



BIRMINGHAM CITY FOOTBALL CLUB
2025/26 REVIEW OF THE YEAR



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BIRMINGHAM CITY TURNED 150 YEARS OLD THIS SEASON.

Such a special milestone was celebrated with requisite enthusiasm and joy. And quite rightly so, for one of football's famous names.

Supporters, players and personalities current and past, Blues' partners and the wider football world came together as we documented our history and reflected with pride on who we are and what we stand for, as a Club and as a city.

Yet, as we close the chapter on our 150th anniversary, there is an even bigger, more exciting story still to be told under the ownership and leadership of Knighthead Capital Management. The November unveiling of The Powerhouse, the Club's breathtaking new £1.2 billion stadium, was a game-changer.

The Powerhouse will be the catalyst that fires and underpins our ambitions to be among the elite, on and off the field, and will transform the city and local communities around East Birmingham.

The Club continued to make major progress in 2025/26. On the field of play, our Women's team led by Amy Merricks won the WSL2 title and clinched promotion back to the top-flight, after a four-year absence.

After the last day heartbreak of the previous season, Blues made no mistake this time in yet another final match showdown, at The Valley against Charlton Athletic.

The investment in our Women's side has been significant. The Club smashed our transfer record when signing Swedish midfielder Wilma Leidhammar in January to help get us over the line. Staffing levels and facilities at the Knighthead Performance Centre, West Hills, have continued to be enhanced, including a newly built gym specifically for our women's team.

After a record-breaking, title-winning and promotion season in League One, the Men's team finished 10th on their return to the Championship, the highest league position in a decade.

Chris Davies' side challenged for the play-off spots. Although they fell just short, their final position represented the highest points return in 14 years. Progress was made on and off the pitch.

The Academy has been learning about and rising to the challenge of Category One status, whilst our Under-21s continued to go from strength to strength, winning the PGA Cup again.

In the three years of Knighthead's ownership, much has been done to improve the infrastructure. The planning and design of The Powerhouse attracted plenty of attention, yet the Club still engaged in 90 projects across three sites with a capital outlay of £7.5 million.

Our commercial partnerships continued to grow, while through the Built in Birmingham: Brady and the Blues Amazon Prime docuseries our story reached more than 200 countries.

Our magnificent fans maintained their loyal support, consistently selling out St. Andrews @ Knighthead Park and ensuring packed away ends at every game.

The relationship with the independent Official Supporters' Club (OSC) continued to strengthen during the past 12 months as new branches came on board. And the Birmingham City Foundation, who collaborate closely with the OSC, has extended its body of work and implemented new programmes to enrich lives in local communities, in so many different ways.

The 2025/26 season was 150 years of Blue. It was one of great progress. And the next chapter of our story, and the many more thereafter, promise to be unprecedented.





THE BLUE THREAD

JUN

24 Jeremy Dale is announced as the Club's Chief Executive Officer, having served in an interim position since January.

25 Stephen Haines joins Blues as Chief Commercial Officer New Revenue Streams. He brings decades of global operational leadership from Meta (formerly Facebook), Yahoo and Viacom

1 The Club unveils 'Keep Right On' - a bold, visual identity and campaign of events to mark 150 years since Blues were founded. It comes after the launch of the 150th anniversary home kit, featuring a commemorative gold crest.

James Beadle, fresh from winning the European Under-21 Championship with England alongside Jay Stansfield, joins Blues on loan from Brighton & Hove Albion.

2 Blues take Tommy Doyle on loan from Wolverhampton Wanderers for the season. The 23-year-old former Manchester City midfielder brings Premier League and promotion experience to the ranks.

Lucy Thomas pens a new one-year contract, plus a 12-month option, with Blues Women.

Defender Ebonie Locke signs her first professional contract. She started her Club journey at the age of 10 and was the 2024/25 Player of the Season for the Under-21s.

3 He's back home – former Academy graduate Demarai Gray joins Blues from Saudi Pro League side Al-Ettifaq. Blues Women make their first signing of the summer as Chelsea Cornet arrives from Glasgow Rangers.

4 Nigerian international Bright Osayi-Samuel becomes the latest Men's signing, on a three-year deal after leaving Fenerbahçe at the end of his contract.

Blues Women appoint Jon Ritchie as Lead Goalkeeping Coach bringing a wealth of experience, having most recently worked at Blackburn Rovers.

Blues make three high-calibre appointments across key areas of the Club.

Rich Carpenter takes up the position of Director of Operations, joining from Ipswich Town.

Chris Long joins Blues as Head Stadium Grounds Manager, arriving from Leicester City.

Nick Venables is appointed Head of Venue Management, having previously held senior roles at major tournaments including the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games.

5 Kyōgo Furuhashi joins from Rennes for three years for an undisclosed fee.

Shannon Cooke signs on a permanent basis, from West Ham United. The defender scored a stunning, 40-yard goal of the season for Blues Women whilst on loan the previous campaign.

6 Blues announce the signing of Japanese midfielder Kanya Fujimoto on a three-year contract.

7 Blues Women reveal the signing of burgeoning talent Lily Crosthwaite. The all-action midfielder puts pen to paper on a three-year deal having departed Durham.

12 Blues' opening pre-season friendly results in a resounding 3-1 victory over Sevilla in Portugal.



JUL

14 Rebecca Holloway signs a contract extension. The defender commits to Blues Women until at least the summer of 2027.

15 Attacker Lucy Quinn agrees a new one-year contract at Blues Women, becoming the latest player to renew.

16 Greek international Veatriki Sarri is back at Blues Women, putting pen to paper on a two-year deal, with an option of another year, having departed Everton.

20 A first-ever Blues Memorabilia Antiques Roadshow is held at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park. As part of our 150th anniversary celebrations, fans showcase their rare and prized artefacts and tell the stories behind them.

22 Alfie May moves on from Blues, joining Huddersfield Town for an undisclosed fee. May scored 16 goals in 44 appearances in League One as Blues won the title.

23 Blues retain the Arthur Cup with a 1-0 victory over Solihull Moors at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park, Alfons Sampsted scoring.

24 Jon Grimes is to lead the Club's commercial operations, overseeing ticketing, hospitality, retail, and conference and events. He is appointed Chief Commercial Officer Existing Revenue Streams.

25 Eiran Cashin becomes Blues latest transfer window capture. The Irish defender joins on a season-long loan from Brighton & Hove Albion.

Blues Women complete the signing Haitian international forward Batcheba Louis for an undisclosed fee, from French side FC Fleury 9.

29 France Under-23 international Océane Hurtré becomes the latest addition to the Blues Women ranks. She signs a three-year contract after heading to Birmingham from Paris Saint-Germain, runners-up in Première Ligue.





THE BLUE THREAD

1 Prime Video releases a five-part documentary series, Built In Birmingham: Brady & the Blues, the behind the scenes look at the Club during its League One promotion-winning season. It's available in more than 200 countries.

2 A 13-foot bronze statue of Club legend Trevor Francis is unveiled at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park. The reveal comes before the second Trevor Francis Memorial Match, against Nottingham Forest.



AUG

7 German international striker Marvin Ducksch signs for Blues from Werder Bremen. The 31-year-old arrives with some pedigree: 54 goals and 40 assists in 134 appearances for the Bundesliga outfit.

Blues announce a flagship agreement with Sports Illustrated Tickets, the global primary and secondary ticketing platform's first major international partnership.

Blue Rising debuts. The Club's weekly magazine show - featuring stories, interviews and behind-the-scenes access - premieres every Thursday for Blues+ subscribers and on the official YouTube channel. Hosts are Ellen Ellard and Richie Driss.

8 Blues get the Championship season underway on Friday night with a 1-1 draw against Ipswich Town.
Former Blues and Wales international defender Terry Hennessey dies, aged 82.

14 Krystian Bielik moves on from Blues. The former captain departs for West Bromwich Albion for a seven-figure sum.

16 There's delirium among Blues' incredible backing of 7,000 fans at Blackburn Rovers as Lyndon Dykes scores the winning goal in the eighth minute of added-time, making it 2-1.

22 Winger Lewis Koumas joins Blues on loan from Liverpool.



1 Patrick Roberts moves to Blues from Sunderland in a deadline day loan.

Blues add Jack Robinson to the ranks, on a permanent basis. The experienced defender joins from Sheffield United.

Taylor Gardner-Hickman joins Blackburn Rovers on a season-long loan.

5 Blues Women agree a short-term loan for South Korean international Ji So-yun from Seattle Reign. The experienced midfielder won six league titles in a 10-year period with Chelsea.

7 A statement of intent from Blues Women, who open the WSL2 campaign with a resounding 5-1 defeat of Bristol City Women at home. Simone Magill scores twice.

SEP

17 Steven Knight releases a 'Poem to Birmingham' to celebrate the 1875 Club launch at Birmingham's Millennium Point. An exclusive members club, it provides the highest access possible to a variety of Blues events, in aid of the Birmingham City Foundation to help grow projects in the city.

19 Blues partner with SheMed, an innovative healthcare platform dedicated to empowering healthier lifestyles and advancing women's wellbeing.

20 Blues maintain their strong home form, with a last-gasp win over Swansea City. Lyndon Dykes nets the only goal in the fourth minute of added-time.

24 Northern Ireland international Rebecca Holloway makes her 100th appearance for Blues Women in the Subway League Cup group game against Bristol City.

1 Knighthead Capital Management completes a £40 million purchase of a 49% per cent stake in The Hundred franchise Birmingham Phoenix.

10 Amy Merricks is named WSL2 Manager of the Month for September. The Blues Head Coach presides over three wins in the opening four games of the campaign to guide Blues Women to the top of the table.

18 Blues lose at home to Hull City, in controversial fashion 3-2. It's a first St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park defeat in the league for the Men's First Team since April 2024.

21 Phil Neumann's first Blues goal combined with a gritty rearguard action registers an away win at Preston North End.

OCT

25 Chairman Tom Wagner visits Academy School Ark Victoria in Small Heath. He meets Year 10 Business Studies students to chat about opportunities and jobs the Sports Quarter will bring and observes a Birmingham City Foundation mentoring session.

27 Birmingham City Foundation lands the prestigious title of 'Sporting Initiative of the Year' at the 2025 Birmingham Awards.
The Foundation helped more than 34,000 people over the 2023/24 season – including primary school children and budding young players from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, as well as adults needing friendship and help getting back into work.





THE BLUE THREAD

4 Blues partner with West Midlands Police's dedicated Vehicle Crime Team to make the areas around St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park freer from so-called 'car cannibalism'. Suspects are identified and charged.

5 Forward Simone Magill announces she is expecting her first child, with husband Mark Rigby.

7 Knighthead Capital Management, through its affiliate Shelby Companies Limited, complete the acquisition of the remaining 51% shareholding of Birmingham City Limited, owned by ZO FUTURE GROUP (formerly Birmingham Sports Holdings Limited). Shelby now holds 96.64% of Birmingham City Limited, which holds 100% ownership of Birmingham City Football Club Limited and Birmingham City Women Football Club Limited.

20 Another momentous day as Blues reveal the design of the new 62,000-seat, multi-purpose stadium, to be called The Powerhouse, at Digbeth Loc. Studios in Birmingham. It is the jewel in the crown of the £3 billion Sports Quarter development

21 Blues Women draw 3-3 against Aston Villa Women in a pulsating League Cup derby clash. Veatriki Sarri scores twice to put Blues 2-0 up before Villa go ahead in the 90th minute. But a dramatic added-time goal by Batcheba Louis sends the game to penalties and Adrianna Franch saves two spot-kicks to clinch a 4-2 shoot-out victory.

22 Blues score four goals for the third successive match at home. Norwich City are beaten 4-1, the ideal way to mark the Club's official 150th anniversary game. Jay Stansfield and Marvin Ducksch both score twice.

1 It's four home wins on the bounce for Blues, who see off Watford 2-1. Goals by Paik Seung-ho and Demarai Gray do the trick for Chris Davies' side.

5 Members of the Official Supporters Club raise more than £4,500 for Blues Foundation and FareShare Midlands via the annual sleep out at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park.

13 It's Blue Nose Day, as Charlton Athletic visit St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park. The Birmingham City Foundation annual fundraiser uses monies donated to assist local food charity, FareShare Midlands, to source good quality surplus food and buy its own refrigerated van, capable of delivering to the communities which need it most.

Principal partner, UNDEFEATED, drops a limited edition of 2,200 UNDEFEATED x Nike Air Max 95 'Geo Exclusive Collection', featuring the 'Hyper Cobalt' colourway, created to honour Birmingham and the Club that bears its name.



NOV

14 Blues host international football. England Under-21s defeat Ireland Under-21s 2-0 at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park in a UEFA European Championship qualifier.

16 A first ever Knighthead Women in Sport Day takes place ahead of Blues home fixture against Portsmouth. It brings together Birmingham Panthers netball and Birmingham Phoenix cricket for a celebration of women's sport, community and the growing power of female participation

18 Blues captain Christoph Klarer signs a new contract, securing his future to June 2029.

Goalkeeper Ryan Allsop follows suit, penning a contract extension until June 2028.

19 Ark Kings secondary school, in Kings Norton, partners with Birmingham City Foundation to become the third Academy School in the city.

25 Former Second Division title winner and 1956 FA Cup Finalist Johnny Neman dies, aged 91. The defender was the last surviving member of the Wembley side.

28 Mayor Richard Parker, Jeremy Dale and Nick Smith test drive the first stage of the tram extension that will ferry thousands of Blues fans to The Powerhouse and Sports Quarter. The new tracks between Bull Street and Millennium Point are the first part of a route that will link the city centre to the forthcoming HS2 Curzon Street Station, Digbeth and Blues new development.



DEC

19 Rebecca McKenna signs a contract extension that will keep her at Blues Women until June 2028. The Northern Ireland international is a mainstay of Blues defensive backline.

23 Japan international Asato Miyagawa joins Blues Women, from Hammarby IF of Sweden. The 27-year-old defender boasts an impressive pedigree, having experience at the World Cup, Tokyo Olympics and the Champions League.

Knighthead award responsibility for developing Blues training centre at the Sports Quarter to Populous, a global architecture and design practice specialising in sports and entertainment venues and facilities, following a competitive tender process.





THE BLUE THREAD

1 Dion Sanderson's loan to Derby County is made permanent for an undisclosed fee.

2 Blues move quickly in the January transfer window to recruit left-back Kai Wagner from MLS side Philadelphia Union, for an undisclosed fee. The German arrives with a 'king of assists' reputation after seven years in the States.



16 Swedish midfielder Wilma Leidhammar is a headline signing for Blues Women as the squad strengthening continues apace.

The technically gifted and versatile 22-year-old joins for a Club record transfer fee from IFK Norrköping.

17 Colombian midfielder Jhon Solis arrives at Blues from Spanish side Girona. The 21-year-old, who boasts Champions League experience and an imposing style, joins until the season's end.

19 Flying winger Ibrahim Osman comes to Blues on loan to the season's end from Brighton & Hove Albion. A Ghana international, Osman spent the first part of the campaign on loan to Auxerre in France.



JAN

4 Blues defeat Championship leaders Coventry City 3-2 at home in rousing encounter. Marvin Ducksch is on target twice and Lewis Koumas slots his first goal for the Club.

7 Blues Women sign Finland international Lotta Lindström on loan from London City Lionesses, for the remainder of the season.

9 Shanade Hopcroft, 28, adds more quality and experience to the Blues Women side. She moves from Crystal Palace until the season's end.

11 Former winger Robert Hopkins dies, aged 64. A fan favourite, promotion-winner and Leyland DAF Cup squad member 'Hoppy' is remembered for his skilful, tenacious play during more than 200 appearances over two spells for the hometown Club he loved.

14 American defender Michaela Kovacs joins Blues Women, to the end of the campaign.



20 Blues sign Denmark Under-21 international August Priske. The striker is one of the brightest striker talents in Europe, having impressed as league top-scorer for Djurgårdens IF in Sweden.

23 Hannah Silcock, 21, comes to Blues Women on loan from Liverpool for the remainder of the season. An England youth international, Silcock provides Amy Merricks with more options for the run-in.

Marc Leonard makes a loan move north of the border to join Heart of Midlothian for the remainder of the season, having appeared in 17 matches for Blues this term.

24 A brace by Veatriki Sarri is the platform for Blues Women's comprehensive 4-0 win at Portsmouth. Wilma Leidhammar opens her Blues account.

26 Lewis Koumas is recalled from his loan by Liverpool, following on from Eiran Cashin's return to Brighton & Hove Albion earlier in the month.

27 Blues make waves in the January transfer market again by snapping up Carlos Vicente for a big fee. The winger leaves Alaves in Spain and pens a three-and-a-half-year deal at the Club.

30 As part of the 150th anniversary celebrations, Blues unveil the limited edition 'Penguin' collection. The colourway shirt is a retro-inspired blue and off-white design rekindling memories of the iconic 1970s kit.



THE BLUE THREAD

- 1
- Lotta Lindström bags a hat-trick in a devastating six-minute spell as Blues Women rout Nottingham Forest Women 5-1.
- Willum Willumsson leaves Blues. The Icelandic forward heads to Holland to sign for NEC Nijmegen. Striker Tyler Roberts' Blues career finishes as he exits for Mansfield Town on a free transfer.
- 2
- It's a double deadline day swoop for Blues who make Patrick Roberts' loan from Sunderland permanent. The winger's transfer concludes the winter window business for Blues as defender Jonathan Panzo signs a short-term deal, moving from Rio Ave in Portugal.
- Birmingham City Foundation launches the Blues Go Green Project; a new initiative focused on improving sustainability at the stadium whilst supporting and educating the local community to make more sustainable choices in everyday life.

20

Birmingham City Foundation announces its first cohort of ambassadors: Dele Adebola, Lukas Jutkiewicz, Louise Quinn and Tom Ross. They will be champions of the Foundation, helping with fundraising, events, storytelling and spreading the message.

- 2
- Chris Davies takes charge of his 100th Blues game as Manager away at Charlton Athletic.
- 5
- For five nights, the Away Car Park of St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park transforms into a celebration of food and art, as Ramadan Streets brings a wealth of traders and exhibitors. Families and friends of all backgrounds eat, socialise and learn more about Birmingham City Foundation and the Club's plans for the Sports Quarter.
- 9
- Former forward Phil Summerill dies, aged 78. Phil netted 52 goals in 132 after joining Blues from school in 1963.
- 11
- Blues return to winning ways against Queens Park Rangers thanks to an early strike from Patrick Roberts, to move to within five points of the Championship Play-Off zone.

