



# THMT NEWS

Issue 7

July 2012

A lot has changed since Issue 6 of THMT News, at Ayr United and in Scottish football. Unfortunately, Ayr changed divisions and we will kick-off the new season in the Second Division with Mark Roberts in charge after a change of manager quickly followed play-off defeat at the hands of Airdrie.

Within Scottish football, the crisis at Ibrox has implications for all clubs. In the end, Chairman upheld the ideal of 'sporting integrity' and reflected the demands of their supporters, in the face of pressure from the SFA, SPL and perhaps the demands of their bank manager. It is now up to supporters to back their clubs to ensure the repercussions of financial mismanagement at one club are not felt beyond Govan.

This Issue of THMT News includes the unveiling of a new slogan for the Trust; an update on our recent Fans' Survey; the results of our Player of the Year vote; and news of more changes: at Supporters Direct Scotland with a top post for a THMT Board member and at Whitlets Victoria. As always, if there is something you would like us to cover in future editions – or you have any feedback on THMT News – then please get in touch. Details are on the back page.

## **JOIN THE TRUST AND SAVE SCOTTISH FOOTBALL\***

\* OK, we can't guarantee that joining The Honest Men Trust will save Scottish football, or even allow you to hold great sway in the Boardroom at Somerset Park. But we strongly believe that the views of supporters on how clubs and the game is run are louder when spoken collectively, rather than individuals. Our aim is that THMT provides

a platform for the collective view of members to be established and a mechanism by which these views can be expressed. Our recent consultation on newco Rangers is one example of how this works in practice and in the coming weeks we hope our recent fan survey can also bring about positive changes. This is just one reason we would encourage Ayr United supporters to join the Trust and for existing members to renew their subscriptions. Subscribing is now easier than ever using PayPal – see [www.thmt.co.uk](http://www.thmt.co.uk) for more details.

### **Player of the Year**

Congratulations to Kevin Cuthbert who was voted THMT Player of the Year by Trust members. Kevin had an excellent season between the sticks for United and will surely be an important asset for Hamilton Accies this year. Ayr United Historian Duncan Carmichael presented Kevin with the Ally McLeod Player of the Year award in the Somerset Park Boardroom following the Dundee game.



## FANS, CLUB, FOOTBALL, COMMUNITY, UNITED

Fans, Club, Football, Community: **United** is the new slogan for THMT. It captures the things that are important to what the Trust does and our aims. We have also drafted new statements on what the Trust is and what are goals are. We hope to increase awareness of THMT among Ayr United supporters in the coming season and grow our membership base:

### WHAT IS THE HONEST MEN TRUST?

The Honest Men Trust is a constituted and democratic, not-for-profit society committed to strengthening the involvement of Ayr United fans in decision-making at Ayr United Football Club and the partnerships between the club and the community.

### WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

Our goal is to promote a future for Ayr United as a financially sustainable, open and inclusive Football Club owned by its supporters which is a genuine community asset and makes decisions aligned to the long term success of the club.

### Fans Survey

Thank you to everybody who completed our end of season survey. Over 380 supporters responded, providing excellent feedback on a range of issues that we hope will be useful to the club. The survey results have been independently analysed by [Red Circle Communications](#), who also assisted in drafting the survey questions. Red Circle have produced a report which we will circulate amongst the Ayr United's directors, manager and will email to all those who part and provided their contact details. The Trust Board will be discuss the survey at our next meeting, scheduled for Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August and hope to work with the club to address the issues raised by supporters in the coming months.

## Trust back Marko

The Honest Men Trust have welcomed the appointment of Mark Roberts as manager of Ayr United FC and given their support to the change of direction at the club, putting a greater emphasis on youth development.

THMT Chairman John Dalton said that the move heralded a new era for the club. "I'm sure every Ayr United supporter will wish Brian Reid well in whatever role his career takes him in future. He'll be able to look back on his time at Ayr United and point to two promotions and taking the club to the semi final of the League Cup but given the financial state of the club and of Scottish football in general there is no doubt that a change of direction in club policy was required."



"The appointment of Mark Roberts is a positive one. He has a wealth of experience in a playing sense, is well respected in the game and has done a tremendous job in an Ayr United shirt in recent seasons while achieving his coaching badges and I'm sure he will be able to use those skills and experience to enable the young players at the club to develop.

