their main roles should be**:

Role	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
To provide a safe experience	85%	62%
To watch the crowd for any issues or disorder	55%	53%
To investigate any incident reported	43%	37%
To welcome supporters	37%	31%
To direct and to assist supporters	79%	29%
To reduce ground regulations being broken	31%	24%
To be an ambassador for the Club	36%	23%
To check fans have tickets	8%	17%

The key finding here is that **Thistle fans feel much more strongly** than their EFL counterparts **that the purpose of stewards is to direct and to assist supporters, and to provide a safe experience**.

Stewarding levels and quality

When asked about the levels of stewarding at games, the **overwhelming majority said that the current levels were “about right” (84%)**. By contrast, **11% felt there were too many stewards, and 5% not enough**.

For comparison, 82% of EFL fans felt existing stewarding levels were about right, with 6% saying there were too many stewards and 12% not enough.

When asked to **rate the overall quality of stewarding on matchdays** TJF members gave the following response:



Whilst a majority of fans are content with stewarding, there is clear room for improvement in the relationship between stewards and fans at games. Concerns about specific incidents involving stewarding should be raised with the Supporter Liaison Officer.



15. Fan engagement and media

We asked a series of questions about how fans engage with media content and the Club.

A significantly higher proportion of our respondents than in the EFL survey access online content on matchdays via a mobile device (88% compared to just 62%).

Social media at games

When we asked **what kinds of social media activity fans engaged in**, they said:

Activity	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
Score updates	79%	86%
Team news	80%	77%
Post a photo of you/friends/family at the match	20%	29%
Match previews	30%	28%
Manager interviews	37%	23%
Video clips of match play	30%	18%
Player interviews	32%	16%
Posting photos of match play	12%	15%
Viewing photos of match play	20%	12%

Our fans are therefore **more interested in player, manager and match content**, and **less interested in taking selfies**, than their EFL counterparts!

Club social media channels

We also asked members about **how they use official Club social media channels**. The trends are almost identical to those of EFL fan survey respondents:

Activity	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
Ticketing news	71%	73%
Fixtures and results information	70%	72%
Match previews	57%	51%
Post-match round-ups	55%	50%
Streaming information	27%	27%
Player profiles	21%	25%
Contact information	24%	17%

Additionally, **35%** of our respondents indicated that they **have a JagsZone subscription**. We may look to consult further on the Club's media subscription model to understand better the content people most want to see (and, indeed, are willing to pay for). This is important against the backdrop of the Club seeking to grow fan revenues.



Television coverage

We asked about the selection of Thistle’s fixtures for live television broadcast, and how it makes TJF members feel when it happens:

Response	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
I attend the match and like the coverage the Club gets	47%	53%
I like it. It’s a chance to watch my Club’s matches	42%	34%
I don’t mind but I think it impacts negatively on the match attendance	30%	21%
It often means the match is rearranged for a date I can’t attend	19%	15%
It usually disrupts my matchday routine	16%	14%
I think my Club is selected too frequently	4%	6%

Overall, views on television coverage tend to be neutral or positive. There is, however, clearly a negative impact for some fans (particularly impacting ability to attend games that are rescheduled for a different date and time).



A small number of members commented that fixtures being shifted to Friday nights (which they could not go to) eroded the value of the season ticket as a proposition.



16. Legacy and sustainability

TJF has consulted separately on **whether to enter into a strategic partnership with the Youth Academy**. Over **96%** of the members that voted on that proposal supported both proposals.

- The first proposal was that TJF would accept, if offered, appointment as a corporate director of the Academy’s operating company.
- The second proposal was that TJF would commit £2,000 per month to the Academy, to help it meet its running costs.



The £2kpm pledge is in place, and helping to meet the operating costs of the Academy for the remainder of season 2023-24. TJF is not (yet) a director of the Academy Operating Company. The related sustainability work on the Academy is ongoing, and we will update our members when there is more to say on this.

Youth development

It is clear from the Census that **youth development is important to TJF members**, though slightly less important than for EFL survey respondents:

Level of importance for Club to produce home grown players	TJF respondents	EFL respondents
Very unimportant	0.5%	1%
Unimportant	2%	1%
Neither important nor unimportant	8%	6%
Important	30%	23%
Very important	59.5%	69%

Net Importance Rating

+87

Fan ownership

We also asked a question which was specific to Partick Thistle, on fan ownership. In light of the recent investment agreement, which involved a dilution of existing shareholdings including that of the PTFC Trust from 74% to 68%, we asked you **how important it was that Thistle remains majority fan-owned**.



