

City Fans United / Chester FC – Board Election – AGM 2012 Candidate Manifestos

The order in which candidates are listed was selected at random by the independent adjudicator.

Chris Pilsbury

Nominated by Barrie Hipkiss and Gary Talbot

Most of you reading this will probably know the basics of my background- and be able to guess at why I am standing once more for the Board of CFU- as I have been the Chairman of Chester FC/CFU since the Club's formation. I'd now like to put myself forward for a further three years of service to the Club.

During my time on the Board, Chester FC has accomplished many things. We have won consecutive titles, and, when I'm writing this, we are top of Conference North. Crowds have been above many League 2 teams. We have made great progress off the pitch, including setting up the youth and ladies teams, and engaging in more community work than probably any other club at our level of football. We have set up the Senior Blues, Junior Blues, and Inclusive Blues so that all parts of our fanbase have a real stake and voice in the Club. We have done all of this without jeopardising our long-term financial future.

I can't claim to be directly and wholly responsible for this success. Much of the reason for it comes down to Neil Young and Gary Jones for the on-pitch success, and to a wide range of other volunteers, including other Board Members, for the Community and youth team work. My role as Chairman has been to coordinate and facilitate the work of others. But I do think that coordination role has been valuable in what we have accomplished, as otherwise the work of others risks being duplicated or wasted.

Over the past three years, I have on average spent about 35 hours a week dealing with issues for the Club, and I would plan to devote a similar amount of time over the next few years. I am fortunate that my position as retired enables me to devote this much time to the football club that I have supported for over 50 years. I think that the Club continues to need an individual on its Board who can essentially act as a full time member of staff, and I think that I am ideally placed for that role.

There is still much to do at the Club. We need our own training facilities, which will also provide us with more opportunities to undertake community work. We need to extend the Blues Bar, to cater for our supporters in the way which they rightly demand. And we need to set up structures which enable us to turn professional after promotion to Conference National. With a further term on the Board, I would seek to drive forward all of these initiatives. After only three years, I see my work at the Club as still beginning, rather than ending, and would hope that members of CFU continue to believe in me, and what I have to offer to the club.

It has been a great honour and privilege to serve Chester FC/CFU, and I hope to do so for another three years.

COYB! Chris

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Steve Ashton

Nominated by Jane Hipkiss and Barrie Hipkiss

Developing Our Club to the Next Level and Beyond

I was born, raised and live in Chester. A lifelong fan, I attended Queens Park High, before studying Economics at Keele University. I am married to Rebecca, and we have three children Jasmine, Phoebe and Toby.

I am currently Senior Vice President, Head of Partnerships at MBNA.

Some members may know me from my time as Chief Executive of Chester FC. I was fortunate to be offered the opportunity to help set up the club by my employer, MBNA, in April 2010. The next six months were incredibly challenging but also rewarding as I wanted to give the club we all cherish the best possible start.

With support from volunteers, I had wide ranging responsibility including; head hunting Neil Young, successful FA Appeal (equivalent to two promotions), headline sponsorships, bars, catering, playing budget, kit deal....., the list goes on!

In September 2010 I returned full time to MBNA, but remained on a voluntary basis as Director of Football. Following the birth of our third child last year I stepped down from my duties. I hope my business skills and drive played a part in the successes we have all enjoyed.

We Are At a Crossroads.

We have come a long way in a relatively short period of time. If we are successful this season we will enter a league where 15/24 clubs are full time. To remain competitive we have to ensure we keep developing.

Following the unexpected announcement at the September CFU meeting that the club was likely to report a loss last year, I decided that I would stand for election to again put my business and people management skills to use for our club.

Develop Commercial Strategy, Grow Revenues, Control Expenses and Value Volunteers

I have marketing, business development and profit and loss responsibilities in my role as a senior leader at MBNA. My skills in developing commercial strategies can assist in taking the club forward. We cannot keep asking the same members for more money, we must widen our reach, looking for alternative revenue away from the core fan base.

At the same time I would be keen to review expenditure to ensure the members and fans are getting the best value for money. In line with our constitution members should be kept informed of the club's financial position; there should be no surprises of a loss at year end.