"Every fan would like a sugar daddy to come in and plough loads of cash into Ayr United to allow us to sign seasoned quality players but we all know that isn't going to happen. Scottish football isn't like that anymore and we need to accept that as a reality. It is clear from the experiences of some clubs, particularly in the top flight, that football clubs in general need to live within their means and for clubs like Ayr United, a strong

youth policy is required and THMT welcome a greater emphasis on youth development.

“The blueprint for the Ayr United Football Academy was drawn up by THMT and its’ success is testament to all the volunteers who have given up their own time over the past six years to make the Academy the success it is today. One of the key personnel in the youth development programme has been David White and his appointment as Mark’s assistant will give continuity in the pathway from youth development to the first team.”

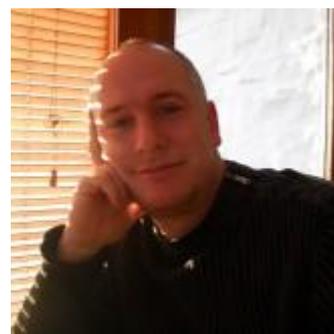
But John also cautioned that supporters should not expect instant success and asked that time be given for the project to be developed fully.



“There are some very talented young players at the Academy and with the right mix of youth and experience the long term future of the club should be very bright. But this has to be viewed as a long term project and not an experiment for a season. Patience is something which not every football supporter is blessed with and while every Ayr fan wants to get back to the First Division as soon as possible, we can not afford to suffer immediate relegation as we have on the last two occasions. This has to be a long term project and one which will give Ayr United a strong foundation on which to build in the years ahead and THMT wish Mark Roberts every success in his new role.”

### Neil lands top fans’ post

THMT Director Neil Bone is the new Chairman of Supporters Direct Scotland (SDS), the governing body for Supporters Trusts in Scotland.



Just last year Neil topped the poll in elections to the first Supporters Direct Scottish Council and will now have the job of co-ordinating and presenting the voice of football fans across Scotland.

Upon his appointment, Neil commented, “I am delighted to accept this position at this important time for the game in Scotland and believe that no proper solution to the problems the game faces in Scotland can be found unless the voice of the supporters is heard. Individually, there is only so much each of us can do to assist our clubs, and virtually nothing we can do regarding the governance issues at the heart of our national sport. However, when we pool our strengths, locally and nationally, supporters can make ourselves heard”.

That influence was proven recently when Neil, along with two colleagues, presented the Fans’ Plan to the Chief Executives of the SFA, SFL and SPL at Hampden Park and now he will lead SDS in a new project to enhance the voice of supporters in Scotland.

As Neil explained “As recently as last year 50% of MSPs supported a parliamentary motion that Supporters Direct had provided a valuable resource for football fans. As a result SDS have just secured further funding from the Scottish Government to continue our work and also to help establish a Scottish Football Supporters Network (SFSN)”.

“The SFSN will go beyond the traditional role of SDS and provide a two way flow of information

between fans and Government on a whole raft of issues such as the Offensive Behaviour Act, safe standing, pricing and much more. Both the future of clubs and the future of the game itself is being put at risk by short term vested interests poor financial management and inadequate standards of governance. The issues at Rangers show that the continual pursuit of big money is not the answer, and a more sustainable model for Football must be implemented as soon as possible. Hopefully with the introduction of the SFSN ordinary football fans can convince the authorities that their views are wholly valid, and very much worth listening to.”

### **Supporters Direct have also announced the appointment of Paul Goodwin as Head of SDS.**



Paul, who led the acquisition of Stirling Albion FC by its supporters’ trust in July 2010, has extensive experience of working with football clubs and authorities, following a successful career as a marketing executive managing campaigns for

some of Europe’s biggest brands.

Following the acquisition by the supporters trust of Stirling Albion FC, Paul was appointed as a director and helped to run the club when it was in the Scottish First Division.

On welcoming Paul to the post, Neil Bone said: “I am delighted that we have managed to attract someone of Pauls’ experience and knowledge of the issues about which Supporters Direct Scotland cares so passionately. His first-hand experience of working with the trust and the club at Stirling Albion will enable him to drive forward our work with supporters’ trusts and develop a more broadly based Scottish Football Supporters Network to promote the voice of the fans.