- 22
- Blues stage a come-from-behind victory against Sheffield United Women to help Amy Merricks celebrate 50 games in charge.
- 25
- Blues mourn the passing of former forward Geoff Vowden, who dies at the age of 84. Geoff made 253 appearances and scored 94 goals between 1964-71 and notably became the first substitute to net a hat-trick in the Football League.
- 26
- The Prime Video docuseries Built In Birmingham: Brady & the Blues is nominated for a Sports Emmy award.
- 31
- August Priske comes off the substitutes' bench to score for Denmark Under-21s in their 4-0 UEFA EURO qualifying victory over Wales Under-21s.

FEB

MAR

- 11
- CEO Jeremy Dale shares an update on Tom Wagner, revealing the Chairman recently suffered a stroke. He writes on the Club website: "Thanks to rapid medical intervention, he received immediate treatment and is now receiving excellent care. We are pleased to share that he is making a good recovery. While he will be stepping back from day-to-day activity for a period of time to focus on his recovery, Tom remains closely connected to the Club, and we all look forward to welcoming him back."
- 15
- Blues are knocked out of the FA Cup on penalties, 4-2 at home, by Leeds United. The Fourth Round tie ends 1-1 with Patrick Roberts grabbing a late equaliser on the day Blues reprised the 'Penguin' kit.
- 16
- Lily Crosthwaite receives the WSL2 award for Player of the Month. The attacker's outstanding form in January is recognised.
- 17
- Blues owners complete the purchase of the Women's team, with England and Blues legend Karen Carney part of several independent investors involved in the deal. Shelby Companies Limited, a subsidiary of Knighthead Capital Management, acquire a 97% stake. The remaining 3% is taken up by a group of "prominent female business leaders and global professional sporting icons" including 144-cap Carney and three-time US Open tennis champion Kim Clijsters.
- 27
- The first 1875 Club drinks evening is held at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park, with special guest appearances from Amy Merricks, Kai Wagner, Marvin Ducksch and Wilma Leidhammar.
- 21
- Blues win a third away game in the Championship on the bounce. A vibrant first-half at Norwich City proves enough for a 2-1 victory.
- 30
- Ji So-yun departs Blues Women following the conclusion of her short-term loan, with the midfielder returning to South Korea after 15 years of playing abroad.

- 17
- Blues announce a new commercial partnership with Guinness, the fan favourite and world-renowned Irish stout.
- 19
- Blues strengthen the Senior Leadership Team with the appointments of Liam MacManus as Chief Marketing Officer and Andrew Rudd as Chief Financial Officer. John Clarke assumes a newly created position of Chief Communications Officer.
- Blues announce a landmark partnership with Netflix centred around the launch of the film, Peakylinders: The Immortal Man.





THE BLUE THREAD

1 They leave it late in a tense affair, but Blues Women go top of the WSL2. Lily Crosthwaite, in the third minute of added-time, provides the inspiration by scoring the solitary goal. She beats two defenders and lifts the ball over the Sunderland Women goalkeeper, which sends Blues to the summit with just two matches to go.

2 Blues partner with Netflix in a full Peaky Blinders matchday takeover, for the visit of Blackburn Rovers. Through the activation of fan zones at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park, use of iconic imagery, character interaction and creation of unforgettable experiences, the collaboration provides a cultural moment for both brands and the city they proudly represent.

15 Tudor Grange Academy Kingshurst becomes Birmingham City Foundation's partner secondary school, growing the Academy School model to four. CEO Jeremy Dale and Foundation ambassadors Louise Quinn and Tom Ross launch the partnership.

17 A second award of the season for Amy Merricks, who is named WSL2 Manager of the Month for March, as Blues Women's Head Coach reignites title and promotion hopes.

Birmingham City Foundation welcomes families from across the city to the Knighthead Performance Centre for the Utilita Football Family Fun Day during the Easter break. Free to attend, the event brings the local community together to get involved in a wide range of activities, including fan park games, technical football sessions and matches on the 4G pitch.

2 Champions! The Women clinch the WSL2 title in dramatic fashion, with a 2-0 win at Charlton Athletic. Promotion is secured in this crunch showdown thanks to goals in either half by Wilma Leidhammar. Amy Merricks' side are backed by 685 Blues fans at the Valley, who delight at the Club's return to the top-flight after four years.

August Priske scores his first goal for Blues Men who finish the season with a 1-1 draw at Portsmouth, making it five unbeaten to close the campaign.

3 It's the glittering 150 years of Blue: 2025/26 awards night at the ICC, Birmingham. For the Men, Christoph Klarer picks up the Supporters' Player of the season award and Players' Player. Jay Stansfield is named Young Player of the season. For the Women, it's a clean sweep by Lily Crosthwaite - Supporters' Player of the Season, Players' Player of the Season and Young Player of the Season.

18 Chairman Tom Wagner is named among the recipients of the Lord Mayor's Awards, celebrating exceptional contributions to Birmingham. He is recognised for his leadership and impact on the city's sporting landscape as well as commitment to investment, regeneration, and community advancement.

The first episode of the Club's new podcast, Blue Rising, is released, featuring Carling Cup winning goalkeeper Ben Foster.

19 Blues outstanding season is recognised at the Women's Super League Football Awards.

Lily Crosthwaite is named Player of the Season, with the award voted for by supporters. Neve Herron takes the Rising Star Award. The pair are also included in the Barclays Women's Super League 2 Team of the Season, alongside Veatriki Sarri.

APR

4 Blues post a strong financial statement for 2024/25. Accounts show £36.5 million revenue for the League One title-winning season - a record for that level, excluding parachute payment clubs. Blues own revenue generating activities rise £13 million, fully offsetting the £6 million decline in broadcast revenues that came with relegation. Commercial revenues grow by £9 million and matchday revenue is £4 million.

6 Blues put on a fine display but go out of the Adobe Women's FA Cup in the Quarter-Finals at St. Andrew's at Knighthead Park. Manchester City - the eventual WSL Champions and Cup winners - squeak through with a 1-0 victory.

12 Blues see off Wrexham 2-0 at St. Andrew's at Knighthead Park in a dominant performance.

14 Birmingham City Foundation's Blues Go Green project is shortlisted for the EFL Environmental Sustainability Award at the 2026 EFL Awards.

21 Jude Bellingham buys a minority stake in cricket team Birmingham Phoenix. He purchases from Blues owners Knighthead (48.4%) and Warwickshire CCC (50.4%) who retain overall control of The Hundred Franchise based at Edgbaston.

25 Blues win back-to-back PGA Cup Finals, in dramatic circumstances against Brighton & Hove Albion at Loughborough University. The Under-21s equalise in the second minute of added-time, through Roni Molendo-Payne. And then in extra-time, in the 100th minute, Lucy Day powers in a header from a corner to clinch a 2-1 victory - and the silverware yet again.

Goals by Phil Neumann and Jhon Solis ensure that Blues round off their home campaign with a third straight victory, this time over Bristol City. Blues thus garner an impressive 44 points from Championship contests at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park.

Rich Goulding steps down as PA announcer and is honoured for his 20 years service - complete with a send-off 'who?!'

26 Blues Women suffer a shock 3-0 home defeat by Ipswich Town, which throws the title and promotion race in WSL2 wide open. The visitors rattle in their goals during a stunning opening 16-minute period to leave Blues up against it.

MAY

5 The Powerhouse - Built By Us.

More than 150 supporters are in attendance and 3,500 join online to hear more detailed plans and emerging concepts relating to the stadium development. This engagement event provides opportunity to share ideas and feedback on what the Blues faithful would like to see included both inside and around The Powerhouse.

15 Blues scoop gold at the prestigious Football Business Awards. Blues are honoured for the Best Club Marketing Campaign (Non-Premier League). The 'Forever Forward: 4-1 to the Chimney Boys' campaign submission covers the second half of 2025 and celebrates heritage while also projecting ambition, using the kicker of the 150th anniversary.

16 Paik Seung-ho is named in the South Korea squad for the World Cup in America, Mexico and Canada. It is Paik's second appearance at a finals after involvement in Qatar 2022.

26 Simone Magill is a new mother! She and husband Mark Rigby announce the arrival of baby girl Skye.

28 There's a clamour to watch WSL action in 2026/27 as the record for Blues Women season ticket sales is broken in just three weeks, with 40 per cent of fans first time purchasers.

31 Blues announce a staggering 95% renewal rate for Men's season tickets for the 2026/27 campaign.

Hundreds attended the finals of the Vertu Primary Schools Cup and Trevor Francis Schools Cup at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park. The Kop car park is transformed into a family fun day, with free games and activities laid on courtesy of Birmingham City Foundation, Vertu, Warwickshire CCC, Birmingham Panthers and University of Birmingham.



THE BLUE THREAD

JUN
2026

5 Director of Football Craig Gardner departs the Club. Across two decades, he represented Blues as a player, coach, Technical Director and Director of Football, making a significant contribution to the Club

15 Blues confirm the permanent signing of Colombian midfielder Jhon Solis from La Liga side Girona



17 Blues announce an exciting pre-season friendly against Spanish giants FC Barcelona at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park on 31 July





A MESSAGE FROM JEREMY DALE

BIRMINGHAM CITY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



As we reflect on our 150th anniversary year, there is one undeniable truth about Birmingham City: this Club has changed beyond recognition since the day Knighthead's name went above the door.

In those early days after the takeover, it often felt as though we were constantly putting out fires that had been burning for too long: reopening the lower Tilton and Kop terraces, repairing Knighthead Performance Centre after the fire, and tackling countless other issues besides. In 2024/25 we made real progress. In 2025/26, that momentum became something bigger, stronger and more visible. This review is intended to document that progress and share the detail with our fans.

We entered our 150th anniversary year with high hopes for success on the pitch and continued progress off it. We did not achieve the double promotion that was our ambition, and we should be honest about that. But huge strides were made across the broader project. This past year should be remembered as one of significant progress in so many areas: commercially, through the Sports Quarter development and the unveiling of The Powerhouse, through the work of our Foundation in the community, with the Men delivering the Club's highest finish in a decade, and with the Women returning to the WSL.

In recent weeks I have heard some people say that this was 'a good year of consolidation'. My reaction to that is simple: "Consolidation? You must be kidding." This has been a year of transformational progress for our Club and for the city we represent.

Given the journey we are now on, people must no longer judge our progress solely by the league position of our Men's team. We have to judge progress on many different levels, because this is a multi-faceted project. It is about the transformation of a football club and the regeneration of a city, with an impact that will change this city forever.

We are no longer a Club that simply lives season to season. We are building robust foundations so Birmingham City can succeed for decades, rather than just hoping for fleeting moments of glory.

Clearly, we are not there yet and there is still a long way to go, but it is equally clear that we are a million miles closer than when we started this journey three years ago.

So let us look at the different parts of our Club.

Infrastructure: Investment continued at pace this year across a wide range of projects. Not huge transformational projects but essential work nevertheless.

When I now look at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park, I think it is truly beautiful. When you walk in and see the lush green grass and the blue seats around the stadium bowl, it takes your breath away. We see that reaction time and again whenever we bring someone new to our home.

A former employee who left us a few years ago returned mid-season and was shocked by what he saw. It was genuinely one of those "house makeover" moments: he visibly recoiled and was stunned by the beauty all around him. That former employee was Jude Bellingham. One of our own, who loves St. Andrew's just like we do.

However much we love St. Andrew's, we know it cannot accommodate our ambitions. So in November, during our 150th anniversary month, we unveiled designs for our new home: The Powerhouse. It was a jaw-dropping moment: a 62,000-capacity, state-of-the-art stadium that will transform this Club and change the skyline and fortunes of this city forever.

We showed people around the world our intent. They now know something special is happening here.

Commercial: Our revenues once again grew strongly. We said at the start of the season that we would generate more revenue than any other club has ever achieved in the Championship, excluding parachute payment clubs. We did that, and we beat our targets significantly.

That commercial success is down to both our valued partners and, of course, our loyal fans.

When we look at the strength of our commercial partner roster today, we are proud that so many outstanding organisations have chosen to stand alongside Birmingham City. More than that, we are proud of the genuine partnerships and relationships we have built with them. They have chosen to be part of this journey, and while their support has helped drive significant revenue growth, their contribution goes far beyond that. They support the Club in many different ways, and I would encourage our fans to support them with your custom wherever possible.

We never take for granted the vital role our fans play in the strength and growth of this Club. Matchday attendances, food and drink sales and Club store purchases have all continued to grow strongly, and that support makes a real difference. We know the cost-of-living pressures many people are facing, so we are especially grateful that you continue to choose to spend your hard-earned money with Birmingham City. Your commitment is not just appreciated; it is fundamental to everything we are building.

Community: We have always said that we are more than football, and our responsibility to this city, its neighbourhoods and its people is not lost on us.





The work of the Birmingham City Foundation delivers support and hope to some of the most underprivileged people in this city, and we should all be very proud of the impact it has in changing lives across our communities.

The Foundation is constantly working in our schools, our neighbourhoods and our streets.

A few years ago, our Foundation was helping around 3,000 people each year. Since we applied a deeper focus to this vital work, we have grown massively, and this past year we helped more than 62,000 people. That could not happen without the support of our fans, in particular the independent Official Supporters Club, who once again raised significant funds to support the efforts of the Foundation.

Birmingham City is a Club that cares; a Club that looks after those in need; a Club that reaches down and lends a hand to those who stumble and fall. Birmingham City is, and must always be, more than football.

Football: I will leave it to Chris and Amy to comment fully on our on-pitch achievements elsewhere in this review. However, let me say that there was much to enjoy watching the Men’s team at St. Andrew’s. We had the third-best home record in the division, though that form was not replicated away from home. The team is focused on correcting that.

The Women’s team were strong all season, but they still had to show great resolve and determination in the final game of the season, away at the league leaders, to take the title and win promotion to the WSL. That was a performance to be proud of. Congratulations to Hope, Amy, the players and the staff.

Fans: Words are not enough to convey how grateful we are to our fans. You sell out stadiums at home and away. You come early to games. You spend your hard-earned money. You cheer on the teams. Your love for the Club is infectious, and for all of us who work here, it drives us on every day.

My two highlights from last season were standing in the away end at Blackburn with 7,000 Bluenoses, celebrating a last-minute winner, and then on the final day seeing nearly 1,000 of you celebrating the title with the Women’s team at Charlton.

Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts.

Our People: I must also say clearly how proud I am of our staff across the Club. Working in football is an absolute joy, but it is also hugely demanding. It is an “always on” business in a way that no fan can ever fully realise unless they have been on the inside. The commitment of our people is unquestionable, as is the support of their families. I would like to thank each and every one of them for the sacrifices I know they make as we continue on this journey.

None of this, and none of the progress we have made, would be possible without Knighthead, under the leadership of Tom Wagner, and the rest of the Board: Andrew Shannahan, Kyle Kneisley and Matt Alvarez. Their vision, commitment and investment have been extraordinary.

I have been asked countless times to send best wishes to Tom following his illness, from which he is recovering well. I have done that, and it has been a great source of encouragement to him. He cannot wait to be back at St. Andrew’s.

To close: During this past year, our special 150th year, I am sure many of us found ourselves looking back and reflecting on what Birmingham City means to us: remembering the moments of joy we have had following the Club and perhaps giving thanks to our forefathers, who brought us to St. Andrew’s and taught us what being a Blue was all about.

We are very conscious that there is something truly powerful in the spirit and heart of this Club. Those before us created something incredibly valuable, and each generation has held onto it dearly. As we grow, we must make sure that, as custodians of this Club, we do not lose that. I can assure you we will not.

As we exit our 150th year, we should recognise that we have made major progress, and we can now look to the future with eyes wide open to the scale, excitement and wonder of what is coming.

And finally, once again I must say thank you to our fans. Your support is amazing, and your love of the Club is infectious. Be excited for what is ahead, because there is so much more to come.

We are building something seriously exciting here. Something lasting. Something worthy of Birmingham City Football Club. And something we probably never dreamed of.

Keep Right On and see you soon!



BARCLAYS WSL2

THE CHAMPIONS



BLUES WOMEN ARE BACK AMONG THE ELITE. THEY WON THE WSL2 TITLE AND PROMOTION IN DRAMATIC FASHION, IN A WINNER-TAKES-ALL FINAL MATCH. IT WAS THE IDEAL END TO AN ABSORBING CAMPAIGN. HERE'S HOW THEY DID IT.

Blues Women were unapologetically blunt when the aims for 2025/26 were discussed last summer. Nothing but the Barclays Women's Super League 2 title would do.

A year ago, Blues just needed to conjure one more goal to defeat London City Lionesses on the last day of the season and clinch the Women's Championship crown and the only available promotion slot.

They had battled back from 2-0 down to equalise with six minutes left on the clock but, agonisingly, they couldn't find a way through. They were forced to stomach watching their opponents hoist the silverware instead and celebrate on their own turf.

If anything, it made Head Coach Amy Merricks, her staff and squad all the more determined. There was no sulking or feeling sorry for one another.

They targeted winning the league - "I couldn't settle for second place again," Merricks commented - and were vocal in outlining this intention and, effectively, putting extra pressure on themselves.

A summer rebuild commenced and Blues recruited impressively, for the rebranded WSL2. Adriana Franch made her loan permanent, Veatriki Sarri returned from Everton, Shannon Cooke came back and Blues plundered Durham for exciting young talent Lily Crosthwaite.

Moves were made in the French market to bring in Batcheba Louis and Océane Hurtre, the wily experience of Ji so-Yun was added as well as Chelsea Cornet, from Rangers.

So, Blues were set fair for what became another extraordinary chapter in the Club's history. Blues got off to a flying start in the league, thumping Bristol City at home on the opening day 5-1.

Simone Magill scored twice, Crosthwaite netted on her home debut, Christie Harrison-Murray scored with a fantastic strike and Louis, on as a substitute, registered on her debut.

By the end of September, undefeated Blues were in good shape and topped the table with 10 points as Crosthwaite's 90th minute goal provided a dramatic win at Sheffield United to round off the month.