Level of importance that Thistle remains majority fan-owned	TJF respondents
Very unimportant	1%
Unimportant	2%
Neither important nor unimportant	10%
Important	22%
Very important	65%

Net Importance Rating

+84



We agree with our members about this. As previously indicated, the new Club-Trust Agreement will introduce legal protections against any further dilution of the fans’ existing shareholding in the Football Club.

The beneficiary vote will be a key component of any future share issue, giving TJF members, Jags Trust members, and season ticket holders, a collective legally binding veto if they think the deal isn’t right for the Club. This should mean that any future investment proposals are explained fully and transparently to the fans, and should be informed by their priorities for the Football Club. Well over 2000 fans will be eligible to have a say across the beneficiary categories.

Financial sustainability

The Census also asked about **how much importance you place on the financial sustainability of football clubs:**

Level of importance that football clubs are financially sustainable in the long term	TJF respondents
Very unimportant	0%
Unimportant	0%
Neither important not unimportant	0.5%
Important	7%
Very important	92.5%

Net Importance Rating
+99.5

Clearly past experience has shaped the thinking of Thistle fans on this. We are heartened that financial sustainability is prioritised so strongly by our members. This is why TJF was so keen on a proper fan ownership model with robust mechanisms for transparency and oversight of Club finances and budgets. That’s now going to be delivered through the CTA.



This finding also shows that TJF members are realistic and understand that fan ownership has to go hand-in-hand with sound finances. A fan-owned football club that isn’t committed to being self-sustaining won’t remain fan-owned for very long. One that takes balancing the books seriously can, by contrast, build the space for enduring and meaningful fan influence.



Environmental sustainability

We also asked about **how important members regarded environmental sustainability**:

Level of importance that football clubs operate in a more environmentally sustainable way	TJF respondents
Very unimportant	4%
Unimportant	3.5%
Neither important not unimportant	20%
Important	36.5%
Very important	36%

Net Importance Rating

+65

With an ageing stadium, many of the changes Thistle can make in terms of environmental sustainability go hand-in-hand with energy efficiency and cost savings. If you have ideas about how Thistle can become environmentally more sustainable, please get in touch.

Safe standing

Safe standing provision has been a long-running issue, ever since the move to all-seater stadiums in the Scottish top flight. We asked you **how important it was that standing provision be made available at all football grounds**:

Level of importance that standing provision be made available at all football grounds	TJF respondents
Very unimportant	11%
Unimportant	9%
Neither important not unimportant	27%
Important	30%
Very important	23%

Net Importance Rating

+33

It is worth noting that stewarding at Firhill has been relatively permissive when it comes to standing, especially in the John Lambie Stand, where there is a dedicated singing section.





Firhill - Maintenance, sustainability, redevelopment

A lot of our members commented on the current state of Firhill, and its facilities. They wanted to be consulted about/to see further progress made by the Club on:

- stadium maintenance (broken seats was a particularly common complaint, but so was general upkeep/cleanliness)
- stadium redevelopment (understanding what options are realistic and what they would involve)
- facilities improvements (particular mentions on the catering and toilet facilities)

Maintenance and facilities

At the recent Club AGM, the issue of general stadium maintenance was raised. Specific issues were mentioned around the maintenance of the Jackie Husband Stand roof and a multitude of challenges with the Colin Weir Stand. The Club has a rolling programme of safety and maintenance works, prioritised around ensuring regulatory compliance. Specific works ongoing this season have included:

- roof repairs
- replacing broken windows in the Colin Weir Stand
- repainting of facilities and thoroughfares throughout the stadium
- a rolling broken seat-replacement programme



The main obstacle to more extensive facilities improvements (including some of the disability-related access ideas mentioned by members) is the up-front capital cost. The Club has, this year, prioritised improvements to the hospitality lounges and Aitken Suite, aiming to improve the experience for fans and to increase footfall and therefore income.

It was suggested by the Club Board at the AGM that, if there were further inward investment into the Club, it could potentially support further facilities improvements.

Stadium redevelopment?



The Club provided an update on potential stadium redevelopment at the January AGM.

Exploratory discussions have taken place looking into whether the old south end Terracing could be redeveloped into (mainly) social housing provision, with a small stand facility. We understand that no spend has yet been sanctioned by the Club in relation to this project.



Expectations should be carefully managed around this. There have been repeated attempts to find a financially viable and planning-permission compliant redevelopment opportunity for this part of the ground, for almost two decades, without success. Any viable project would require substantial capital outlay, and this would have to come from outside sources.