Paul Goodwin said: “It is a real privilege to be given this opportunity to help represent the interests of sport’s most important stakeholders. This is a crucial time in Scottish football. I firmly believe that now more than ever, the voice of the fans should be heard loud and clear and Supporters Direct Scotland will be pivotal in making sure the opinions of fans are influential.

“I look forward to working closely with everyone at Supporters Direct and with all the stakeholders in Scotland to change the game for the better.

### **New name for Vics?**

After clinching West Superleague First Division safety at the end of last season, Whitlets Victoria are beginning preparations for the new season under new manager Brian Delaney. A range of sponsorship opportunities are available from as little as £35, with details on the club’s website: <http://www.whitlettsvictoria.com>. In the longer term , Vics are contemplating changing their name to reflect the clubs’ status as Ayr’s junior football team – and they want YOU to put forward suggestions as to what the name of the club should be.



The club, who play in the West Superleague First Division, were founded in 1944 but following the closure of their Voluntary Park ground last year, currently play their home fixtures at Dam Park Stadium, with the

now demolished Voluntary Park set to be used for housing in a proposed redevelopment of the area.

Chairman Colin McTrusty said that a change of name would reflect the clubs’ status as the only junior club in Ayr and could be a catalyst that could take the club onto the next level of the junior game.

“For the past 55 years, Whitlets Victoria has been the only junior football club in Ayr yet we have never capitalised on that potential.”

“The club are due to embark on our fourth successive season in the West Superleague First Division and have an ambitious new manager in place who has promised that the team will play attractive and entertaining football this season. We firmly believe that the potential is there for Ayr to sustain a team in the top flight of junior football and compete for honours and that is where our ambitions lie.”

“With the launch of our community membership scheme, we are looking to establish ourselves at the heart of the community in Ayr and it is under consideration that one way of starting that process would be to change our name so that the whole town becomes our community . And what better way of involving the community than by letting the people of Ayr suggest a new name for the club?”

“By making this change it is hoped that we may start the process to attract more supporters to our matches and increase other potential income streams through commercial activity that may assist the club to make that step up to the next level of the game.”

Colin confirmed that it is a name change and not the formation of a new club that is being proposed and that the Board of Directors have no preference as to the new name of the club, other than it must reflect the fact the club hails from Ayr.

“This is a name change. We are not forming a new club or abandoning our past and the history of Whitlets Victoria will remain the history of the club whatever name it plays under. It is also in recognition of our past that we will be retaining the club colours of red, white and black.”

“Given our aspirations to become Ayr’s junior football club, it would make sense that any proposed name change shall reflect that, whether that be from its’ historical past or from a vision of the future as to where Ayr as a town wants to be. Junior football clubs throughout Scotland have some of the most romantic names around but we want all followers of the junior game to know that

we come from Ayr and we aim to be a good ambassador for the town.”

If you want to suggest a new name for the club, you can do so by e-mailing [admin@thmt.co.uk](mailto:admin@thmt.co.uk), post on the clubs [facebook page](#) or via twitter [@wvfc\\_official](#)

### **Finally...**

The decision last week of the Ayr United Board to vote to send Rangers to the Third Division is to be applauded. In making a principled stance on the Rangers issue, the club has reflected the views of the vast majority of the Trust’s members and Ayr United fans.

While the financial implications of Rangers starting again in the Third Division aren’t clear, it’s important that, now more than ever, Ayr United fans give the club all the backing they can by purchasing season tickets, encouraging people to attend matches and sponsoring the club in all the various ways possible.

THMT are supporting this month’s shirt sponsorship draw and will be advertising on the back of this season’s team sheets. Ayr United fans do a great job backing the side through thick and thin and we’d urge supporters to go that extra mile over the coming months to back the side in any way they can.

### **Get in touch.**

Website: [www.thmt.co.uk](http://www.thmt.co.uk)

Email: [admin@thmt.co.uk](mailto:admin@thmt.co.uk)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/honestmentrust](http://www.facebook.com/honestmentrust)

Twitter: [twitter.com/honestmentrust](https://twitter.com/honestmentrust)

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Ayr United Community Initiative – The Honest Men Trust.  
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