The next couple of months were something of a mixed bag for Blues as Charlton Athletic deposed them at the summit, not least in part due to a 1-0 win at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park.

Blues, however, showed character and resilience to respond in positive fashion after two defeats across this spell.

And at the end of November, they locked horns with Aston Villa at Walsall in an eagerly anticipated derby in the Subway League Cup.

The clash didn't disappoint. Blues took command thanks to two-goal Sarri, but Villa hit back. They drew level late on and looked to have won things with a 90th minute goal by Rachel Maltby.

Blues were not done just yet however. A minute into added-time, from a Lucy Quinn corner, Neve Herron and Rebecca McKenna both had attempts denied as



pandemonium ensued in the Villa penalty area before Louis steered the loose ball in.

The group game went to a penalty shoot-out and Franch stepped up to become the heroine. She saved two Villa spot-kicks and Blues prevailed 4-2, as Harrison-Murray, Martha Harris, Sarri and Quinn all found the back of the net with their penalties. Close to 750 Blues fans were present with 'Keep Right On' being sung en masse.

By the turn of the year, Blues booked their place in the fourth round of the Adobe Women's FA Cup and thumped Durham 3-0 at home, which included the Goal of the Month from Sarri, a fine free-kick.

Blues also went to work when the January transfer window opened. Six new players came in, including record signing Wilma Leidhammar. The capture of the Swedish midfielder, snapped up from IFK Norrköping, was a real statement of intent.

Lotta Lindström, Asato Miyagawa and Shanade Hopcroft also brought extra quality, experience and options for Merricks.

The first WSL2 match of 2026 was at Portsmouth, where Blues were dominant 4-0 winners. Leidhammar opened her account.

Blues then beat Nottingham Forest 5-1 which included a second-half Lindström hat-trick. But there were bumps in the road to come for Blues, who dropped points against Durham and lost to Crystal Palace.

STAR PERFORMERS

Lily Crosthwaite was named Barclays Women's Super League 2 Player of the Season. The wide player was a major influence during Blues' title and promotion-winning campaign. She was named in the WSL2 Team of the Season alongside fellow Blues stars Neve Herron and Veatriki Sarri.

Here is how the League officially recognised the trio, who were all honoured at the WSL2 awards evening in London.

LILY CROSTHWAITE

A key figure in Blues' title-winning side, Crosthwaite featured in 21 matches, starting in 19 of them. Recording 14 goal involvements, she finished second in the charts, only three contributions behind Ashleigh Weerden. Her stellar performances drew widespread praise from fans and her manager alike. She went on to win Blues' Players' Player, Supporters Player, Young Player of the Year and Goal of the Year awards. With her versatility of being able to play on the wings or up front, Crosthwaite is sure to cause defenders problems next season.



NEVE HERRON

Playing in 21 matches this season, Herron's contribution to Blues' title win cannot be overlooked. With 156 defensive contributions across the entire campaign, it's clear to see she rose to the task when called upon. She's no stranger to setting up team moves too, with a solid 824 successful passes across the season and an accuracy of 80.1%; her passing has been one of her strongest attributes as Blues finished in top spot on goal difference, securing their status in WSL next season.



VEATRIKI SARRI

Featuring as a left-winger this season, Sarri has been in and amongst the goals. A combined nine goals and assists see her as a worthy recipient of a Team of the Season place. Her best moments include a wonderful free-kick against Durham, and she scored a second in the same game, propelling Blues to a 3-0 win. This season, the Greek international featured 21 times out of a possible 22, starting on 16 occasions, making crucial contributions to the league title success.



BLUES ACADEMY: HISTORY MAKERS

Blues Women Under-21s created history in April by winning the Professional Game Academy Cup.

They made it back-to-back titles in the most dramatic of circumstances against Brighton & Hove Albion at Loughborough University.

Brighton took the lead on the stroke of half-time and after the break chances were few and far between for both sides. Blues also had to contend with Lucy Powis

requiring treatment for an extended period due to a head injury.

Just as it looked as if the Seagulls would claim the silverware, Blues forced a last-gasp equaliser. Two minutes into added-time, Roni Molendo-Payne reacted quickest inside the box to turn the ball in.

Kimoya Foster's low drive had been well saved by Silvana Miranda, but Molendo-Payne was there on the spot to send the contest into extra-time. Blues got what proved to be the decisive goal in the 100th minute.

Scarlett Manship's corner found Lucy Day, who rose highest to power a header into the net. Wins in successive finals for Georgia Clarke's side exemplified

the great strides Blues' youngsters have been taking. This season the Under-14s won the Central Warwickshire Girls Football League Cup for the first time.

One of the stars of Blues Under-21s in 2024/25, defender Ebonie Locke, signed her first professional contract with the Club in July. And both Locke and fellow Academy graduate Riya Mannu made their first senior starts in a 2-2 Subway League Cup draw against Bristol City in September, with attacker Mannu scoring her first professional goal.

To further her development, Mannu spent the second part of the season on a dual-registration basis at West Bromwich Albion, making key contributions before returning to Blues.



In the FA Cup, a resounding 8-0 home win in the fifth round put paid to Chatham Town. Hurtre netted a treble.

As the season reached the nitty-gritty, it was anyone's guess who would prevail.

By the end of March, Charlton held a nine-point lead over Blues, having played two games more.

After Blues fell 2-0 at Newcastle United, they knew there could be little margin for error during the run-in.

A three-game spell proved critical, when Blues showed all their qualities and mental strength when the pressure was on.

They came from behind to win 2-1 at Sheffield United and then at Bristol City, Leidhammar was set up by Miyagawa for the only goal of the game. The victory at Ashton Gate was one that fired belief, Merricks recalled.

Into April, and Blues registered a pivotal victory over Sunderland at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park. A tense, deadlocked affair moved into the third minute of added-time when Crosthwaite took Shannon Cooke's long ball outside the box, slipped two defenders and lifted a shot over the goalkeeper.

It was a huge, huge moment, taking Blues to the top of the league with two matches to play.

We know that Blues, being Blues, don't do things the easy way. And so, it proved, in front of an expectant largest home crowd of the season for the visit of Ipswich Town.

Blues had been buoyed by a sterling performance against eventual WSL Champions Manchester City as they bowed out of the FA Cup in the Quarter-Finals.



But with the chance to clinch promotion, Blues stuttered. A three-goal salvo inside 16 minutes surged the visitors into the ascendancy and a stunned Blues just couldn't recover.

Thus it all came down to the final match of the season, with Blues heading to the Valley. They, leaders Charlton and Crystal Palace were in a three-way tussle. Blues had to win, no doubt about it, and against a team they had yet to enjoy success against since WSL relegation.

But tactical tweaks and a front-foot approach paid dividends as Leidhammar headed Blues in front and also struck the crossbar from a free-kick.

After the break Leidhammar got her and Blues second goal in the 53rd minute and from then on in, Blues were never going to relinquish control - the WSL2 championship title and promotions was theirs! The scenes of celebration in front of a 700-strong travelling army of Blues fans when the trophy was lifted will long live in the memory.

As Crystal Palace hammered Portsmouth 6-1, they squeezed into runners-up and the other automatic promotion spot. They finished level on 44 points with Blues, but Merricks' side had a superior goal difference.

Charlton's devastation turned to joy, however, as they beat Leicester City, on penalties, in a Play-Off to go up. It was a remarkable finale to a pulsating campaign and for Blues the pain of missing out so agonisingly 12 months ago was well and truly banished.



LEGEND RETURNS AS BLUES WOMEN FUTURE IS STRENGTHENED BY KNIGHTHEAD

Karen Carney was one of several high-profile independent investors involved in the purchase of Blues Women in February.

The former Blues FA Cup-winning hero and England star was among a group of "prominent female business leaders and global professional sporting icons", including three-time US Open tennis champion Kim Clijsters, who made the commitment.

Shelby Companies Limited, a subsidiary of Knighthead Capital Management, acquired a 97% stake in Blues Women, with Carney, Clijsters and others taking the remaining 3%.

In a statement, Blues said the deal "will elevate the focus on the Women's team" and "deliver on the stated ambition to compete at the highest levels in the women's game".

Jeremy Dale, Blues CEO, described the deal as "a pivotal moment" in the Club's history.

"Birmingham City has a strong heritage in the women's game, competing at the highest levels and winning the FA Cup in 2012," he said.

"It has developed outstanding talents like Karen Carney, Kerys Harrop and Jess Carter, who have represented the women's game with distinction.

"To now have Karen, along with Kim Clijsters and several other prominent women business leaders as investors is a pivotal moment for the Club."

Carney, who is now a successful television pundit, commented: "The ambition is for the Women's team to compete at the highest levels and we will do all we can to help this club achieve that goal.

"We all want to elevate women's sport in Birmingham, inspiring the next generation and continuing to build on the legacy that has been created at Birmingham City Women and we're excited to see what we can achieve together."





BACK IN THE TOP FLIGHT

A CONVERSATION WITH AMY MERRICKS



A CONVERSATION WITH HEAD COACH AMY MERRICKS, WHO GUIDED BLUES WOMEN TO THE WSL2 TITLE AND PROMOTION BACK TO THE TOP FLIGHT

It was an incredible climax to the season, such a huge last game at Charlton Athletic; what are your emotions reflecting on it now?

Enormous pride because I think following the Ipswich Town defeat at home, and what that could have meant for us, it would have been easy for us to ‘stop’ there. The players really knuckled down, and you could tell directly after the game the type of response we were going to get. Everyone was very angry, very disappointed. The training that week, leading into the Charlton game, was excellent. The players’ focus and attention was brilliant. There was no doubt in my mind before we left the hotel to go to Charlton that we’d do it. We showed the players a video of the season and the response, in terms of the audible noise the players created . . . I just thought ‘wow, they are truly ready to go’.

The performance on the day was very good from us. We dominated a lot of our duels, got the second balls and we created some really good chances. We felt like we were on top of them after weathering the initial 15 - 20 minutes of pressure. It’s a tough place to go and in terms of record against Charlton, it hasn’t been particularly great. But the team stepped up.

What made the difference tactically on the day?

There were a few changes to personnel but equally to structure. We learned some lessons from last year. It was important we approached it as a one-off game. We had to win. If we had lost the game, it wouldn’t have changed where we would have been – in a play-off. But nobody wanted to work another two or three weeks and be in that game! For us it was we are chasing, we need to win and therefore our structure had to equal that. So, we played with a 3-5-2, we put two forwards up front. We went for physical presence against their backline because physically, defensively, they are very strong and capable. We played a front four effectively in the 3-5-2 with Lily Crosthwaite and Océane Hurtré out wide and I thought it worked really well. We also rolled the dice in midfield. We utilised Chelsea Cornet to hold but we played with six in advance, with the likes of Lee Guam-min and Asato Miyagawa higher and it really paid off. It allowed us to take a lot more risk, have more bodies in advanced areas, which certainly got us the first goal and helped us create more chances. It gave them a real problem to deal with because of the quality of the personnel we had in the frontline.

How did everyone handle the pressure of this winner-takes-all scenario? Did leaning on the experience of the London City Lionesses game a year ago help?

I will be honest, we didn’t speak leading into Charlton about the game last year. Fifty per cent of the group were different. I did address it with our player leadership group. Their work was critical amongst the team all season. If I look back to the last six games of the season, that’s when we were talking about handling pressure. And that work doesn’t just crop up last minute, like ‘oh we need to talk about it now’. We were addressing the pressure head on because of the expectation that was on our backs. You could probably see it in a few games, certainly after Christmas. You get to the business end, and the team is playing a little more cagily. It was more about getting results over the line than anything else. It was more about recognising that pressure was never really going to go away. I guess the one positive after the Ipswich game was that we could turn to the fact that we needed to fight for what we wanted and whenever we have had our backs against the wall, as a team, we have delivered. In a way, that result gave us a ‘nice’ springboard. A silver lining around the cloud – we have no choice, we must win. It showed how much it meant to the players in the way they performed in that last game and how they managed the occasion.

After the shock Ipswich Town defeat at St. Andrew’s @ Knighthead Park, you described the performance as untypical and lacklustre. What was going through your mind when they scored one, then two, then three in no time at all?

It was 10 minutes of madness. We had really good momentum coming out of the previous three games when we’d gone back-to-back. We played Manchester City and had a fantastic performance in that FA Cup quarter-final. Then there was an international break and the timing of that did not help. We have so many players who go away, the reintegration can be challenging. You are dealing with travel et cetera. Ipswich were having a real spike in performance and equally fighting for their lives to stay in the league. We never underestimated them. But that 10 minutes . . . we were making bad decisions. After the second goal we conceded, we took a kick-off and gave the ball straight back to them. It was uncharacteristic of us.

It made it sweeter the way we responded. At the start of the season we presented the team with the characteristics of a championship-winning side and the patterns you tend to see – back-to-back wins, bounce back ability and the players said they really wanted to go after bounce back ability. If you look throughout the whole season, when we dropped points we bounced back to a win. That was far more valuable than anything else. Last season we drew far too many games. That’s why we didn’t get over the line. This season we lost games, but we won more. After Ipswich we knew what we had to do and we had a sense of belief that we would bounce back as we had done it before.



What were the key components of your pre-season planning, what did you want to implement, after that last day heartache in 2024/25?

There were some key markers whereby we had to make changes and drastic improvement. Saying that, last season wasn't that bad – we just didn't get over the line in the final match. But we looked at it and, for example, our goal difference was not strong enough. We have had, for the last two seasons, the highest xG scored ratio but we hadn't converted consistently. But we did this season, in the first half of it especially. That gave us the cushion to win the league, effectively. That was one of the markers we presented to the team, they took it on board and we stormed it. It was not just a case for me of two seasons; this was four seasons that the Club have tried to get back into the WSL, and just fallen at the last hurdle. So, over the summer, individually and as a leader, I spoke to several coaches across

the men's and women's game who had been in that position and asked them what they did. I got some fantastic ideas. I really wanted to shift the group from being reliant on the staff to be able to own it more themselves and lead it more themselves. Hence why we were showing them markers and data and asking what was important to them. We had a leadership group of five senior players, including the captain. But we were very selective in what we needed to see in those characters that we wanted to portray in the team's performance throughout the season. So, one of those leaders for example was Martha Harris, an absolute stalwart. Her performance at Charlton . . . wow. It showed her experience, her knowledge of the game and she was just a true Blues performer. Bringing those people together was important. Whenever we had a dip or a problem, they supported clarity of messaging, they solved a lot of problems and that for me was vital. We are developing more leaders so when the pressure hits the fan, they know what to do, how to do it, what the next steps are and how to lead the team. That was probably the proudest piece of work if I look





at how we got it done in the end. It was through the elements that the players decided they wanted to change. From a technical point of view it was all about ‘how can we break down low blocks?’, ‘how can we be effective against medium blocks?’. We had that a lot. Teams would try and score early against us and try and put 10 behind the ball. It was a real compliment, but we had to try and add a few more strings to our bow, which we did. Look at the Sunderland game, scoring in the last minute. We were relentless to break down those teams. And that moment was very significant for us as well.

As for player recruitment across both summer and winter transfer windows, what types were you looking for to enhance the group?

I think in every window we have been clear in that we are not just finding players that could help us for the here and now, but would come on the journey with us. It’s about ambitious individuals. If we want to be a consistently winning side, we have to bring players with us who want to win, have a thirst to win, and can handle that pressure. We recruited players who have huge talent and potential in the likes of Wilma Leidhammar, who has made an amazing impact. She has captained sides at a high level, but equally she has so many more amazing years to come in her development. Then someone like Asato Miyagawa. She took a jump to come with us as she believed in the journey and the project. An older player, far more experienced, she has played in the Champions League. But she wanted to come here.

There was a bunch of games after a defeat by Newcastle United in March and April that appeared crucial in the season – Sheffield United 2-1 win, Bristol City 1-0 win, Sunderland 1-0 win. It showed the team’s resilience and got you back on track?

We had come out of a difficult period. We had dropped points against Durham, conceding a late goal, we had a poor result against Crystal Palace at home. And we condensed that period into five league games – with the FA Cup game against Manchester City, six games in three weeks – and there was a lot of travel. Southampton away then up to Newcastle to play them midweek. We grouped that section of games and as staff we knew what we mathematically needed to get us into a good position. It was important that we balanced our view, because the league is so competitive. You see teams such as Charlton have had an incredible season but arguably with only 20 per cent average possession rate each game. It puts it into perspective that some days you won’t get the result but there will be elements of performance you need. In that Newcastle game it felt like there was a magnetic field across their goal! But again, it was about bouncing back. If we nailed those three games, which came in quick succession, we knew what it would give us and we were just very performance focused, very calm. It was after Bristol City away – and a few of the players have said this to me as well – that we really felt that we were going to do it. January, Charlton had a nine-point gap on us and I said ‘we will do it, we will win it’. We really felt a shift in the momentum and that

snowballed for us.

Lily Crosthwaite was outstanding. WSL2 Player of the Season and she swept all the Club awards. How would you assess her contribution?

I was with her at the WSL awards evening and the nice thing about Lily is that she still doesn’t quite believe it herself. She is so humble and so mature beyond her years. When she stood up for WSL2 Team of the Season, she looked round, saw Vivianne Miedema and put her hand over her mouth, shocked! In our recruitment during the summer, we really needed to make sure that we brought in players with certain traits. As a Blues side, we need to be relentless, we need to be aggressive. Well, Lily built and developed all of that at Durham. And not only that she brought with her individual brilliance. The way she can travel with the ball at pace is unbelievable. I think she would admit, as well, that she didn’t think the season would have gone quite as well as it did for her. I remember speaking in the summer and saying ‘come on, come on board, this will give you exactly what you need to develop yourself’. The exciting thing is that she has so much more to come. She is certainly ready for the jump to the WSL. She demonstrated that against Manchester City. But she is eager to keep improving. She has got some fantastic individual traits that we have yet to uncover. It means the world to her as well that she has really invested in what it means to be Blues and a Blues club. I think she is a future leader, too. But step by step for her, she is still very young.

We know people move on, football never stands still, there is always change. But let’s take a moment to talk about two outstanding players and their contributions over the years, Christie Harrison-Murray and Lucy Quinn, both of whom left at the season end.