Fully harnessing and cherishing the support of our volunteers can provide significant financial benefit to the club. This is an area we have to continue to develop, ensuring inclusivity and that everyone can play a part.

Your vote will help me to make things happen. I am aware of three other CFU members who standing, they are good people with the relevant knowledge and skills. I believe they will all strengthen the Board and help the club develop further and ensure we do not stagnate.

They are Tony Durkin, David Evans and Mark Howell.

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David Evans

Nominated by Jeff Banks and Steve Mansley

It has been a privilege to serve on the Board for three years.

When we met at the Guildhall in 2010, we could only imagine what might be achieved. Thanks to hard work of hundreds of volunteers and the incredible application and expertise of Neil Young and his team, we have exceeded all expectations.

It is easy to look back and think it was all destined.

It was not. And neither is future progress.

We are at a pivotal moment. And I believe we need to freshen the Board if we are to consolidate and grow.

Born in Chester, I have supported the Club since the age of seven when I was taken to Sealand Road by my dad. By doing that he imposed a life sentence on me. Despite moving to London there has never been any other Club. There never could be.

I worked with Mark Howell and others to establish the ISA over 12 years ago and remain on the Exiles Committee. A quarter of CFU members live away from Chester – we need to harness their passion and use their expertise.

My understanding wife and family allow me to devote the time to make a contribution. Running my own communications company employing 15 people also gives me some flexibility and has taught me key lessons about how to run a business that can survive in tough times and thrive when conditions are right.

The key for a successful and sustainable future is to convince people that we are a different kind of football club with a passion for doing things the right way – putting people first, building links and making contributions to our community. That will grow our support and make it more resilient when we don't win every week.

I believe we have the potential to grow the club much further. But to do it we need to prioritise three main areas:

- *Communication and involvement of our members*
Our members need to feel fully informed and engaged with the Club. Our volunteers can and want to do much more.
- *Development of our Community role*
I hold the Community Portfolio on the Board and we have just established the Community Trust. This is central to reaching out to the wider community and building our profile. I have been successful in winning just under £100,000 for the Club in grants. But we need to do more. It is going to take effort and resources. I would love the chance to continue this work.
- *Professionalise how we operate*
A supporter run club means we have to be more professional, not less. We need to invest in training, systems and support so that all aspects of the Club are run to the highest standards.

I know of some excellent candidates standing. Each CFU member will make up their own mind, but I believe that Tony Durkin, Steve Ashton and Mark Howell in particular would significantly enhance the existing Board.

Please contact me on david@thecampaigncompany.co.uk or 07802 551630.

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Mark Howell

Nominated by Jane Hipkiss and David Evans

I am a Chester born, bred and based 40 year old married father of two, who has supported the Club home and away for best part of 35 years. I was the founding Chair of the Chester City Independent Supporters Association back in the mid 90's, and have been involved with City Fans United as a member, activist and board member since the formation.

I currently voluntarily work as the clubs Community Football Officer, and I oversee the youth, junior and ladies sections of the football club. Since we started we have overseen the development of 7 teams, and have 25 staff, all voluntary, working with us. We currently look after over 170 players, several of whom regularly train with the first team. I would continue to work in this role, but feel that I have a lot to offer within the boardroom also.

I served as a club board member until resigning at the beginning of July due to pressures of setting a new project up at work. Happily this project is now in full flow, and I am very keen to get back to committing time to helping the development of Chester Football Club.

Our club is at an extremely important crossroads in its growth, with a manager who is about to go full time and on the road to the Conference. To match the development shown on the pitch it is apparent that the club needs hard working people with local business experience and the essential skills to take the club to the next level off the pitch.

I feel that whilst the clubs supporters have worked extremely hard and contributed greatly to the finances at the club, in order to take that next step a greater focus is required on the commercial activities that the club undertakes. We cannot rely solely on our members to fund our clubs development.

Further to this, the club should be building on the great work David Evans has done and really begin to establish itself as the true community club it should be.

I have experience of running and managing businesses and projects, some in the city, and from this have developed a good understanding of business processes, am very competent with spreadsheets and presentations and feel I am very approachable.