Under [the new Club-Trust Agreement](#), any decision to approve redevelopment of the ground would be subject to a legally binding PTFC Trust beneficiary vote. If and when more concrete proposals come of the exploratory discussions, we will therefore expect the fans to be fully consulted and informed and to have the final say.

Club finances and future investment

A significant number of respondents wanted to hear more about the Club's financial position, what steps were being taken towards longer-term sustainability, and where external investment would fit into this. These are primarily responsibilities of the Club Board itself, but the PTFC Trust and TJF have a role in scrutinising this work.

We hope that some of [TJF's analysis of the Club's Annual General Meeting](#) will help to provide key answers for fans on this, though we always welcome further questions on this to support our own scrutiny of the Club finances.

Financial Sustainability

The Club is expected to incur a six-figure loss this season but the deficit is likely to be significantly smaller than last year. This has been achieved in part thanks to TJF's regular and additional contributions to the Club in the 2023-24 season. The Club has also seen revenues from season tickets increase significantly.

The Club's financial forecasts at the AGM anticipated a "break-even" position from season 2024-25 onwards. Actually delivering this will depend on:

- robust cost controls across the entire business
- significant further improvements in commercial, hospitality and fan revenue streams
- meeting or exceeding the budgeted footballing assumptions of a 5th placed finish in the Championship and no significant progression in domestic cup competitions



Under the new Club-Trust Agreement, the Club Board will need to secure the approval of the PTFC Trust for its budget, strategic plan and business plan each season. This will give the trustees (of which TJF is one) the opportunity to scrutinise financial planning much more proactively at the Football Club.



Investment this season

Earlier in the season, Donald McClymont, Mark Tyndall and Stewart Smith injected £500k of working capital into the Football Club, in return for voting preference shares equal to 10% of the share capital of the Club. That agreement anticipated the possibility of a second tranche of investment, on similar terms.

The first tranche of investment was, frankly, a bailout. Without it, the Club would have had insufficient working capital to complete season 2023-24, even on a break-even budget. That cash injection addressed the immediate cashflow problems and has bought the Club some breathing space to restructure its operations and to move sustainably towards break-even.

Any second tranche of investment should, however, be for different purposes. The Club indicated some potential uses of this investment at the AGM, including building a buffer for stadium repairs and improvements and investing in revenue-raising areas of the business.



Donald McClymont,
Lead 2023 investor

The Second Tranche

The Club Board indicated at the AGM that it wishes to progress with this second tranche of investment in the first quarter of 2024. However, at this time it should be stressed that no formal proposal has been presented to the PTFC Trust trustees. As and when that happens, the proposal will be considered on its merits and communicated more widely with beneficiaries.

Under the new Club-Trust Agreement, any investment involving changes to the share capital of the Club cannot take place without a prior vote in favour by the beneficiaries of the PTFC Trust. Our expectation would be that the fans are kept fully apprised of what a second tranche of investment would look like, how the money would be used, and what the expected impact will be (particularly financial).

We will also be seeking clear assurances, as part of the budget approvals process, that any investment will not simply be used to cover operating losses. Any investment should be strategic and clearly connected to building a self-sustaining top-flight football club with appropriate facilities, in line with fan priorities.

We hope this will provide some reassurance to those fans who expressed concern about the initial investment process, and the lack of fan consultation and influence. The new legal framework puts Thistle fans in a much stronger position to ensure they get a defining say.



Fan ownership and governance

Back in October/November, our members indicated that they were especially keen to see progress on implementation of the fan ownership model.

Questions were asked about the continuing role of the individual trustees, the formal relationship between the Club Board and the majority shareholder, fan representation on the Club Board, and proper protections of fan interests at the Club.

We hope that what has evolved in the last 3 months or so has provided some reassurance.

The Club-Trust Agreement

Firstly, [the draft Club-Trust Agreement](#) went out for consultation in January 2024. The plan remains for this agreement to be put properly in place before the end of February 2024.

Legally binding protections

The CTA provides legally binding protections for:

- **the majority shareholding itself (including a binding fan vote on any dilution)**
- **Firhill Stadium, in the event of any redevelopment or proposed sale**
- **financial scrutiny at the Club**
- **information sharing between the Club, the Trust and the wider fanbase**

Elected fan representation on the Club Board

Secondly, the Club has committed to have at least two elected fan representatives on the Club Board by the end of the 2023-24 season.