I truly believe we wouldn’t have got it done without those individuals, Christie and Lucy. I recall the summer after the London City game when I was on the phone persuading Lucy to stay. I recognised what she gave us on the pitch and off it. She is a fantastic character and someone who always gave everything for the Club. She knows what it means to be Blues. She had a fantastic first half of the season. We would not have been in the position we were without Lucy Quinn’s performances. She is such a fun-loving character, for me it was always about just letting her be Lucy. Some people, I don’t know, maybe think ‘oh, it’s a bit much’. But no. I love it. I am all for it. You be yourself, that’s why you’re here. Behind all of that, though, when we were in meetings her contributions were excellent. She is a real professional and drove the standards and performances which is something people maybe don’t actually see with Lucy. Where do I start with Christie Harrison-Murray? I have said this countless times, we would not have done it without her leadership. She will make an incredible head coach when she is ready to make that step. She has a fantastic eye for the game and detail. The conversations we’ve had after games are in-depth, the type I have with other head coaches. What she brought to the grass as well. She was so consistent. Training, games, consistent with what she brought as a leader and what she expected from the team. She did so much away from the pitch as well. She really knew what was needed to get the Club back to where we wanted to be. After the third or fourth time of



trying, we had to change and manipulate the culture to bring success, and she was truly invested in that. She gave absolutely everything and it was a nice way for her to sign-off, with the title. It was difficult, as well, as she got injured at a tough point. She is front and centre in our new gym. There is a massive picture of her as you walk in. And that's exactly where she needs to be. And I hope in years to come she finds herself back in the building as a member of staff. I did try to keep her. People like Lucy and Christie deserved all the merit.

The infrastructure and support staff Blues Women now have is unrecognisable compared to a few years back. That brings pressure and expectation. But it seems something all have embraced?

It's ongoing. When I first came in I spoke about being WSL ready. That's having the right people and implementing the right processes. I have worked in the WSL and there is an absolute ocean to swim to make sure you're ready to win that league. So, to become an established WSL side, we have to have an incredible backroom team who know exactly how to drive performance and what makes the difference. The facilities and investment we have now behind that is incredible. The gym is completely dedicated to the Women's team. It has equipment specific for the female athlete. And that is ongoing. Processes. We must we align the work in the gym, in terms of the exercises, the players programmes impact the way we play, in a positive manner. All of that is going to be critical to create a high performing team in the WSL. We are advertising for roles week on week because we are recognising the job is only just really beginning. That was the 'easy' bit (winning the league and promotion). We have a fantastic foundation platform we have built the last two years and that doesn't need to change. But we must keep evolving. And with the backing and investment we have, it is so exciting to know we don't have a ceiling right now.

What would be your biggest takeaway from this season? What are you favourite memories?

It would be the resilience and bounce back ability of the team. The players and staff. And the passion. Everyone was fully invested. There was no 'me', it was 'we'. We wanted to get the Club back to where it belongs. The fight and passion we showed against Aston Villa in the derby (in the Subway League Cup) and to get a result there was huge. I am incredibly proud with the way we have upheld the identity of the Club and what it means to be a Blues team, and the fact that we have never given up. We have fought to the very end and that's why, although we would have all liked it to have been easier, actually it made sense for who we are as Blues to have done it this way. Now, looking back, I wouldn't change it.





A SEASON OF PROGRESS

A CONVERSATION WITH CHRIS DAVIES





PUTTING BLUES' SEASON INTO CONTEXT IS A WORTHWHILE EXERCISE.

The Men's team under Chris Davies were back at Championship level in 2025/26 after recovering from relegation two years ago.

Blues finished in 10th place, their highest position since Gary Rowett's Blues of 2015/16. And the points return of 64 was the best since Chris Hughton's side made the Play-Offs 14 years ago.

Blues pushed for the Play-Offs this season but fell just short.

Davies, like everyone at the Club, is ambitious and targeting a Premier League return. But the Championship is a tough beast to wrestle into submission.

In eight previous campaigns, Blues have placed 19th, 19th, 17th, 20th, 18th, 20th and 17th, circling the drain before finally dropping out of English football's second tier.

"I have always had a really good grasp of that context of this Club," says Davies. "Before I got here, I never considered Birmingham City as a Play-Off contender; there were relegation battles in that last decade. These were the facts.

"I knew it would be a big jump for us, from League



One. When we came up, I was a little concerned the expectation would weigh too heavily on the players when it should have been more a case of an adventure and let's see how high we can go.

"But, as a football club, if you can say you've had your best, highest finish for a decade then you know you've made progress.

"In my mind, I made a note leading into the season, that finishing in the top six would have been amazing and finishing anywhere between seventh and 12th would have proved we were a competitive Championship team.

"Us being in that 'competitive' bracket is a good achievement and probably the longer the season went on the more I felt we did really well to finish where we did.

"The Championship is incredibly demanding. You are going out there against teams who have been in the Premier League. You are not going to overpower them like you did against some of the sides we played in League One. You are going to have to really earn it.

"At the end of the season when we got to Portsmouth, we had been through a lot. But the reaction of the fans was one of happiness with how the Club is going

and how we finished up."

There were definite high spots for Blues. At St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park their return of 44 points ranked them fourth in the division.

It was a fortress, in front of sold-out crowds. When it all clicked, there were memorable moments like the dynamic successive four-goal beatings of Portsmouth, Millwall and Norwich City, the latter fittingly in the 150th anniversary match.

Title winners Coventry City were seen off in a gritty display; Wrexham were overpowered. Others often hung on for a draw in the face of a Blues onslaught in front of the Tilton Road End. The FA Cup tussle against Leeds United was a tremendous advert for the Club, as was the raucous atmosphere St. Andrew's is so famous for. Davies' side ended the season with three consecutive victories at home.

When Hull City controversially won on Blues turf in October, it was remarkably the first league defeat at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park in 556 days.

"I've been told that at home we have won more points per game than Arsenal, Manchester City - any other team in England. In fact, nobody has picked up more points at home during the two years I have been here.

"This is a great achievement that everyone associated with the Club can be proud of. To go that way at home, in front of close to 30,000 Bluenoses has been amazing. The fans were always there for us, raucous, and together, with the way we played at home, it was



a powerful combination."

On the road it was a different story, but Blues showed signs of addressing that as the season went on.

Again, it harks back to the fact that the Championship is anything but a doddle. Davies reflected on the areas of Blues play that had to be recalibrated due to the step up from League One.

"We saw quite early that we could still control games with the ball. That encouraged me. But what I found as we went along was that our ability to create chances was less, against better organised teams.

"Probably the thing that let us down was our goals scored. Our defensive record, in terms of shots conceded, was I think either top or top three in the league.

"Because of our pressing game, we didn't give a lot away. We were aggressive, we went after teams. That side of our game was quite consistent. But we did make mistakes that were punished.

"We had a lot of control in League One and we could almost wear teams down. We were winning a lot of games 1-0, 2-1 or 2-0. They weren't six or seven nils. We would wear teams down and pound the rock and eventually it would break open.

"In the Championship we realised that had to change. We became more direct. When we won the ball back, we focused on trying to go directly forward quicker, rather than be more patient and keeping control of the ball.

"We tried to improve on our set-pieces. We lost a few games on set-pieces but only won one on a set-piece, at Preston North End.

"I think the attacking game we found it harder, definitely. We scored 84 goals in League One, we scored 57 in this league. Despite going up a level in quality, we still didn't score enough.

"Then, of course, there were the away games. Everyone could see you are up against some big teams, in big stadiums and we didn't have the same sort of ability to hurt them at their places, despite having a lot of possession and territory.

"You go to certain stadiums, there's 30,000 on top of you and we didn't quite have the same rhythm we've been so used to having. That was another change we found in this league."

Blues carved out a lot of big chances this season but finding that clinical edge wasn't there – they ranked third for such openings missed in the league, hitting the woodwork 27 times, more than any other side.

The New Year's Day defeat at Watford was a watershed moment, like the shock Shrewsbury Town defeat in League One that triggered Blues march towards a record-breaking title.

Davies confirms: "Yes, I think that Watford game was our Shrewsbury moment! The best thing that happened to me was getting sent-off against Southampton as it meant I had to sit in the stand and watch the Watford game unfold. And I couldn't do anything; I couldn't speak to anyone. I just sat there and out of the corner of the eye I could see the very same hospital I was born in - Watford General - and I was watching what was happening on the pitch thinking we can be so much better than this.

"It was the first match - including that Shrewsbury game - where I actually felt we were unrecognisable, for half-an-hour towards the end.

"I was crystal clear after that there needed to be very, very big changes if we were going to push on. After that, we went on to beat Coventry, and we got near the top six. We weren't a team in that Watford game. Basically, we weren't running enough, especially in the last 30 minutes."

Blues flexed their muscle in the January transfer window bringing in Carlos Vicente and August Priske for big money, as well as Kai Wagner, plus loanees Jhon Solis and Ibrahim Osman.

A number of players departed including Lyndon Dykes, Keshi Anderson, Willum Willumsson and Dion Sanderson.

"Obviously the Club backed me on those changes and we did see - although we had another little bad spell, don't get me wrong - an improvement," says Davies, who expanded on how stylistically Blues altered.





THE TRANSFER MARKET

"I changed the shape. I freed the players up a little bit and I gave them more licence to go longer and more direct, rather than feeling compelled to build up from the back and be too static in our positioning.

"I would call our previous shape a 4-2-3-1, a kind of positional shape where the right-back would push on and right winger would go inside. Then, by the second half of the season, I'd class it as a flexible 4-2-3-1. We weren't as defined, we were more direct and I think that gave us different tools to be able to survive difficult periods and beat teams.

"We brought in powerful, quick, strong, solid players. [Ibrahim] Osman, the quickest winger you'll find in the league. [Carlos] Vicente runs all day. [August] Priske, 6ft 3in mobile. We brought in [Kai] Wagner, strong, physical. We brought in athletes and we became a much more athletic team."

"We learnt a lot last season and gained important experience, which is key in the Championship. The new season will be upon us soon and we will be ready to go!"

Blues have not stood still when it comes to the transfer market. Under the ownership of Knighthead, the Club has been one of the most active in football. This past year it has been no different for the Men First Team, once more underlying the ambition.

In the summer transfer window Demarai Gray was brought home. Bright Osayi-Samuel returned to these shores from Turkey, whilst there were also eye-catching raids for fellow internationals Marvin Ducksch and Kyogo Furuhashi, amongst others. Loan-wise, Blues snared England Under-21 goalkeeper James Beadle, Patrick Roberts and Tommy Doyle as prime targets.

In the winter, Kai Wagner was through the door from the MLS and big money was paid for Carlos Vicente and August Priske as Blues strengthened yet again. Roberts' loan was made permanent. Jhon Solis and Ibrahim Osman came in on a temporary basis to add to the dynamic.

Blues have been busy constructing squads to get out of League One at the first attempt and then retooling for the Championship to meet the next level in quality and become serious contenders. Progress year on year.

For Manager Chris Davies, the activity was a blessing, but the squad now needs to take on more of a settled look, which will be a major boost moving forward in the Championship.

He notes: "Since I've been at the Club we have had 80 transactions. We have had 40 players in, 40 out. This summer, if you asked me what I want, I'd say a maximum of six in and six out. That would half last season's summer transfer window and it would be less than a third of my very first season's transfer window.

"Continuity, consistency, togetherness, understanding, cohesion . . . we could have a pre-season where we look a bit like a settled team, one that knows each other, that understands the league a little bit better.

"And then you start to move towards your Coventry City type of teams that have grown together in the Championship and got to know it."

Coventry won the title. By the end of the 24/25 campaign, their players had played a total of 3,172 matches in the Championship - more than any other club. Blues stood at 1,637 Championship matches combined.

Such know-how was important, says Davies. "We can progress and be better and be a more cohesive unit than we were this season. We'll know what we have got to do. "And the way we finished the season - we were more direct, very physical, big - I think if we are like that and more consistent with our line-up, with players who are getting used to the league, that would bode well to get more points."

Davies clocked up his 100th game in charge of Blues in March, at Charlton Athletic. With 59 victories in all competitions in that time, it puts Davies among exalted company - on the coat tails of the likes of Pep Guardiola, Jose Mourinho, and above Sir Alex Ferguson, Arsene Wenger and Mikel Arteta for best win percentage from a manager's first century of matches in this country.

A handful of the players have been with Davies all the way and have clocked up the most minutes during his tenure.

"We have to give credit to the players who have been so consistent, like [Christoph] Klarer and Paik [Seung-Ho]. Paik goes under the radar.

"[Tomoki] Iwata. Jay [Stansfield]. These players who are consummate professionals every day. Polite, respectful, hard working, diligent.

"These are the players we have relied on for two years. These are the players we should be thanking for their efforts. I see them every day and they have done everything for this Club.

" All the players work hard and contribute significantly over the season but I am especially grateful to our most trusted players who are great servants.

"For some of them, this was just their first year in the Championship, too. It was Paik's first full season at this level. They are only going to get better."



THE POWERHOUSE



**WITH HEAD OF
INFRASTRUCTURE
NICK SMITH, WE
CHART THE
INCREDIBLE
STORY OF
BLUES' ICONIC
NEW HOME**





There's not a single superlative that would suffice in summing up the last 12 months when it comes to The Powerhouse.

The vision of the 62,000 capacity multi-purpose stadium, the anchor of Knighthead's £3 billion Sports Quarter project, started to become reality following a series of major landmark events.

In June, Chancellor Rachel Reeves was at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park with Chairman Tom Wagner to announce that around £400 million of government funding would be unlocked for the Metro tram line to connect the city centre and the ground.

As part of £2.4 billion funding package for transport projects across the West Midlands, money would also be diverted to help rebuild the existing railway station at Adderley Park.

This major announcement kickstarted the Sports Quarter project into life. Improved and increased transport links to the East Birmingham site - uniting to HS2, and out to Birmingham International Airport - was deemed vital to the whole venture.

In October, the best of the best came together. British designers Heatherwick Studio partnered with Kansas-based architects MANICA, and Peaky Blinders creator and writer Stephen Knight - they were appointed to deliver the Club's new stadium.

Next, at Knight's Digbeth Loc. Studios, was a truly seismic and jaw-dropping event - the unveiling of The Powerhouse. We had not known the name, let alone what it looked like, by this point, remember.



Assembled guests were left in awe at how bold, brash and how Brummie the design was. And the interest of a worldwide audience was piqued.

The Powerhouse... with its 12 chimneys recognising Birmingham's industrial heritage and its location on the old Birmingham Brick Works, its steep-banked stands, the first visuals, it created a monumental stir.

As those at Knight's HQ in Birmingham in November tried to take it all in after the launch show, Blues CEO Jeremy Dale made a pertinent passing comment. He suggested that this could be the most important day in the Club's 150-year history as well as the most important day in the next 150 years.

Then came May and by now more than 150 people

were working on the stadium full-time. The Club's inaugural 'Built By Us' Supporter Consultation Series saw 150 fans attend a St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park presentation led by Blues' Head of Infrastructure, Nick Smith, and Eliot Postma, Partner and Group Leader at Heatherwick Studio.



1. DESIGN

HEATHERWICK STUDIO

Bold and innovative. Winners of more than 100 international awards for design excellence. They have a team of 250 architects, designers, makers, engineers and landscapers. Heatherwick's mantra: 'We want to see a world where the buildings and places around us are radically more joyful, engaging and human'.

MANICA ARCHITECTURE

Global-leader in the design of sport and entertainment venues worldwide. Behind the Las Vegas Raiders' \$1.5 billion Allegiant Stadium. Renovating Barcelona's Camp Nou stadium. Owner and President David Manica previously worked on the O2 Arena, the new Wembley Stadium and the 'Bird's Nest' Beijing National Stadium, China.

STEVEN KNIGHT

Renowned film and television screenwriter, producer and director. Creator and writer of worldwide phenomenon Peaky Blinders, The Detectives, SAS: Rogue Heroes and co-creator of Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? game show. Birmingham-born lifelong Blues supporter set to write the screenplay to the next James Bond film.

Fresh, stunning renders and further insight into the detail and design of the new stadium were outlined. Those present and those watching a live stream gained a clearer understanding of the scale, purpose, and positive impact of The Powerhouse on the Club, supporters, the city and the surrounding community.

Charting the past 12 months for Blues Review of the Year, Smith agrees that these developments provided tangible evidence for observers. Whether supporters, those in the football industry, the global public, stakeholders, politicians and even the nay sayers. "Correct. I feel it made it real for a lot of people," he says.

"Until we start building and it comes out of the ground we will continue to get criticised by some people. Some people are stuck in that space. That's fine. We can't control that so we do not waste energy thinking about it.

"Knighthead and all the people involved, including Government, are not making these investments and are doing these events just for the sake of it.

"This past year set the tone of the intention and ambition. It brought a reality to the whole Football Club and where we want to go, and what we want to do." The quest to find the right experts to put the plans into action was rigorous.

Smith recalls: "We went through a competition of the global leaders of stadium design.

"We started with 13 of those, a kind of the Top Gun school of architects. And then we went down to five – who went into a paid competition.

"The quality we got out of running a paid competition was excellent.

"Heatherwick as the design studio, we felt understood our ambition to be iconic and global, but provide an asset that really spoke to the community.

"Then they brought in a team who were perfect for us in that we wanted it to be a football first but a multi-event stadium. MANICA, who are one of the leading sports architects, understood football from Wembley. David Manica had worked on the project for another company before he started his own business.

"But MANICA have also been 'all the way through' to deliver the Allegiant Stadium, which is probably the exemplar American multi-event stadium.