Those who know me and have worked with me will attest to my strong work ethic, and an almost obsession with doing things right. I am also extremely passionate not just about our football club but our local community, and have firm beliefs that the real strength of our club will be as an inclusive, community focussed football club that is transparent to and involving of its volunteers, supporters, owners and partners.

I would really appreciate the chance to serve you all again, and as I have proven I have the ability, drive and will to help grow and help this football club to fulfil its potential and thrive for many years to come.

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John Martin

Nominated by Carol Bennett and Barrie Hipkiss

I was born in Chester (within the City Walls!) in 1953 and I have been supporting the Blues since the 1960's.

During the '80's I became Chairman of the Supporters Club before handing over to Barrie Hipkiss. I was a contributor to the Match day programme and part of the editorial team for many years up until the early 1990's.

Since the birth of Chester FC two years ago I have been a season ticket holder in the West stand and I became part of the volunteer team who help to run the Club office during weekdays and during the past two closed seasons have helped with programme and ground board advertising.

I am semi- retired having worked in the Nuclear Industry for over 30 years during which time I was involved with Marketing and PR. I also have extensive experience of admin procedures which I could bring to the club.

I believe that the progress made by the club during the past two years has been phenomenal and think that we are more than capable of continuing with this success. Obviously the next step up is a big one and the club has to be prepared off the field to continue to progress.

A lot of bridges have been built with local businesses and the local community and I feel it is now time to step this up with the club becoming more and more involved with the city and local community and build on the good work already undertaken by members of the board.

We need to reinforce our links with the supporters and build up the CFU membership and exceed the previous numbers achieved.

We cannot however keep asking the same people for more money and must look to different fund raising activities on a wider scale. I would like to see the club continue to build on current business partnerships and also get many more businesses involved in both sponsorship and advertising . The supporters of course are the life blood of the club and we must look to involve as many supporters as possible in various activities.

I believe that with my experience and knowledge I could bring many skills to the board which could enhance the everyday running of the club.

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Mike Vickers

Nominated by Laurence Kirby and Pauline Vickers

A lifelong supporter of the club, I bought my first season ticket in 1975 and have had one for the vast majority of seasons since then. Joining the forerunner of the CFU in 2005 I was a member of the CFU board that set up the current Chester FC in 2010 and have also been the Vice Chairman since then.

On the pitch the first three seasons of Chester FC have exceeded my wildest expectations with back to back Championships and a great start to our current Conference North campaign. Off the pitch most things have gone well but there is still much to do to enable the club to become a competitive Conference Premier club with a realistic chance of gaining League status. Our crowds have been very good for the level we have been playing at but it is essential that we continue to find ways to increase our support. The pricing policy for children has been an excellent start to this process but I also believe that we must not price some adults out of attending matches, particularly in these economic hard times.

Commercially we have been very lucky to attract several large sponsors as well as numerous smaller companies and individuals. I think that it is very important that we have as many diverse income streams as possible and do not become reliant on a few large sponsors or wealthy individuals.

I am a great believer in the collective approach that supporter ownership brings and think that this is the future for clubs the size of Chester FC. We need to have a much more active CFU element to the club. Any decisions that can realistically be made by members should be and there needs to be a proper accountability mechanism for the decisions that have to be made by the Board. We need to improve our communication so that members feel more affinity with their club and a more proactive fund raising policy that harnesses the talents and abilities of the membership. Volunteers are a vital part of what we are trying to do at the club but there is still a lot to be done to make best use of this capacity.

I believe very firmly in financial prudence and discipline and that a strong position with healthy financial reserves is a must for continued success on the pitch. Investing in our own youth system is also vital for the future, as are our own training facilities.

I believe that I have gained valuable experience over the past three years that I can use to continue contributing to building the sort of football club that the vast majority of supporters would like to see. Working with people in a constructive, professional manner and respecting the opinions of others are important to me.

It has been a privilege to contribute to what has been achieved so far and hope that members will let me have the chance to continue to do so.

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Paul Baker

Nominated by Stephen Baker and Richard Lynes

We have been thru hard times together, there have been many dark days and there will be further moments of turbulence to come in the years ahead. Yes we have had some great times recently, back to back Championships and currently second in the Blue Square North could give the impression that "everything in the garden is rosy".