This will embed more permanently a system of accountability and influence for the fans.

Work is ongoing to compile and verify the beneficiary database, so that it is as accurate and complete as possible ahead of any vote.



Corporate governance at the Club

Thirdly, **the Club has committed to the development of a Corporate Governance Manual**, drawing from the equivalent arrangements at Exeter City. New Club Board member Elliot Gilmour is leading on this work, to bring about cultural change and alignment throughout the Club and wider Thistle community. This will help to strengthen role-based appointments for Club Board positions, corporate culture, and to improve the supporting framework around the leadership group.



Fully democratic fan ownership vehicle

Fourthly, it should be noted that **later this month, the fan ownership roadmap will be properly and fully implemented.** Richard Beastall stepped down as a trustee in early January 2024, and Neil Drain will step down on 24th February 2024. **This will leave only the two fans organisations, TJF and The Jags Trust, as co-trustees of the majority shareholding.**

The two trustees will be joint custodians, acting in the interests of both their members and the Season Ticket holders and 71 Club members. **We encourage all fans to get involved with either or both TJF and The Jags Trust, to be active in the Thistle fan ownership journey.**

Fan-owned, not fan-run

Some of the feedback we received was about Club Board or operational decisions at the Football Club. Even under the fully implemented fan ownership model, there remains a distinction between the Club Board and CEO, who are responsible for running the Club, and the majority shareholder. **It is also for the Club Board, rather than the majority shareholder, to decide the routine allocation of roles and responsibilities within the leadership group (e.g. appointing/not appointing a Chair).**

We are a fan-owned, not a fan-run Football Club. Day-to-day decisions at the Club are not taken by the PTFC Trust or TJF. **So, for example, decisions about things like staffing, football matters, facilities and commercial agreements are core responsibilities of the Football Club’s Board and senior staff.**

Fan ownership provides the opportunity for strategic input by organisations representative of the fans, for direct democratic influence on key decisions, and for scrutiny of the wider operations of the Football Club, including its longer-term financial health.

But the Club’s leadership team still needs to be given sufficient freedom and flexibility to operate the business, on and off the park, without inappropriate interference. Getting that balance right is key to a successful and enduring fan-owned club.

Fan fundraising and growing TJF

A lot of members wanted to see more done on fan fundraising. The Club’s financial forecasts, set out at the Club AGM, depend on significant growth in fan revenues in future seasons, albeit not exclusively from TJF.

TJF’s fundraising model is primarily driven by membership subscriptions and donations.

It is then supplemented by the sale of members-exclusive merchandise and funds raised at TJF events.





Growing TJF's membership and increasing individual pledges therefore makes a huge difference. **We have ambitions to get TJF up to 2000 members, but this will depend on existing members spreading the word and encouraging their friends and family to join.**

We are also looking to diversify the TJF merchandise offering beyond Thistle Pins, and welcome new ideas. If you have any other fundraising ideas, please also get in touch.

In the calendar year 2023, TJF contributed **more than £130k to the Football Club**. This is expected to increase further in 2024. Other sources of fan revenue for the Club include:

- [the Centenary Fund](#) (a Club-run lottery)
- [the Players Fund](#) (which directly supports the playing budget)
- [JagsZone subscriptions](#) (the subscription commentary and video content platform)
- Matchday fundraising (including 50-50 half-time draw tickets)

The key to success here is finding ways to increase overall levels of fan contributions, and to avoid competition (where possible) between different revenue-raising initiatives.

Fundraising for Shares?

One question that came up several times in Census responses was whether TJF could improve fundraising by subscribing for shares in the Club, or if the Club could offer shares to individual fans as a revenue raising opportunity.

Should TJF become a shareholder in its own right?

As things stand, TJF's financial contributions to the Club have mainly been in the form of recurring donations. We are doing it this way (for now) because it's currently the most efficient and simplest way to get our members' raised funds into the Club.

This is being kept under constant review and if the balance of interests changes, we will consult further with members about changing this arrangement. A TJF shareholding would not make a huge practical difference at the moment, given the existing 68% shareholding of the PTFC Trust. Over half of the 2,400 or so Trust beneficiaries are already TJF members.

It is also worth emphasising that, if the financial position of the Club drastically improves in the years ahead, the fan-owned shareholding should increase (as and when preference shares are 'redeemed'). This is a clear incentive to increase fan fundraising, even if it does not directly lead to TJF acquiring shares in its own right.

What about shares for individual fans?