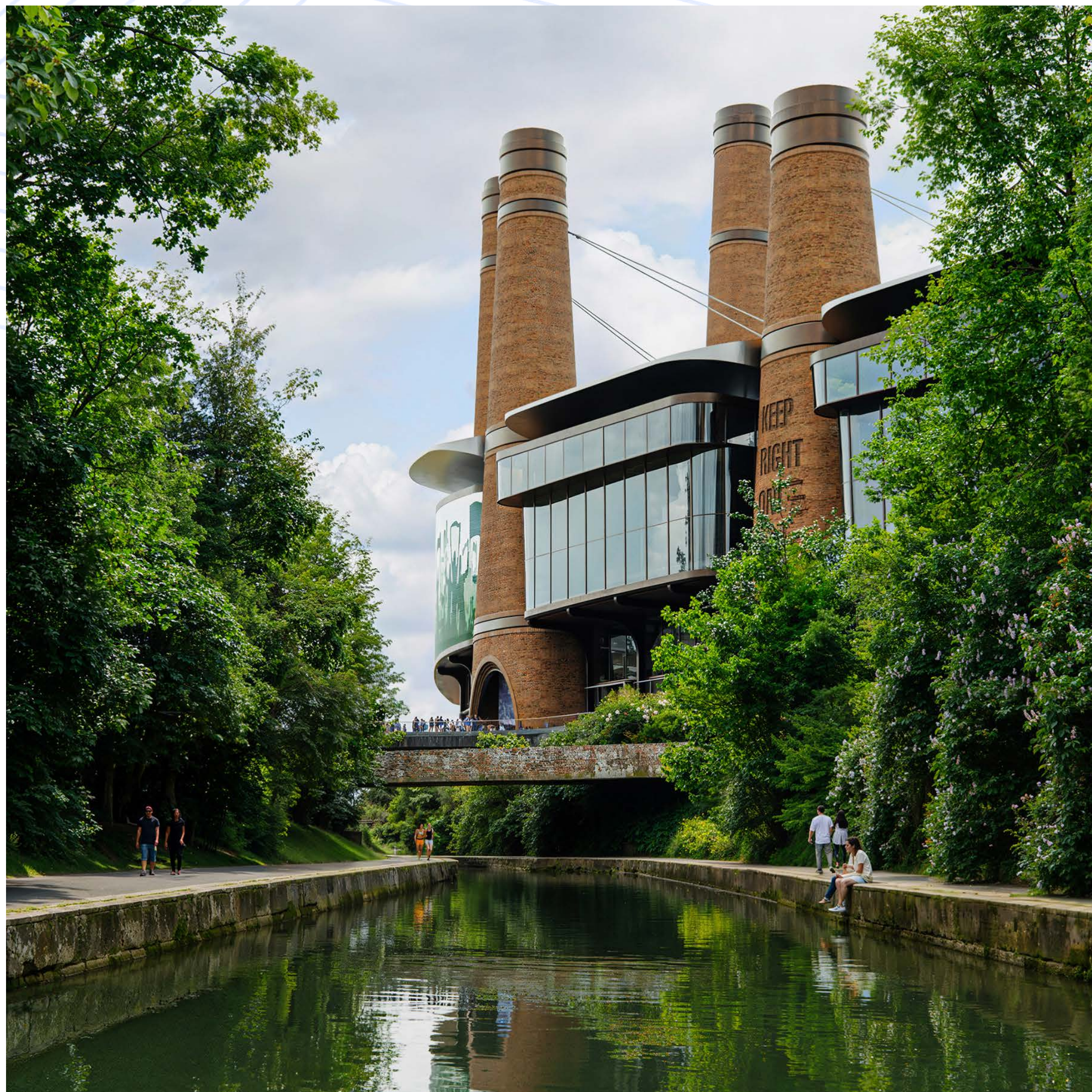
"We felt that was very compelling - that sports stadium, multi-event stadium, with the design quality of Heatherwick - supported by a global engineering team Buro Happold, who have been involved in multiple UK-based stadiums.

"They understood stadium engineering requirements, in terms of retractable pitches, and the steepness of the rakes that we wanted in the bowl.

"And then there was a sprinkling of Steven Knight magic, for the storytelling.

"We felt it was a group of people that we just couldn't ignore."

The pitch that was put to Blues was full of 'scale models, lights, pizzazz, smoke'. "These guys present like it's a show, with the substance to back it up," Smith recalls.



“Both from a Birmingham city perspective – the gateway coming into the city, 40 million – 50 million people will go past this iconic coliseum – you could feel the heritage of the Club, the heritage of the site, the heritage of Birmingham in this completely modern way. It won you over.”

The months and weeks up to the Digbeth Loc. Studios launch were testing times. More people were 'in the know' about the design.

“Let me tell you how hard that was to keep a secret!” jokes Smith.

“Not the event but keeping the stadium a secret. We knew the designs a month or so before that. So, the project team deserve a pat on the back. Then landing at the event . . . for me it was genuinely a beautiful moment.

“I thought the mix of gritty, warehouse venue, quality of presentation but with authenticity of local poets, bands and a studio that puts on world TV series . . . the juxtaposition versus the ambition versus where we were coming from versus where we are going was just a beautiful mix of emotions.”



The moment of The Powerhouse unveiling by Wagner front and centre on stage at Digbeth Loc. was unforgettable.

Smith sums it up: "It's so iconic the design, when you first see it, there's complete silence then . . . wow! "We have got used to current stadium designs that land in their community and are vast buildings that feel untouchable.

"But this? It is so Birmingham and it is so beautiful." Consultation with fans, the local community, political

representatives and planning officers will continue over the summer. The first 'Built By Us' presentation provided plenty of stimulating feedback.

Fans were asked to sum up The Powerhouse in one word. And some of those adjectives? Iconic, breathtaking, bold, intimidating, revolutionary, bostin.

"I think the fans really love that we are talking to them," says Smith. "And really I hope it comes across that we are listening. We are not talking to them to tick a box. That's important.

2. REVEAL

The Powerhouse design was revealed by chairman Tom Wagner in November at Steven Knight's Digbeth Loc. Studios in Birmingham.

The Club made a dramatic hero film for the launch that featured Jude Bellingham's reaction to images of the 62,000-seat, multi-purpose new home of the Blues.

Jude simply mouthed 'wow' when shown the plans and there was a similar refrain - albeit in industrial language - by Peaky Blinders' Arthur Shelby, whose character also featured in the video.

Tom Brady promised us we were 'in for a blast' before Wagner teed up the grand unveiling.

"This is a sports stadium and music venue that will claim the sky to claim the city," stated Wagner, co-founder and co-CEO of owners Knighthead

Capital Management.

The event at Digbeth Loc. was attended by supporters and stakeholders, dignitaries and celebrities, Club directors and the Men's and Women's First Team management and players.

It was opened by spoken-word artist TrueMendous, who recited her original 'Birmingham Poem', a powerful piece that highlighted city's identity, the Club's history and the passion of fans.

The eyes of the world were firmly fixed towards Birmingham that afternoon. Blues recorded 48 million total impressions from the day of the reveal (organic and earned) on their social media channels.

And the hero video topped 7.5 million impressions, with around 500,000 views on the Club's YouTube channel alone.

THE POWERHOUSE



“I genuinely think that they love the uniqueness of the chimney towers. I believe that.

“I also think they are a little bit overwhelmed by this scale and size. And 'Is it really happening to us?'. That kind of scenario.

“And then a lot of people are having conversations about the steepness and the intimidation and the closeness to the pitch. The bowl is what people are talking about.”

There are many fascinating features and facts about The Powerhouse. It is sure to become a 'must see' destination.

“You have to make an experience and an attraction out of these features to connect with fans and visitors and make people want to return” says Smith.

One of the most often asked questions this past year has been when will work actually start?

“These projects are vast and complex and so I can’t answer exactly when, but I can say that it is still our intention to submit for planning in 2027 and next year work will be underway.”

The Sports Quarter and Powerhouse will put Birmingham on the global map and help trigger more major projects.

There will be a mix of new facilities - from leisure and entertainment to retail and wellbeing – as well as dedicated spaces for the community. Plus, better transport links, new housing and jobs.

“We will have a global attraction,” Smith comments. “We are going to attract and host major sports and cultural events and artists, which will attract further investment. That eastern part of Birmingham will be positively unrecognisable in the near future and over next two decades it will be sensational, you will see this rise in the city.



THE POWERHOUSE

3. NAME

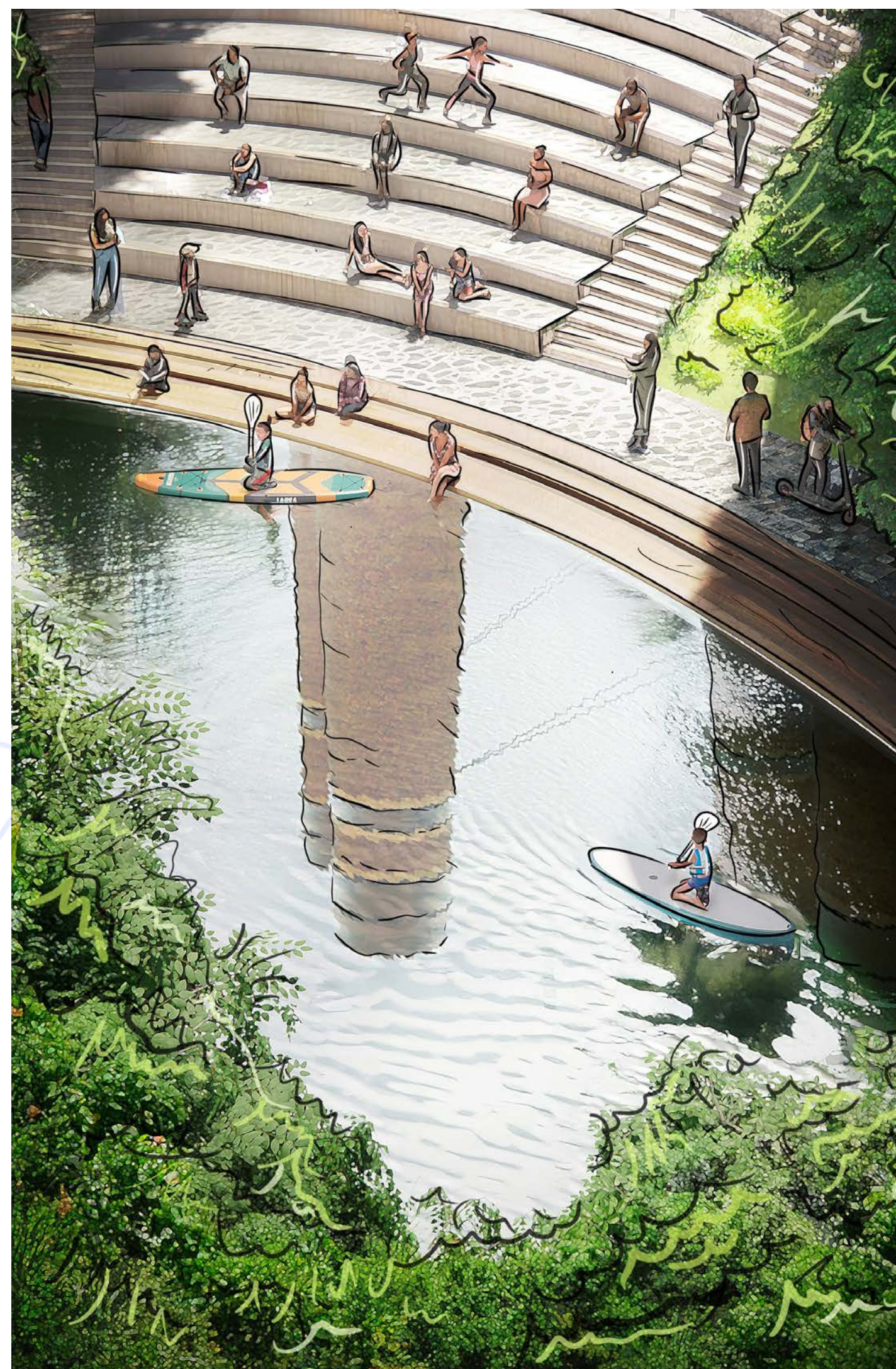
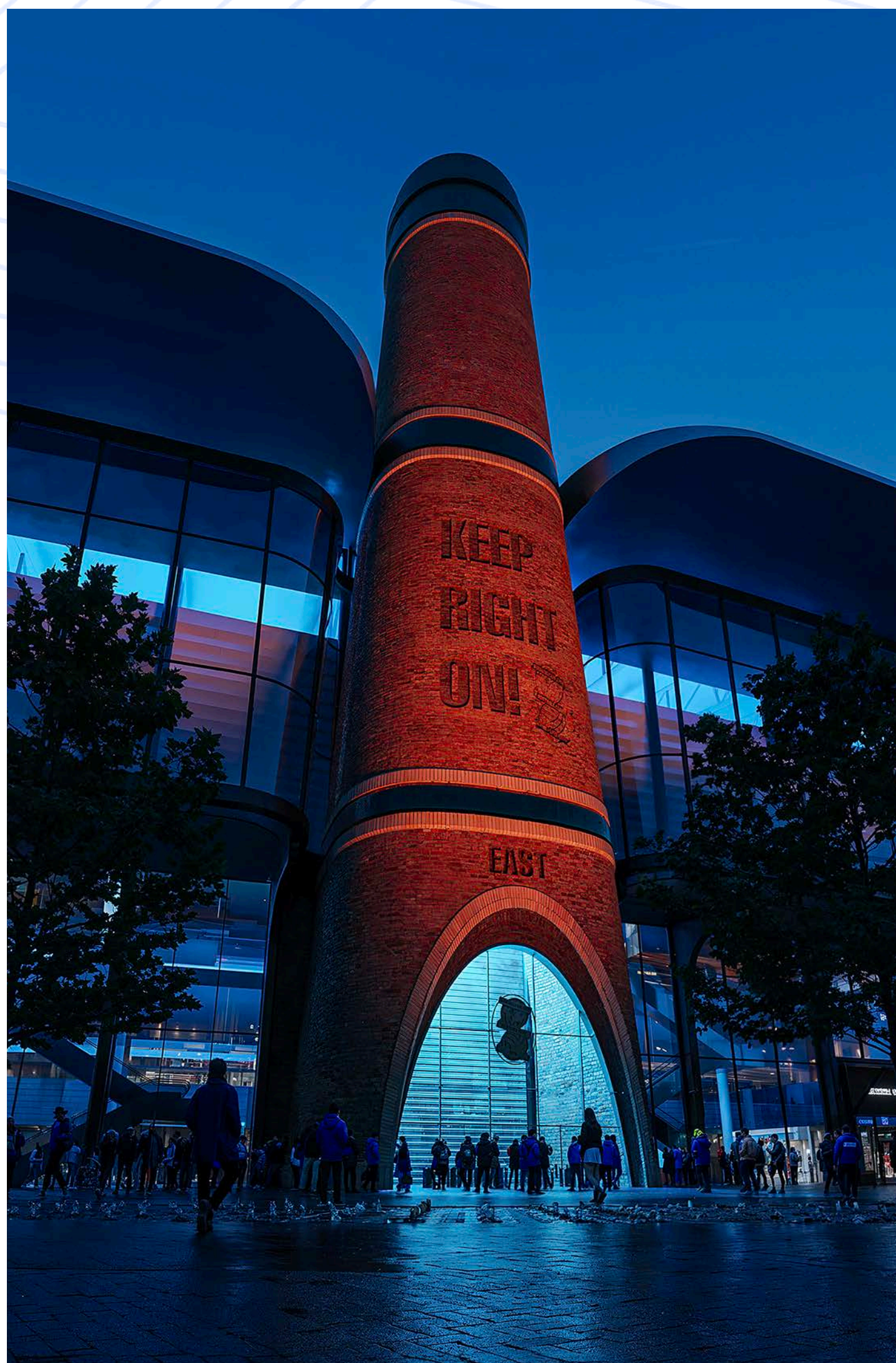
STEVEN KNIGHT

"Once upon a time structures were built to create power so there's a logical thing to it. There's something about a football stadium and a stadium where people perform live music, I think anybody who goes to those stadiums feels a particular power when you're with the crowd and you feel that excitement. That's what we want, we want this thing to be a theatre of enjoyment and the power of collective experience."

ELIOT POSTMA, OF HEATHERWICK STUDIO

"This whole project, so much of it was about identity and so often contemporary stadiums feel quite generic and a bit anonymous, like spaceships that have landed somewhere into our cities and towns around the world. This was about trying to find the story of Birmingham but also of this very specific site that did house the brickwork and built the canals and Victorian houses. A name that could go alongside that distinctive vision felt appropriate."





THE POWERHOUSE

4. FAN ENGAGEMENT

The engagement process began in 2025 with the fan travel survey, followed by the initial supporter survey in October and November.

The Powerhouse design was then unveiled in November, coinciding with the Club's 150th anniversary celebrations, before supporters were invited to attend the fan exhibitions held in December and respond to an associated survey which ran until January.

In May supporters were shown updated stadium designs. In June and July, the Club will conduct several 'Built by Us' workshops involving a newly created Fan Design Panel alongside existing accessibility and inclusivity groups.

A full public consultation will then follow in July and August, providing another opportunity for all supporters and members of the local community to provide their feedback.

There will then be an additional workshop with the Fan Design Panel in the autumn, followed by pre-planning exhibitions in spring 2027.



"Success breeds success. The city can hang its hat with pride on the events, the globalisation and knowing that this project will breed other big projects."

The regeneration of East Birmingham and providing skills training and opportunities has always been high on Knighthead's list of priorities.

In some areas of East Birmingham child poverty exceeds 50% and around 27% of adults have never worked, which is more than double the national average.

"We are engaging with the local community and that is key," says Smith. "We are in our second round of the Built by Us programme to listen, learn and understand what our communities would like."

"We intend to provide an environment we really believe the community is going to flourish in. Skills and opportunity will flow before and after The Powerhouse and Sports Quarter."

