



Statement in support of nomination – 400 – 1000 words

Once completed, please email (with your nomination form) to ashley.brown@thefsa.org.uk

Your Full Name: Steve Henderson

Your Statement:

My connection to Newcastle United is not a passing interest; it is one of the central passions of my life. For over 40 years, I've been regularly attending St. James' Park, ever since that first unforgettable (if frustrating) 3-2 loss against Spurs in May 1985. That day cemented a lifelong commitment, and while much has changed at the club since then, the dedication of the fanbase has only intensified.

I am applying to stand for election to the NUST board because, like so many fellow Toon fans, I recognize that this is a critical time for the soul of our club. The new era has brought unprecedented success and excitement, but it has also created monumental challenges around access, fairness, and inclusion - challenges that the Trust must continue to hold the club accountable for.

I bring two crucial perspectives to this role: that of a long-standing, active supporter, and that of an experienced professional leader in technology and product management.

THE VOICE OF THE LONG-STANDING MEMBER

I spent many years as a season ticket holder, but now attend games as a member, often alongside my wife or one of my sons. This change in status is important, as it means I live and breathe the difficulties faced by the vast majority of the modern match-going support.

Every game brings the same cycle of hope, frustration, and fury: the endless ballot entry, the agonizing wait, and the anger when tickets immediately appear on resale sites at extortionate prices. I feel the same sense of injustice as every other member struggling for a seat.

While I believe season ticket holders are rightly rewarded for their unwavering loyalty, the current system for members is simply not fit for purpose. It treats the member attending their 1st match the same as a member who has been attending for decades and has 100+ games under their belt. Loyalty must extend beyond the turnstile of a season ticket holder. I want to advocate for a tiered

system that recognizes and rewards the commitment of longstanding, active members, offering them improved priority access while still ensuring tickets remain available to new supporters.

BALANCING LEGACY AND GROWTH

I understand completely the commercial realities facing the club. Newcastle United must grow its global appeal and attract new fans both locally and internationally to secure its long-term future. However, this growth cannot come at the expense of the core fanbase — the 'legacy' supporters who carried the club through decades of difficulty.

My commitment, if elected, is to work constructively with the club to help them find the right balance. We must ensure that the loyal, local match-going support never feels sidelined or priced out of St. James' Park. I aim to use my position on the board to constructively challenge the club on this balance, ensuring that the necessary commercial expansion respects the identity and the history that the 'legacy' fans represent.

LEVERAGING PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE FOR THE TRUST

Outside of my passion for NUFC, I have built a career in product and technology leadership for a large global company. This experience has equipped me with a skill set directly relevant to the current challenges facing the club and the Trust's mission:

1. **Transparency and Data:** My professional life revolves around understanding complex data, defining systems, and pushing for transparency in processes. The issues of ticketing—ballot success rates, membership numbers, and the secondary market—are fundamentally product and data management problems. NUST has rightly campaigned for greater ticketing transparency; I can help translate the Trust's demands into concrete, actionable technological and procedural suggestions for the club, challenging them if sensible ideas are dismissed as 'commercially sensitive.'
2. **Stakeholder Management:** Leading major product initiatives requires balancing the needs of various stakeholders — customers, finance, legal, and operations. This is directly analogous to the NUST board's job: balancing the needs of the membership, the club, and the wider community. I am skilled at facilitating tough conversations and driving positive outcomes for the customer (the fan).

If elected, I will focus on these key areas:

- **Recognition for Members:** Developing a concrete proposal to reward long-standing member loyalty in the ticketing process.
- **Ticketing Process Improvements:** Using my technology experience to suggest improvements to the ballot and resale platforms that combat touting and improve the fan experience.

- **Constructive Challenge:** Being a pragmatic, data-focused voice that pushes the club for greater transparency without being needlessly adversarial, always keeping the long-term health of the fan experience as the priority.

I am not applying to join the board to complain; I am applying to contribute the time, energy, and expertise needed to represent our membership effectively. I ask for your vote so I can help NUST deliver a better, fairer future for all Newcastle United supporters.