The Club has, in more recent years, been reluctant to issue new shares in small quantities to individual fans. There are administrative and legal burdens associated with the issue of micro-shareholdings, which makes it a less attractive vehicle than other fundraising mechanisms (like innovative sponsorship arrangements).



Communications and transparency

Generally speaking, the feedback in the Census was very positive about the level of communication and engagement from TJF with its members. However, against the backdrop of the Alistair Creevy boardroom dispute and the investment process, several members did say they wanted to see more proactive communication about key Club developments, from both TJF and the Club itself.

Inevitably, there will be some things that Club Directors, the Trustees and TJF Board members cannot discuss publicly (at least as fully as they'd want to) because of confidentiality considerations or commercial sensitivity. Nevertheless, all involved are making more of an effort to engage with the fans directly on issues that are important to them.

Most recently, the Club issued [pre-AGM](#) and [post-AGM](#) updates to fans. We are working with the Club to develop more effective ways of keeping fans informed and engaged about major developments, and are encouraging these forms of communication to be done more frequently.

As part of TJF's commitment to openness and transparency, we will shortly be circulating to members our draft accounts for 2022-2023. These will set out in detail how TJF has raised money and how it has been spent.

Some members expressed a desire to have more influence over how TJF's funds are spent. We agree. The members will get to decide, at the 2024 TJF AGM, whether the pledge to the Club should continue, and if so, at what level of contribution. The same will also apply to TJF's Academy pledge.

Improving the matchday experience

As the earlier responses to the Census indicate, there are aspects of the matchday experience where TJF members feel there could be improvement. Part of this relates to facilities, which we covered earlier. However, there were other specific issues raised by members in the open responses.

Catering

Several members raised matchday catering. They felt improvements could be made on both the quality of the offering and the price-point.

At the moment, matchday catering on the concourses is sub-contracted to Pie Sports, a company that also provides food and drink services at St Mirren (another fan-owned club).





Even so, there are opportunities to learn from what is being done elsewhere. The catering provision at Petershill (where the Partick Thistle WFC team play) has received positive feedback from fans. **If you have specific ideas for how catering could be improved, get in touch.**

The Club has invested more resources into the Aitken Suite’s decor and kitchen facilities, which should translate into a better food offering on matchdays and encourage higher footfall. **If you haven’t been to the Aitken Suite for a while, we’d encourage you to grab a drink and a bite to eat at a home game later this season.**

Women’s team

Several members commented that they wanted to see more consultation and engagement around Partick Thistle WFC. In the last two seasons, TJF has been a sponsor and advocate of the Petershill side, including most recently sponsoring the Scottish Cup game against Queen’s Park.

Attendances at Petershill have been breaking new ground this season, helped in no small part by the on-field success of Brian Graham’s side, securing another top six finish, a place in the Sky Sports Cup final, and progression in the Scottish Cup.

It’s clear that the women’s game is appealing to new audiences. It presents a real opportunity to grow the overall Thistle fanbase, and to inspire the next generation of Jags fans. **We encourage all Thistle fans to try a game at Petershill on a Sunday, and to consider buying a women’s season ticket for the 2024-25 campaign.**





Growing the fanbase

One of the potentially transformative changes the Club can do is to grow the fanbase and regular attendance at Firhill. A Club that regularly gets more than 3500 fans through the gate is a very different one than if it averages 2500 fans on a Saturday. Some of that will inevitably be influenced by on-field performance, but appealing to new audiences is also key.

Ticket incentives

TJF members were generally very positive about the Kids Go Free scheme, and some specifically said they'd like to see it extended to walk-ups.

One suggestion that came from the survey was to have more kids-focused activities on matchdays, such as face-painting. There were also calls for greater use of "Bring a Friend" schemes which were attempted for a couple of fixtures last season.

The student community

Some members suggested that students were a major growth opportunity in terms of boosting the fanbase, with large amounts of student accommodation on Firhill's doorstep. The Club has previously attempted to engage that cohort, but with limited success.

We'd encourage any ideas as to how we can get this right in 2024.

Fan events and Nomads community

Several members referred positively to TJF events as ways of bringing fans together and creating a feel-good factor around the Club. The Record Factory pre-match party (before the Scottish Cup game against Rangers) was particularly well received.



The "Nomads" community are also an important part of the Thistle fanbase: those who follow Thistle from afar. We received some useful feedback about how they engage with the Club, including through the audio commentary and highlights platform, JagsZone. We are hoping to facilitate an online Meet the Manager event later this season specifically to include the Nomads in TJF events.