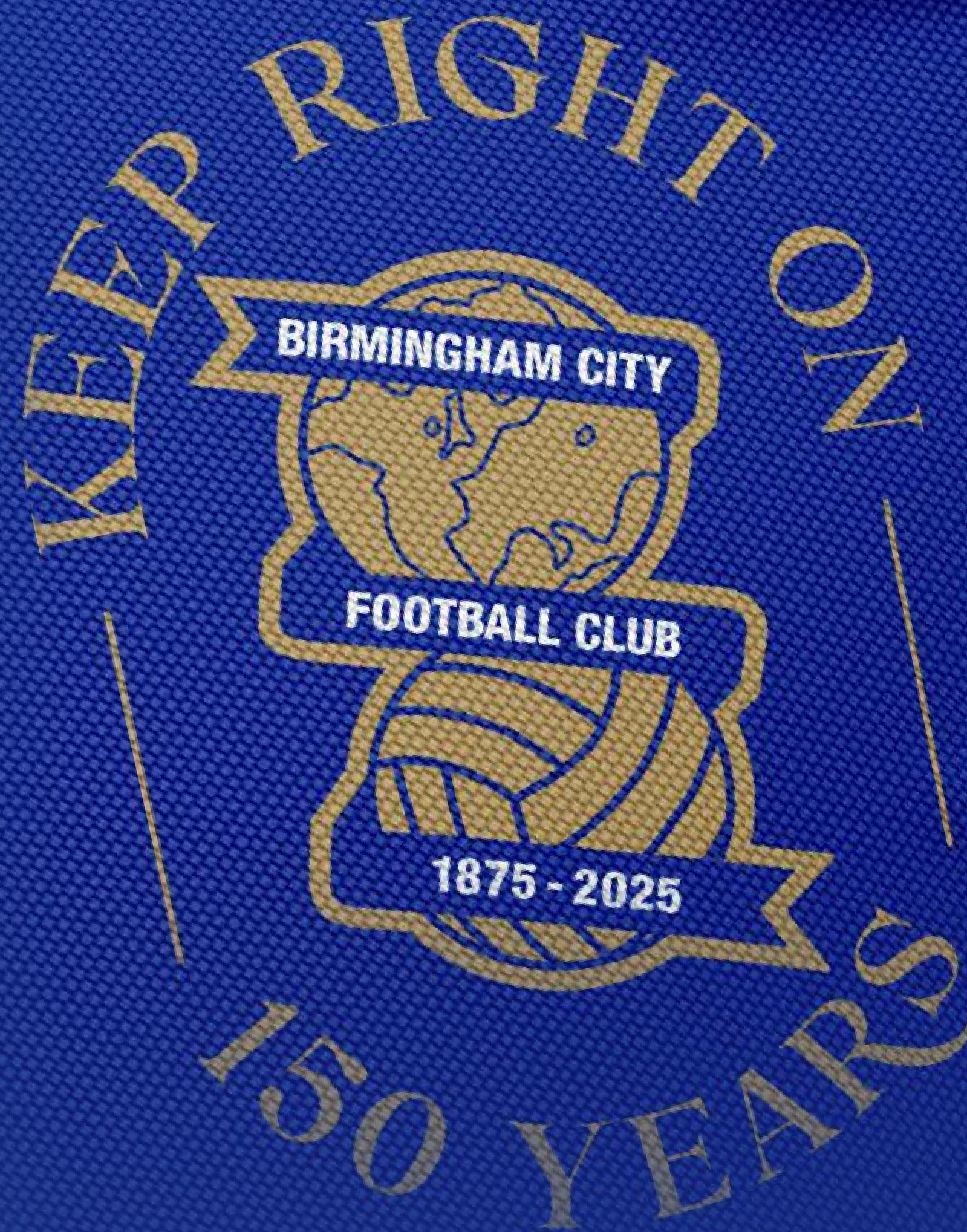
"And then as a Football Club perspective," Smith concludes, "this will be one of the best stadiums in the world. There is no reason why our performance and ambition shouldn't take us to where we want to be."







150 YEARS OF BLUE





A SEASON DEDICATED TO THE 150TH YEAR OF THE CLUB. HERE'S THE STORY OF HOW WE CELEBRATED AND MARKED THE ANNIVERSARY MILESTONE WITH A SERIES OF INCREDIBLE EVENTS

It was a story that began in the autumn of 1875. Members of the Holy Trinity Church cricket team in Old Camp Hill, Bordesley, wanted to keep fit over the winter months.

They decided to try the new sport of association football and because the church alone could not provide them with new players, they thought a name change might broaden their appeal.

And so Small Heath Alliance Football Club was born.

It was formed by William Edmunds and two sets of siblings, Will, Tom and George Edden, and Fred and Tom James. The brothers had been in the choir at Holy Trinity Church.

This season, the Club celebrated the 150th anniversary by delving into our origins and roots, showcasing historic landmarks and commemorating our stars from throughout the last century-and-a-half. We spotlighted our community, diversity and passion whilst also firmly looking forward to what promises to be an exciting future.

The 'Keep Right On' campaign and fresh visual identity was launched in July and based around seven spectacular 'firework' moments, culminating in the glittering '150 years of Blue' end of season awards dinner at the ICC, Birmingham, in May.

We kicked-off with our anniversary kit reveal and the recreation of a stained-glass window from Holy Trinity Church – with a twist – that was central to our formation.

More of that to come, but first the 2025/26 playing strip.

A striking all-blue ensemble, with classic polo collar and elevated with elegant gold detailing that paid tribute to the prestige and legacy of the Club's history, was revealed. It was emblazoned with a special gold 150th anniversary crest, gold Nike Swoosh and the distinctive UNDEFEATED branding. The shorts and socks were matching blue.

The look was both timeless and iconic, and the shirt proved immensely popular as the Club broke previous sales records by more than 50 per cent.

The home kit campaign was brought to life through stills and video centred around the stained-glass window at Holy Trinity Church. Players from the Men's and Women's teams were styled in a fashion-led way that complemented a heritage-rich backdrop.

Acclaimed director and lifelong Blues fan, Steven Knight, delivered the film script direct to camera that was an ode to the Club, our stars and the city and its people.

When, on a cold, late November day in 1875 the members of the cricket club came together to discuss creating a football team, legend has it that they sat under the stained-glass window and light streamed through, illuminating the scene, as they made their decision.

To commemorate that monumental moment in time, the Club recreated the stained-glass window, and the twist was embedding the images of 12 Blues legends into the panes. The window was then housed in the Kop stand at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park for all to see.

In August, Blues and our ongoing story were catapulted into world consciousness through the launch of the Amazon Prime docuseries, Built in Birmingham: Brady & The Blues.

Over five episodes, which were available to watch in



more than 200 countries, it centred around the 2024/25 season and the way in which the Knighthead ownership rebuilt the Club to win following relegation and a past history of far too many heartbreaks.

The docuseries provided a fascinating fly-on-the-wall insight and explored the unique cultural heritage of Blues and a fanbase who have remained loyal. Plus, it shone a light on the community's resurgence and how the Club plans to transform the city, as well as the team.

Brady, the NFL greatest, is a world superstar. For Blues, the closest we have had is Trevor Francis, the legendary former player and manager.

It was fitting that the Club's best ever player – a world class talent who burst onto the scene in scintillating fashion as our youngest debutant, at 16 – was honoured in the 150th year.

Before the second Trevor Francis Memorial fixture, against Nottingham Forest, a bronze statue of Trevor was unveiled outside the Kop reception at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park.

The statue, crafted by internationally acclaimed portrait sculptor Douglas Jennings MRBS, honoured Trevor's legacy and served as a lasting tribute to his impact on the Club and the wider footballing landscape.

The 13-foot piece, including its granite plinth, was commissioned after Trevor's passing in 2023 at the age of 69. What could potentially become the Club's most significant moment in the next 150 years, let alone the



century-and-a-half just past, happened in November.

The design reveal of Blues' new stadium, The Powerhouse, at Digbeth Loc. Studios, was a genuinely stunning and transformational moment, appropriately in the Club's 150th birthday month, of course.

The £1.2 billion, 62,000-seat arena is the jewel in the crown of the Sports Quarter project that will catapult Blues, the city and the local community into exciting and prosperous new spheres of influence.

The eyes of the world were on Blues that afternoon as the first visuals and details of The Powerhouse were released, to much acclaim.

We took an in-depth look and told the story of The

Powerhouse earlier in this Review of the Year with Nick Smith, Head of Infrastructure.

When Blues thumped Norwich City 4-1 the scoreline was poetic. For the Championship match at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park on November 22 was designated as the Club's official 150th anniversary fixture.

It was on this day that our fans christened our new nickname – '4-1 to the Chimney Boys' It marked the closest Saturday matchday to the Club's first ever recorded match in November 1875, when Small Heath Alliance took on Holte Wanderers at Arthur Street.

That match was drawn 1-1, with David Keys scoring

the Club's first ever goal. Against the Canaries, the names of Jay Stansfield and Marvin Ducksch – both of whom scored twice – went into the history books.

Blues produced a bumper, 100-page commemorative matchday programme for the occasion. It sold out. All season, the programme covers were creatively designed by a commissioned artist to depict key moments in our history. For the opening match, against Ipswich Town, the Gothic style Holy Trinity Church and a cricketer and Small Heath Alliance footballer were illustrated.

Blues players, past and present, were guests of honour at the game and before kick-off a magnificent fan Tifo was unveiled in front of the Tilton Road End, emblazoned with the words 'Forever Forward'.

All areas of the ground sold out for this once-in-a-lifetime occasion and Blues banked record food and beverage revenue and recorded the highest fan satisfaction score ever.

Just in time for Christmas, the Club's principal partner, UNDEFEATED, unveiled a limited-edition UNDEFEATED x Nike Air Max 95 'Geo Exclusive Collection'.

It featured a 'Hyper Cobalt' colourway, created to honour Birmingham and the football club that bears its name, in the 150th year.

The drop formed part of the UNDEFEATED x Nike's global geo-exclusive Air Max programme, with four global cities receiving their own unique collection:



Neon (New York), Opti Yellow (Shanghai), Fire Red (Tokyo) and Hyper Cobalt (Birmingham).

It placed the Club at the centre of the global sneaker conversation, celebrating our authenticity, heritage and rising cultural influence.

The design featured the Club's colourways, branding and iconic globe and ball crest. Only 2,220 were produced worldwide and every pair was individually numbered, underlining the extreme scarcity and significance of the Blues drop.

From something modern, fresh and exclusive, to a something old and familiar – of a fashion.

One of the most distinctive and emotionally resonant symbols of Blues' history returned for the 150th anniversary - a limited-edition 'Penguin' collection.

The retro-inspired blue and off-white shirt delivered a timeless vintage aesthetic that honoured the original's 1970s heritage. A tonal UNDEFEATED sponsor and Nike branding provided a subtle, sponsor-free feel that preserved the purity of the original design. The collection was completed with matching off-white shorts and socks, finished with rib detailing and striking blue branding.

Blues took to the field in the kit as a one-off against Leeds United in the FA Cup for what turned into a tremendous fourth round contest that might well have been a throwback to the days of Francis, Latchford and Hatton et al, who made the 'Penguin' famous. Patrick Roberts' late equaliser took the rumbustious tie

into extra-time and although Blues bowed out of the competition after a penalty shoot-out, they had put in a spirited performance against Premier League opposition in front of a live television audience that was befitting of their attire and historical traditions.

The season events and festivities to mark this special anniversary came to a close in May at 150 Years of

Blue: Awards 2025/26. This was not only to recognise the best of the Men's and Women's team, but for supporters to come together to celebrate the milestone and our past among invited Club legends, as well as focus on the invigorating future we are creating.



THE 12 BLUES LEGENDS EMBEDDED INTO THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY STAINED-GLASS WINDOW

FRANK WOMACK

GIL MERRICK

JOE BRADFORD

JEFF HALL

ALEX GOVAN

TREVOR FRANCIS

CHRISTOPHE DUGARRY

KERYS HARROP

KAREN CARNEY

STEPHEN CARR

JUDE BELLINGHAM

LUKAS JUTKIEWICZ



THE ACADEMY

FIRST YEAR OF CATEGORY ONE



BLUES ACADEMY TECHNICAL DIRECTOR MIKE RIGG DISCUSSES THE CLUB'S STEP UP TO THE ELITE THIS SEASON.

When the Academy was rewarded with Category One status, for everyone on the outside it felt like the finishing line. But it was anything but; was it just the beginning of the hard work?

Yes, it is very much the start. There is no underestimating the level of detail that went into getting ourselves licensed as Category One. Not only that, but the actual licensing system is also changing now. We've got there and there was loads of work that was put into making sure that the infrastructure, the people, everything, was right. However, this was a season about living it.

It's called 'best with best', so even though we've got the licence, we've had to go and experience every element of it.

That's coming up against the best in the games programme at every age group. This season's been tough. We have had to learn quickly. Certainly, at the Professional Development Phase Level, for our Under-18s and Under-21s, we're competing with a completely different level of academy. They have been investing in their Category One football programme and their players for the best part of 15 years. So, getting the licence was important, but this season's been about getting our hands dirty with the actual programme.

Has anything surprised you about going Category One?

I think some of the big Premier League clubs surprised me. They had exceptional players, but we were more than competing with them in certain departments.

Then on the other side of it, you go into some of these clubs and you clearly see that they are a really established Category One academy. They've got a really mature programme, experienced staff and the players that have been heavily invested in.

What has also surprised me is how things have moved on in terms of the investments made into young players. I'm not just talking about the purchase price but the competitiveness of recruiting these players, and the contracts that players are being given

by clubs. It isn't just the standard two-year scholarship. We are coming up against boys who are extremely experienced international players who have also played in the first team. Max Dowman broke into the first team at Arsenal and a few months before that our Under-18s played against him.

How have the coaches responded to the step up?

It's been a great experience for them. A challenge, but we have to remember this is not first team football. We're not trying to delve too deep into the tactical analysis of how we set up to beat the opposition. We are developing young players and young people. It has been tough for the coaches but I think they have taken it really well. I'd go as far to say they have really embraced the opportunity.

They have all faced the challenge head on and I've not seen one person shirk away from the jump in difficulty. They have enjoyed it. I think all our staff at every level have been exceptional in relishing the opportunity.

How much better will the Academy be for the experience this year?

We will absolutely be better for the experience, but we've got to make sure we build on it now. That's key. Just in terms of our standards, structures and organisation.

We've learned a lot from these past 12 months, on and off the pitch. I remember going to watch our Under-9s play at Manchester City towards the end of the season and I could see our staff knew it was going to be a big test. But they went there and did





really well and were competitive against an established academy. We've just got to make sure we build on all the progress throughout the age groups.

It's not just about the Under-18s and Under-21s. On and off the pitch, it's that we do things that bit better. Its about constant progress and improvement.

How much have you had to repair the reputation of the Academy because before Knighthead came in as Club owners there were some tough years?

Like the rest of the Football Club, the Academy is no different. I see here in the Academy what I see across every part of the business, whether it's infrastructure, commercial, marketing, retail, football. There was absolute neglect of these areas before Knighthead.

Now they have been transformed. In Academy football, we can't quick fix. It's a slow burn of progression and development. It takes time and it takes patience.

How competitive are we at a Foundational level, the youngest age groups?

Incredible. All the teams have been incredible. And because these players are so young, it's not about contracts or being intense. It's about relationships and our guys have been amazing at that, with players and parents.

At the end of the season, there was a family fun day up at the Knighthead Performance Centre where 50 - 60 kids and their parents all attended. Six and seven-year-olds having a fun day out with the Club. Face painting, bouncy castles, all the kind of work that our guys do is really to win over the hearts and minds of the families.

We want them to feel part of our Football Club. And the work they have done this season has been incredible. I think that's shown because of how competitive our squads have been at the youngest age groups.

We are running initiatives and experiences that top academies aren't doing for the Foundation age groups. Taking the young lads to EPIC for the day, meeting the First Team players, spending time around them, talking to the Manager and Christoph Klarer the captain. It's a great way of forging those relationships between the young boys and the Club.

Some clubs don't get the opportunity to do this and we are doing it consistently.

Have you identified any areas of improvement heading into next season?

Every single area. I can't pick one out. We are constantly looking to try to develop our talent and recruit players to get us to the next level. But more importantly, we are constantly looking to try and increase the standard of everything we do.

The work that the coaches do, their education



provision during the hours that we spend with them to make them better coaches. We want top people, top staff and top players. But the important thing is that we don't become complacent just because we are Category One.

Being Category One is not a guarantee to success. Being Category One is just getting to the table of being best with best. It's now down to all of us to up our game. The bar has been significantly raised with the First Team, and as that progresses further to the

Premier League and hopefully, over time, the Champions League, the bar's never going to come back down. As an Academy we have all got to relish the opportunity to raise our standards and meet the highest demands. So, there isn't just one area that needs fixing. It's in every element, every aspect of what we do.



ACADEMY HIGHLIGHTS

RECORDS

- Alfie Smith at 14 years, nine months, second youngest goalkeeper ever to feature in the PL2 Under-18s
- Alfie Smith youngest goalkeeper starter in FA Youth Cup history, versus Coventry City in December, aged 15 years and four days
- Max Pearce, at 14 years and 311 days, the youngest goalkeeper in FA Youth Cup history, after coming on against Coventry City in December and the fourth youngest player (all positions) to debut in the competition
- Midfielder Juran McKayle at 15 makes his Under-21s debut in December, joining Jude Bellingham and Trevan Sanusi as the youngest to play at that level
- Seven Academy graduates make First Team substitutes bench
- Blues Under-9s win the Premier League National Championship for the first time
- Mandatory Category One re-audit by Professional Game Academy Audit Company reveals unprecedented zero breaches

BLUES ACADEMY INTERNATIONALS

Billy Burrell
Republic of Ireland Under-19

Arijus Ahmadian Lithuania Under-17

Zaid Betteka Algeria Under-20

Alfie Smith England Under-15

Ben Flavell Malta Under-19

Tommy Fogarty
Northern Ireland Under-21

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING CAMP CALL-UPS

Max Pearce England Under-15

Oli Widecki Estima Poland Under-16

Grandel Boateng England Under-15

PLAYERS LOAN EXPERIENCE: STEP 1 OR STEP 2 CLUBS

Byron Pendleton
Yeovil Town, Brackley Town

Ben Wodskou
Yeovil Town, Brackley Town

Will O'Sullivan Solihull Moors

Daniel Isichei Tamworth

O'Shea Ellis Oxford City

Cameron Eubank Maidenhead United

Frank Tattum Leamington

Zac Willis Peterborough Sports

Tommy Fogarty Boston United

PLAYERS LOAN EXPERIENCE: LEAGUE CLUBS

Menzi Mazwi
Queen of the South, Scotland

Tommy Fogarty Morecambe

Godfred Boakye
Sabah FK, Azerbaijan



MARKETING

BUILDING OUR GLOBAL BRAND, WITH LIAM MACMANUS



BIRMINGHAM ON THE WORLD STAGE - BUT NOT FORGETTING OUR ROOTS.

That's a vision the Club have set out and as we prepare to enter year four of Knighthead's ownership.

It's about a collaboration between the city, the Club and its fans and telling the story of Blues in a new and innovative way.

Liam MacManus joined Blues in March as Chief Marketing Officer. His appointment was another major step in enhancing the expertise of Blues senior management and leadership.

MacManus was most recently at Manchester United, where he held a variety of senior marketing and partnerships roles, including Director of Alliances

Strategy and Director of Partnerships. He joined United from Mindshare Portland, where he was lead for Nike's global account and strategic planning.

He has been tasked with growing and strengthening the Club's fan base and brand, particularly worldwide as the £3 billion stadium and Sports Quarter masterplan gathers apace.

The move he made was one that excited him. "This is a massive project. It is not an understatement to say ours is going to be one of the most exciting stories in football in the next decade and the world is watching.

"To be able to influence this long-term vision of the Club in some way is a privilege."

There are three tenets to the approach MacManus has set out, and a new platform 'Where Ambition Gets To Work'.

TELLING THE STORY

"Essentially in layman's terms it's telling our story to the widest audience possible.

"Amplify our story, tell everyone what Birmingham City Football Club is all about, where we are going, what we are hoping to achieve, who the people involved are.

"Transmitting that kind of message to the world will hopefully only create more excitement for us as well as drive up commercial success, for sure. That's a big part of it. It makes us more valuable to sponsors, to people who want to be associated with us. The more powerful

our brand is, the more powerful our story is, the more that we can leverage that and that's what grows value. Value will drive success across the Club.

"We want to be mentioned not only in the same breath as some of the biggest football clubs in the world, but also some of the biggest brands in the world."

GROWING THE FAN BASE

"Everyone before me has done a brilliant job at bringing fans back to the stadium. We will have a big new stadium to fill, as well, so there is a necessity to keep growing the number of our match-going fans.

"I was previously at a club that has a big fan base, so I know from experience what that looks like. We want to grow ours to be as big as it can be.

"Some of that will be people seeing us from afar, from around the world.

"That connects to the first bit of the journey: if they like what we stand for, what the Club is trying to do and how we're trying to do it, then people will start to follow us and fall in love with us.

"On pitch success obviously drives it too. The more those two things go hand in hand then we will attract new supporters.

"The next generation of fans is important as well. Young fans in Birmingham who are often attracted to other teams – we want to make sure they are

choosing Birmingham City.

"So, it's growing our fan base and growing it in this city too. We want to represent all of it. All communities are welcome here and, again, we need to make sure we tell that story - 'this is a club for this city'. We want to take ownership of it, that people feel this is their club and can come join the party. This is a really exciting journey we are on."

SERVING THE FAN BASE

"Marketing-wise, we have to ask ourselves how do we enhance the fan experience? So that comes from how we make our matchdays amazing – and our team have done a brilliant job with activations and fan parks.

"How do we give our fans products and kits, the t-shirts, the hoodies and so on, that are stylish and they love?

"We need to serve them. The role of marketing is always to connect people with the products and services that serve their needs. My job is to help our team here bring the right experiences to fans, making sure that their fan experience is second to none."

WHERE AMBITION GETS TO WORK

"We're developing a really clear narrative of what the Club is and how we want to present ourselves to the world. In the same way that great brands have a clearly defined essence of who they are – Nike is all about human potential and inspiration; Red Bull is all about energy; Apple stands for creativity. Every business has this brand essence.



"We have been sharpening ours and I have been talking very much around our brand position, which is this is a Club with huge aspirations, but it is also a city that knows the value of hard work. And that to be successful, you have got to put the work in every single day.

"So, we are talking about Birmingham City being a place 'Where Ambition Gets To Work'. And that then creates a core of a story we can tell in many ways.

"Everything we will be talking about will contain the energy that phrase gives. So, 'Where Ambition Gets To Work' is all about aiming high and dreaming big but also being prepared to knuckle down and do what you have got to do every day to get there.

"You see the parallels in sport, with the greatest athletes. Take the example of Michael Jordan or Tom Brady. That relentless obsession to be better every day, every season, is the kind of ethos we want to have here. "We know that to get to greatness, it takes hard work every single day. We feel that Birmingham as a city, we have got that in our DNA. We have got the right ingredients to get there.

"We want to make the city proud. We will tell the story of what makes Birmingham different, special. But also show how that DNA when put to work in the right direction is going to create amazing regeneration projects here and puts our Club back on the map." The first noticeable shift in Blues stance will come with a branding 'refresh' this summer across the stadium and the kit launch campaigns.

MacManus says: "The story around the new kit is to celebrate the city and celebrate the people in the city.

"You will start to see us tell these stories, a little bit differently maybe. We will try to be ground-breaking in many ways and innovative. But we will be very consistent in the messaging for the next couple of years.

"An important thing is that we stay authentic to our roots. But we also need to grow at the same time and that's the challenge. Authentic to who we are but look at our ambition. We have got to use our Brummie roots as

a superpower. How does that make us unique and how do people fall in love with that? If they do, we will have a great fan base."

Blues sponsored the Birmingham Design Festival this year and have done several events with other communities to 'connect more parts of the city that previously we maybe haven't shown up in'.

Blues, as a Club, are currently positioned 'like a challenger', MacManus adds. but that we need to embrace our future with confidence. Hugely ambitious, innovative and ready to scale unprecedented heights. "If we're going to be successful, we're going to have to think like a big club, which is I how see us.

"Fast growth, big ambitions, break the mould - but not forget our roots."





COMMERCIAL AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACTIVATIONS WITH IMPACT



THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO JOIN THE BLUES JOURNEY

It's not what has gone before, it's what's ahead that is going to define the Club in unimaginable ways.

Our ambitions, with Knighthead the driving force, are allied to continual high calibre recruitment at all levels of the business, bringing unparalleled expertise and experience. This is helping extend and attract new partnerships.

We are proud of our roster of commercial partners and the work we do in collaboration with them.

It's not a case of a one-way street and dry numbers. No, we like them to tell their story, whilst being part of our story. And the story of Birmingham City will be one of football's most compelling in the next few years.

Based on all of this, it is no wonder that more and more businesses are keen to get involved and back the Blues.

This season, we helped bring brands to life in unprecedented ways.

Our Netflix/Peaky Blinders matchday activation for the visit of Blackburn Rovers at Easter broke new ground. We partnered with Netflix centring around the launch of the film Peaky Blinders: The Immortal Man which brought together two globally recognised brands and one cultural phenomenon, all with deep roots in the city.

Created by lifelong Blues supporter and The Powerhouse design consultant Steven Knight, the show has become one of Birmingham's most celebrated and successful cultural exports.

By combining the Club's expanding platform and loyal following with Netflix's storytelling power, the crossover provided a vivid and memorable matchday takeover on Good Friday.

Peaky Blinders was woven into every aspect of the afternoon and left an indelible imprint on Blues and Peaky Blinders fans alike.

Through themed fan zones, use of iconic imagery and character interaction, sport, culture and entertainment were united in an authentic and meaningful way.

Our fans, many of whom embraced the spirit of the occasion in period fashion, were also treated to a Tifo, depicting Joe Bradford, Trevor Francis, Jude Bellingham and Jeff Hall, flanking Peaky Blinders main protagonist

Tommy Shelby with the words: 'Legends Are Immortal'.

A promotional hero film was released, too, that showed Jay Stansfield, Paik Seung-ho, Demarai Gray and Tomoki Iwata akin to extended members of the fabled Shelby family.

Knight commented: "Bringing Peaky Blinders and Birmingham City Football Club together is a wonderful marriage of entertainment, culture and sport. Overcoming adversity, being truly authentic and possessing an earthy grit which all Bluenoses can attest to are obviously present in both Tommy Shelby and the football club."

Another unique partnership that has blossomed this season was the Club's relationship with the 'other' Birmingham. In Alabama, USA.

With a shared named and similarities between the two Birminghams, not least a rich industrial heritage, Blues and the Greater Birmingham (Alabama) Convention and Visitors Bureau (GBCVB) saw value in teaming up. The partnership grew organically before being solidified with a two-year agreement.

The GBCVB Visit Birmingham Alabama logo is featured on the back of Blues shirts, advertising signage about Birmingham, Alabama, has been placed around St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park and Will Brazier, from the Blues+ Club TV channel and weekly magazine Blue Rising programme, filmed a whistle-stop tour of the so-called 'Magic City', in America's deep south.

The last home game of the 2025/26 season, against Bristol City, was a themed Visit Birmingham Alabama

takeover. This included a Postcard Station in the Fan Zone, allowing fans to fill out a custom postcard and send a note to friends, family or loved ones straight from the game. And Birmingham, Alabama's iconic mascot, Vulcan, made a special appearance alongside Beau and Belle.

Of course, with American owners and Tom Brady an influential figure, Blues appeal in the States has only been strengthened by the link. And by bringing that human touch this side of the pond, we have showcased plenty about our team and city to an American audience.

Blues players tried their hand at guessing Southern slang during an interactive promotional video, whilst in May, Carlos Vicente and Jhon Solis were filmed showing off their Gridiron skills and NFL knowledge at the EPIC training ground.

Another of our 'gold standard' case studies from this season involved Coral, Blues' Official UK Betting Partner.

Coral kicked-off the season by making a pledge to donate £500 to the Birmingham City Foundation for every Blues goal scored at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park, by the Men's and Women's team in all competitions.

The donations funded the Foundation's adult fitness and walking football programmes, empowering local adults to live a





healthier lifestyle.

Coral staged a range of engaging content and activation activities in tandem with the Club to reward and entertain Blues fans throughout the season. Highlights included the return of fans' favourite 'On Your Shed, Son', for the 150th anniversary game against Norwich City in November. During half-time, fans had the chance to step onto the pitch and chip a ball into the shed.

A selection of prizes were up for grabs, including a VIP tour of the EPIC training ground along with race day

hospitality at the Coral-Eclipse Day at Sandown Park. Blues fans were invited to take part by showcasing their skills on video, whether recreating their favourite goal or by simply outlining their passion for the Club, showing why they're the ultimate supporter.

Social media star Big John Fisher became a firm friend of the Club.

He was a regular visitor with Coral and in April he ventured down with Brazier to help Head Groundsman Chris Long with pitch preparation to hilarious results that were captured on video and went viral on social media.

As Big John's famous catchphrase puts it - Bosh! Blues favourites Clinton Morrison and Stephen Carr, the Carling Cup winning captain, were part of a Play On The Pitch initiative for fans via Coral. Team Morrison faced off against Team Carr on the hallowed St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park turf.

Coral boasts a strong high street presence with over 1,000 shops across the UK, combined with a digital-first experience via its mobile app and online betting service which Blues' fans benefit from over the term of the the year





OPERATIONS

SMOOTH RUNNINGS



A CONVERSATION WITH RICH CARPENTER, BLUES' DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

This was a year when the bar was raised again in the way that the Club operates and manages its three main hubs – St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park, the Elite Performance and Innovation Centre (EPIC) and the Knighthead Performance Centre (KPC).

Investment in each location has continued. And this has increased the demands on the operations team.

This year the Club had 90 infrastructure projects underway. There were more games staged at the ground than ever before and supporters continued to flock to St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park in their droves.

At the Men's First Team base EPIC in Henley-in-Arden improvements and upgrades were constant whilst the remodelling of KPC continued, which included construction of a gymnasium specifically designed for and used by the Women's side.

It's an often-asked question of operations: what is it the Operations team does?

The response, being blunt, is that without them the Club simply wouldn't be able to function. The Operations team are the central cog in a well-oiled machine and a key service provider to all key functions within the Club from the Commercial teams to the football departments.

As the Club continued its transformational path, the operations arm of Blues had to make sure everything ran smoothly across the three sites whilst also implementing new processes and strengthening its teams with new staff. In August, Rich Carpenter was appointed as Director of Operations.

Carpenter arrived with 15 years industry experience in key operational and facility management positions.

He moved to Blues from Ipswich Town and has also worked at Ipswich Town, Liverpool, Aston Villa and West Bromwich Albion. During the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games, he was event manager at Edgbaston stadium.

Carpenter has 45 full-time staff under his charge. On a matchday, he has responsibility for circa 850 plus people.

"Without operations support, we simply wouldn't function as a football club". You have got all these different departments focusing on their areas of responsibility, but they all require operational support to make it work and make it come together.

"We have teams and departments at EPIC, the Knighthead Performance Centre and of course at the stadium. The departments within these facilities are each key internal stakeholders and we ensure a best-in-class level of operational support is provided 24/7.

"It's all about being in the background, carrying out our roles, understanding the needs of the business and making the machine tick. Do this well and it means all these key departments can come in and do their day's work, concentrate on their key deliverables, and go home at the end of the day without a problem.

"It's the day to day functioning that entails everything from making sure the pitches are elite level, the facilities are the same, the stadium is kept safe and compliant, we are secure, we are a safe organisation to work with . . . all those things you'd see in any kind of entertainment and high performance business, but ultimately supporting this football club on its journey."

A key component to Operations is ensuring that Blues meet all regulatory stadium governance requirements, enhancing

where appropriate, to ensure that every fan attending St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park crowd can enjoy themselves in a safe environment.

This means adhering to guidelines laid down by the Sports Ground Safety Authority and regular meetings with the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). Local authorities partner with police, fire, and ambulance services to form the SAG, who assess stadium risk and issue our safety certificate.

Quite simply, there's no football if Blues aren't on point in this respect - and they certainly have been this past 12 months.

During his first year at Blues, Carpenter has been implementing new methods, training and refining a highly-capable team with the ability in driving excellent standards.

"It's been about implementing processes, building a sustainable team who are well trained, professional, with the ability to deliver against the objectives of the Football Club. "This year, we had 45 games in 39 weeks, including an England Under-21 international in a torrential rainstorm – that's a crazy schedule. There's probably no other stadium in the country that has accommodated more fixtures and our pitch has coped impeccably well which is a testament to our skilled grounds team.

"This brings pressure. We had several weeks throughout the year where we had three or more fixtures within eight days. That requires resilience and dedication from the team to ensure our delivery model is successful.

“And whilst going through a period of transformation that's quite challenging because we're changing things week to week, we're trying to get better, we're improving.





"We have been very good at making sure we react and adapt. For the first six months of the season, we changed something every fixture, for example, at the stadium which required continuous training for our staffing teams.

"Whether it was a new bar or a new supporter initiative or a new role in the control room for example, it enabled us to enhance the operation whilst putting ourselves under pressure delivering against those objectives."

The matchday experience for Blues supporters has become unrecognisable to what it was in years gone by. Operations are at the forefront of this says Carpenter: "The departments I cover are Grounds, Safety and Security, Health and Safety, Facilities Management, Maintenance and Venue Management, which includes our front of house and guest experience operation.

"It is a huge remit that includes our match day staffing operation which consists of Stewarding, Hospitality and Catering staff.

"We have enhanced the matchday operation significantly with the fan zones, new bars, new catering outlets, keeping it fresh whilst meeting the needs the external stakeholders, broadcasting, and the local authority.

"We have complemented our own stewarding workforce by engaging with a local recruitment partner. Our stewarding numbers were fairly low, but we wanted to make sure that we had a well-trained, well-versed group of people and familiarity in their locations so that they would be engaging with the same supporters week in, week out.

"We have done a lot of work around this and also provided our existing workforce with more training via the use of technology to allow them to carry out their roles more efficiently.

"That's because it's all about the matchday experience for

the supporters that are here and making sure they go home having had a great day across the entire footprint and most importantly, with three points secured."

Blues have significantly grown the number of its own stewards this year and will continue to increase this in the upcoming season.

The enrichment carried out in this area of operations has been reflected in continued fan satisfaction improvement for stewarding, from feedback provided to the Club.

Away from B9, Carpenter has responsibility for ensuring the training grounds in Henley-in-Arden and Wast Hills deliver on the goal of being high-performance environments that are logistically fluid.

"EPIC being the elite training centre for the Men's First Team comes with its expectations because obviously Chris Davies and his team are trying to achieve the best possible result come the end of a season.

"So little things like making sure the pitches are best in class which allows Chris and the team to train and perform every day in readiness for match day.

"KPC is an extremely busy environment with the Academy, Women's and Foundation teams operating out of that space. This makes the successful scheduling of pitches essential to ensure each of the footballing departments are provided with what they require and it's carrying out the daily essential maintenance that we need to do on those pitches to support that.

"We have made some very positive steps in improving processes and making the site run more functionally, more seamlessly. Long may that continue."

On the flip side, Operations are often first to receive the call when things go wrong.

Carpenter acknowledges: "I am happy that responsibility falls

on my shoulders. I am passionate about making positive change and driving continuous improvement. I am also passionate about the team, ensuring they are safe in their roles, are well trained and understand their roles, purpose and what success looks like. This is what drives me and I'm 100% focused on playing my part to ensure the success of the Club.

"As part of the Senior Leadership Team, if something goes wrong then my peers are going to be asking questions – how, why and what next? I have to have the answer to these questions and find solutions.

"Don't get me wrong, with over 28,000 people on your footprint, 2,000 - 3,000 people a week at KPC and the First Team operation . . . things don't go right all the time. There are problems. But, for me, it is a case of remaining calm, understanding what the problems are and revisiting our ways of working to ensure we are well versed around making sure problems go away and don't come back."



WELCOME TO BIRMINGHAM

Operations played a major part in making St. Andrew's @ Knighthed Park and the areas surrounding the stadium a safer, more welcoming place.

A couple of initiatives during the year gratified Director of Operations, Rich Carpenter.

"We have had some challenges around night fixtures, specifically with car crime. Fans were telling us the problem was putting them off coming to games.

"The Club made a commitment to play its role in solving this. I engaged with the local police and we introduced a task force that had nightly patrols of our weeknight fixtures and winter daytime fixtures. This was publicised and fans started to feel more confident that they could park their cars in an area where it wasn't going to get vandalised.

"Through this action a car stripping gang were caught by the police. This is a testament to the relationship the Club have built with the Police.

"Another positive impact the Club is having in its local communities is presentation and appearance. Whether that's an individual, or the stadium and the footprint. Same for EPIC and KPC. First impressions are absolutely everything."

That's why, when seeing some areas surrounding to the ground unkempt, Carpenter and the Club decided to act.

"There were roads full of litter, full of unwanted equipment.



It wasn't a good reflection.

"We engaged with Birmingham City Council on a street cleaning initiative that we put in place for our matchdays at the back end of the season. It resulted in a noticeable improvement in what the local neighbourhood looked like."

Residents felt better about their environment, it empowered fans with a bigger sense of pride about the 'home' of their club and it also painted a far better picture for visitors.

"We have got up to 2,000 away fans coming into Birmingham. Boosting our economy, spending in the stadium. These things are important for the club, the local community and the city of Birmingham.

"I want all fans to have a memorable matchday experience. It's reassuring and great to hear when away fans write to us – and this happens – about how much of a great day they have had. 'Joe Bloggs the steward was great', 'I really liked the food you had on offer'. And having a clean and tidy footprint creates a good impression.

"Great feedback that demonstrates the great work our team behind the scenes put in week in, week out."





Premier League
**Primary
Stars**

THE BIRMINGHAM CITY FOUNDATION

A CONVERSATION WITH ANTONY ISHERWOOD, FOUNDATION DIRECTOR



THE BIRMINGHAM CITY FOUNDATION IS NO LONGER THE BEST KEPT SECRET.



The team has earned the trust of the local community and its leaders and are strengthening and building more partnerships. The result - the Foundation has had a positive effect on more than 60,000 local people this year.

Antony Isherwood, the Foundation Director, reflects on a stellar 2025/26, thus: "We have positioned ourselves now as the 'true' Birmingham City Foundation.

"Whereby we are now in a position where the fans love us, they appreciate the work we do and they get how it is so much more than football.

"We are no longer the city's best kept secret. In fact the story of the Foundation and its impact has reached the Houses of Parliament in Westminster.

"We had the independent Official Supporters' Club (OSC) down for their tournament at the ground in May. All of them were talking to us about what we were doing and the specific projects they have seen.

"We have Jake Malbasa overseeing all the PR and Comms as a Foundation independently now and the Club is amplifying all our stories, helping take what we are doing far and wide.

"Every week a new story is being told highlighting the impact of our work. Whether we are delivering a schools tournament, or it's our food pantry initiative - people are stopping and taking notice.

"When Knighthead came in, because of what happened with the previous ownership, we had kind of moved away from the Club. Post Knighthead it is back in the fold and that has helped drive the growth in the numbers of people whose lives we help improve.

"What we do gives our supporters another reason to be proud of their Club. This feeling is shared by our partners.

"We can't always guarantee success on the pitch, but we can guarantee they will be proud of what we are doing as a collective off it."

The reputational change from the years gone by is tangible.

"That has come down to a lot of hard work. We have a really good team here.

"One of the focuses over the last 12 months embedded into our growth plan was that we had to develop our relationships and the way we work together. Their continued support and funding is key to our success.

"Every partner has a partnership manager. I don't mean that from a corporate viewpoint. What I mean is the Department for Work and Pensions, for example, know they have got a lead person in the Foundation who will work with them to deliver the Walking Football scheme and support over 50s to become more active and potentially back into meaningful employment.



"When I came in, 7½ years ago, we had lost everything. All our funding.

"Now, I look at things like our primary schools department. Lee Chapman, who runs it, is asked to present nationally in terms of good practice.

"We have focused a lot on our core partners like the Premier League and the EFL.

"The EFL now see us exemplary in terms of the delivery that we do. Which is why whenever they have a pilot programme to test the waters with, they come to us. It is very much 'Blues will do it'. 'They get it and understand the relevance'.

"The work we do is very similar to some of the clubs close to us geographically, but they have access to increased funds because of the league they are competing in.

"That said, because the great work has been noticed by those outside the Club, we have been invited to apply for additional funding for Premier League programmes. That is all down to the impact of our Kicks and Primary Stars programmes so It just shows the direction we are heading in."

The Kicks programme is a national recognised initiative linked intrinsically to crime reduction in areas

ACADEMY SCHOOLS

Blues Foundation has doubled to four the number of Academy Schools.

Tudor Grange Academy Kingshurst came on board in April, following Academy School status for Ark Kings, Kings Norton, in November.

The Academy School model sees the Foundation place two coaches into a secondary school full-time. They lead on mentoring programmes, deliver sports leadership qualifications, oversee lunchtime and after-school provisions and much more.

The Foundation also works with the school to deliver community-based activity from the school in the evening, ensuring that it is not just the students who benefit from the partnership. Jedi Campbell is the Foundation's inspirational Schools Academy Manager.

"The School Academies are going from strength the strength. The impact is through the roof," said Antony Isherwood, the Foundation Director.

"Balaam Wood, which became our first Academy School in 2023, continues to be a success. It's Demarai Gray's old school and it was great when he went back there in April to see what is going on and talk to the staff and pupils.

"Ark Kings is a stone's throw from Wast Hills, the Knighthed Performance Centre training ground. There are significant challenges on that estate at the moment.

"The newest one is the old Kingshurst CTC. "Jedi's team walk in and they are like Gods. The children look up to them. They are Blues role models. The teachers are like 'can we have some Birmingham City tracksuits, too?'.

"It just shows. Something so visible and tangible, what we do, has impact on behaviour."

Isherwood says that Blues Foundation have helped forged a real sense of belonging among the communities they serve, with such major projects like the Academy Schools and other programmes, events and campaigns.

"East Birmingham is where we have a hardcore footprint. We have got our Community Hub and Ark Victoria Academy School, one of the largest schools in Birmingham.

"Seeing now, the development of those working

relationships and the connectivity, we are creating a sense of belonging.

"I met with a couple of community leaders recently. They said the work we are have been doing in the past couple of years is incredible. That came off the back of Ramadan Streets, too. "We have positioned ourselves in the heart of the community where our long-term future is going to be.

"The community leaders said if you ask the local community are they proud to be a Brummie, they'd say 'yes, definitely'.

"That really caught me because it showed we are starting to achieve key objectives here, which is to create that sense of belonging, that link where Blues are the community's club. Fundamentally when we move to the new stadium, we absolutely are going to see the footfall."





of the country with high antisocial behaviour statistics. Primary Stars uses the positive power of professional football clubs to inspire children aged 5 - 11 to be active, look after their wellbeing and develop important life skills like resilience, diversity, self-esteem and fair play.

Two of the Foundation's new initiatives this past season have been very well received.

The Community Food Pantry took everyone by surprise, reveals Isherwood.

It is designed to support local residents with access to good quality, affordable food. The plan is to also introduce recipe ideas and simple cooking guidance to help families make the most of the ingredients available.

The programme is delivered in partnership with FareShare Midlands, where surplus food from the supply chain, that is still in date, is redirected to benefit the local neighbourhood.

“A highlight for us was launching the Food Pantry, at the Community Hub.

“Blue Nose Day before Christmas was when we outlined what it was all about.

"We knew there was deprivation, but there's always that bit of concern in what if we try and cater for that need and people don't want to access it? There was no need to worry! It has been an instant success.

“We have already had to increase the amount of food

we are receiving. We have now got queues outside the door an hour before opening, from 10am It is 40-50 people strong.

“That is really pleasing for me because we identified a need, we implemented a mechanism, utilising the OSC to raise funds through our fan base, and to put it back into the community where there is an issue. The community is taking our support with open arms." Growing participation amongst young girls in the women's game has been another priority this year. “Our girls participation numbers have gone up 200 per cent. Through the roof.

“Hope Powell, the Women's Technical Director, gave the Foundation the opportunity to take over the Emerging Talent Centre for young girls. We did that at the start of 2024/25 season.

“It's all about breaking down the health and inequalities barriers to give young girls accessibility to high quality coaching and pathways.

"At the end of that season 16 girls were selected for local academies. Fourteen went to Blues, one to Wolves, one to Aston Villa.

“We identified early on there was a bigger need. So, we decided to expand the programme. We thought about what we could put in below the Emerging Talent Centre (ETC) to help girls get to that first, and then what we could put in between before the Academy.





BIRMINGHAM CITY FOUNDATION AND UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

The Foundation's partnership with the University of Birmingham continued to bear fruit in 2025/26.

The Foundation was boosted by five students on sporting pathways identified by University of Birmingham over a busy six weeks of summer delivery.

The student learners assisted with Summer Camp coaching, planning innovative sessions and helping junior players improve their skills.

And there were opportunities to work with young people across a variety of sports and activities at the Community Hub, where more 1,000 children attended free, engaging sessions.

The Foundation has a long history of offering full-time footballing positions to students who excel, with recent University of Birmingham graduate Jess Foster being offered a role at Blues as a Primary Stars Officer.

Joining the University of Birmingham cohort over the summer were students from BCU, Worcester and Loughborough, with every recruit receiving glowing feedback from fellow staff and participants alike.

Twelve months ago, University of Birmingham formed a strategic alliance with Blues and sponsored the Trevor Francis Cup, for secondary schools.

It was launched during a milestone year as the University and Blues celebrated their 125th and 150th anniversaries respectively to celebrate Trevor's legacy and inspire the next generation.

The second year of the competition, operated in conjunction with the Foundation, proved immensely popular as hundreds of boys and girls from city and Solihull schools took part.

In April, after months of qualifying rounds, eight boys teams and eight girls teams were hosted at sports pitches on the University's Edgbaston campus, in the shadow of the iconic clock tower Old Joe, for the competition Quarter-Finals.

The winners then went through to the Semi-Finals staged at the Knighthead Performance Centre, Wast Hills, to book at date at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park in May for Finals day.

Each tournament participant received Nike shirts, Puma footballs and access to the Foundation facilities.

The University's involvement also supported character-education workshops inspired by Trevor Francis' values (dedication, humility, and resilience), reflecting the University's broader mission to empower young people through sport and education.

"We launched two new programmes this season. A player development programme solely for girls, which was the pre-Emerging Talent. And we launched an advanced development programme for girls.

"We have gone from having 60 girls on the ETC to now having 158 girls in the overall programme. Already, we have had 18 girls go into the Academy system at Blues for trials this year.

"We made a statement very early on about supporting the Women's and girls' game and we have now got them participating at every level. We know the pathway is working. It's been a big success for us."

The Community Hub, in Emmeline Street, behind the Railway End stand, has been a hive of activity all year. "We have got it to a place now where it is truly impressive and incredible based on the impact it has," says Isherwood.

"It took a long time to cultivate the trust needed to get people in. We are now averaging close to 1,000 people there each week.

"It has enabled us to further enhance our reputation not only with members of the local community, but other key stakeholders in the city.

"We use it as a vehicle now to do collaborations. "You have got to remember whilst lots of people may want to work with us, many people might also feel quite threatened as we're the big fish in that charity pond. "A prime example was that we partnered with quite a



community interest company called Women's Wellbeing. We said 'come and use our space and resources and let's see how we can work with you'. "The lady who runs the organisation is all about engaging, very specifically, South Asian females from the Muslim community, which has significant cultural barriers to education.

"What we have now got to is that every eight weeks we have a careers fair there. And it is full up. We have ladies coming in who were taught the skills and now they are now applying for jobs. In fact, we have just employed one of the participants from the programme. "The Hub is brilliant. We're very thankful the support Andy Griffiths gave us from AMG Logistics for these past three years."

Regarding jobs, the Foundation is acutely aware of its responsibility to the local heartland.

"With a focus around the Sports Quarter that's coming, there are questions to us and the Club about employment opportunities.

"We have seen growth here. We finished last year with 30 staff; we have now gone to 44 staff. Out of the 44 staff, 15 of them are home grown. They came through our education programmes.

"We can put our money where our mouth is when we say we create employment opportunity. They don't always stay. Other have gone on to do various things. One has recently become the manager of a care home.

These are people from our local communities." Isherwood adds that the backing from fans and the OSC has been heart-warming.

"We have been very fortunate this year, there is a sense of belonging and ownership of the fans to us.

"The fans fundraising has been huge - the OSC generated more than £30,000. We really appreciate their support."



THE BIRMINGHAM CITY FOUNDATION

RAMADAN STREETS

Ramadan Streets returned to Birmingham for its second year, inviting people of all backgrounds to come together for a five-day cultural night market celebrating the spirit, community and experience of Ramadan.

Birmingham City Foundation supported the March event, which ran daily from dusk until 11.30pm in an open-air setting on the Kop car park at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park. It was transformed into a vibrant souk-like environment where communities gathered to break their fast, share food, and socialise.

Eighteen street food vendors bordered the car park, while the underneath of the Gil Merrick stand was converted into a curated gallery for local artists to show their vision of Birmingham and Ramadan.

Families and friends were also able to learn more about the Foundation and the Club's plans for the Sports Quarter, while Blues

players and Club officials also popped down to the festival.

Ramadan Streets launched last year with Soul City Arts adapting an area of Coventry Road into a street food hotspot, and with a footfall of 15,000 people, the event was relocated to the home of the Blues for the first time.

Antony Isherwood, Foundation Director, comments: "St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park is a huge presence in the Bordesley and Small Heath community, so inviting our neighbours in for a celebration of this size is meaningful to all involved.

"I know lots of our staff attended the hugely successful event last year, and it made perfect sense for the Club and the Foundation to work with Soul City Arts to deliver this important, community event."





THE OFFICIAL SUPPORTERS' CLUB



A CONVERSATION WITH CHAIRMAN SUKH SINGH ABOUT STRENGTHENING THE BONDS WITH FANS, THE GROWTH OF THE OSC AND ITS INCREASING WORLDWIDE REACH



The independent Official Supporters' Club (OSC) have firmly put their stamp on who they are and what they want to be.

Not only is membership growing at home and abroad and their philanthropic work continues to be vast and varied, but the way they have helped fans this season has gone to another level.

The OSC liaise closely with the Club to ensure issues and concerns are heard and acted upon.

Chairman Sukh Singh comments: "The first year was all about getting the basics in place, getting the whole OSC concept started.

"This season we have done a lot of fan interaction, listening to what fans want and what problems they have.

"So, with that special connection we have formed with the Club, we have been able to help and support fans with various issues.

"It could be anything from the overall matchday experience, a ticketing query, concourse issues - all sorts, really.

"Some OSC branches started to put on 'home' coaches to make it easier for fans to get to the stadium without the stress of parking this season. Four branches currently do it, with potentially another

four being added next season. There is OSC away coach travel, too."

A recognisable figure now on the terraces, Sukh is used to fans coming up directly to him and Vice Chairman Paul Delves at matches.

"It could be just a chat, but they will highlight something, we then take it away and go to the Club.

"We get feedback after every home game from OSC members within their branches who go. One of our volunteers, Helena Banks, filters it, sends it to the Fan Experience and Operations team, and they use it to help improve the matchday experience on every level.

"We have really put a stamp on the way we run the OSC now and the value it provides all concerned. "When we started off, there were only three of us at the HQ. Now we have a team of 12. All good people, all volunteers, constantly working on it, who want the Club to be successful and want the fan experience to be the best it can.

"We have a new App coming out that will support members with information.

"The OSC will progressively keep improving as the Club does. As they move forward, we will move forward too."

The OSC has more than 7,000 members. There are 85 branches, including 22 from overseas.



"I think in the modern world we lost that human interaction some time ago with the advent of social media.

"We've kind of squashed that. A common story we keep hearing is 'I live in Halesowen, I didn't know there were another 100 Blues fans in Halesowen' or 'in Gloucester, there's 30 other guys here'. In Devon, they have 150 members. Locally, we're strong – Northfield has over 1,000 in their branch.

"We've brought Blues fans together as one big family. One family, one love, one Football Club."

Branches have been popping up all over the world. And this is a key focus for the OSC as the Club seek to grow its fanbase ahead of the move to The Powerhouse in the Sports Quarter.

Sukh recalls: "We had a new branch start up in Sydney, Australia. There were five, maybe 10 members.

"Next thing you know, I was seeing them having a watch party for one of our games with 100 plus people in a bar, all Blues fans. They're messaging me when it's 3am there during a game. I'm like, 'you lot are crazy!'"

"It is a massive focus for us. We want to push our international OSCs. We love it when they come over to the UK. We support them, help organise little tours, to be as close as they possibly can to the Club. It's so they go back feeling fulfilled and more energised to

support Blues and bring more people into our fan base. Ideally you want them to know our story and be really involved and invested. That's a big deal, especially for the future of the Club."

The OSC continues to raise tens of thousands of pounds for the Birmingham City Foundation. It is one of the key reasons why fans join the group.

They have done work with the Adam Stansfield Foundation and their contribution to Blue Nose Day campaign pre-Christmas was again comprehensive.

At Easter, OSC branches were encouraged to collect Easter Eggs, monetary donations and gifts for causes and charities within their communities.

The annual Alliance Cup at St. Andrew's @ Knighthead Park raised £2,600 for the Foundation as 300 OSC members from branches countrywide took to the hallowed turf.

"There has been a real coming together, everyone has been doing some great stuff," says Sukh. "We've helped those less fortunate and in need through sponsored events, food bags, donations, all kinds of things and in all kinds of ways."

A personal highlight for Sukh, and a perfect example of the caring nature of the OSC, came at Panjabi Blues' homeless feed that is held on the last Tuesday of every month, in Birmingham.

"One of the branches, North and East Yorkshire OSC,

began to put together care packages for us, full of toiletries, which aren't cheap. Helen Taylor, from the branch, came down from her home in York to help us in person. I doubt things like this would ever happen if the OSC didn't exist."

The OSC is an independent organisation, Sukh points out, and the relationship with Blues is strong because of this.

"There is a misconception amongst some that we're not 'independent', because of the close working relationship we enjoy with the Club. That is not the case. The Club knows that the OSC will tell them what they need to hear not what they want to hear. John Clarke, the Chief Communications Officer, gets it. We have some heated discussions. But they are always respectful and focused on how can we improve things at Blues.

"For us to support something the Club does we need to understand the logic behind it. We don't put our name to things just because we want to be friends with the Football Club."

"We have a great relationship and dialogue. And from our conversations, we can also explain to our members the reasoning and relevant information for something like, say, ticket pricing.

"The Club are always really forthcoming and want to talk to us."

When Tom Wagner's illness was revealed, the OSC wanted to show their support and love for the Chairman.

The upshot was the biggest flag ever seen at the ground, paid for and produced in less than a week. Hollywood Monster Chairman Tim Andrews waived the £5,000 cost, which was donated to East Birmingham Club of the Stroke Association.

From its inception to now, the reputation of the OSC has built steadily. "The whole perception of what we are and what we do has totally changed from the early days," says Sukh.

"So much goes on in the background to get things done for people. I think there's a much better understanding of us now."



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