But to be honest there is far much more hard work ahead of us if we are to achieve our aim of making Chester Football Club the vibrant, community based club built on solid foundations we want it to be.

There is no doubt in my mind that our aim should be for Football League membership, just how long it takes to get there will depend on the quality of Board Directors you elect and how visionary, entrepreneurial and transparent they are, and above all how they communicate and integrate with the members and involve them in future decision making.

When I was co-opted onto the Board in November last year I was honoured to be asked to serve OUR CLUB, my role as Director of Football with the remit to oversee the on-field progression of the club, from the first team thru to the Youth and Community teams. With the help and assistance of Neil Young and Mark Howell this allowed me to be able to deliver a strategy to the Board of Directors in April that would show how we should develop and progress. It was my recommendation that Neil Young should be tasked with delivering this strategy as the club's first full time "football employee" who given the right support around him will bring the club further success and build the foundations of football growth.

Of course my life experiences have been of assistance to the Board in many other ways, the introduction of Vi-ability, a Social Enterprise company who are currently working with the club to enhance our Community Involvement which will secure further funding, supported employment programs and work placements with accredited qualifications and provide much needed to support to the hard working Community Portfolio Director David Evans.

I have also been able to deliver Sponsorship Opportunities to enhance further growth and instigate tax savings amounting to thousands and thousands of pounds and identify where further tax efficiencies could be made to avoid wastage of revenues.

The last twelve months have been hard work and I fully expect the next twelve months to be even harder. The job of improving OUR football club will never be complete all we can do is to strive for continuous progression against a back drop of financial prudence. The Board needs entrepreneurial flair if it is to succeed. All I ask is that you give me a chance to be part of the team which can deliver the off-field successes to match the on-field success I have helped deliver to date and be there to give Neil Young continued support.

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Pete Newman

Nominated by Russell Hughes and Ed Jones

My first memories of Chester FC are my eldest brother Keith, dragging me along to watch Sheffield United back on the evening of May 13th 1968.

I was 5 years old at the time; and that Monday night started a life long love affair with the Club.

Since then I've stood in sunshine, moonlight, rain, snow and every type of weather known to man and shouted my support from the sidelines.

I have been a committed supporter of local football in Chester for longer than most. I've witnessed the fabulous ups and downs that being a true fan exposes you to. I'm passionate about the club. I'm passionate about it's past and, more importantly, I'm passionate about it's future.

I'm determined to continue making the Club a better place for all; and already give a great deal of my time over to the club wherever and whenever I can, on matchdays I supply and supervise the ball boys also obtaining sponsorship for them , also gaining match sponsorship along with pitch side sponsorship.

I bring with me a wealth of business experience, having been both a Sales Director, Marketing manager as well as a Managing Director. However, I believe that the biggest asset I have to offer is my availability and time during the daytime with understanding and passion for what needs to be done both now and in the future, to keep this fabulous club on the successful road that we currently enjoy traveling.

I have also undertaken voluntary roles and have coached, managed and ran league-winning teams for youth football for over 20 years. What's more, I also firmly believe that I can play a pivotal role in taking our great Club out into the wider Chester community.

Personally I know many of you will know me as olisdad and from around the ground on Match-day, my postings of goals, news and blues updates on Facebook, Radio Podcasts, Twitter and Youtube. For those who live out of Chester, this has somehow turned into an important lifeline for them and the club. Believe it or not, I have regular followers from as far away as Redhill and Russia!! — It's just a shame they can't vote for me to become a Director of the Club.....which is where I hope you can help me.

I'd love to bring my grass-roots passion to the Boardroom, and if I'm lucky enough to be elected, I will never forget that I'm around the Board Room table representing the members of the CFU and not my own personal interests.

All I ask is a tick in the box next to my name on the ballot paper.

It's our club and I need your vote to make sure that I represent us all on the board. Please take the time to vote. Your vote is very important to the club. And please make sure that you send your vote back to make sure it counts.

Thank you.
Pete Newman

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Tony Durkin

Nominated by John Martin and Richard Lynes

“Progress, continuous improvement and staff motivation”. This has steered me through the last 25 years in business. If we apply these principles to the running of our football club we will not go far wrong.

We have achieved much in three short years. It's been a remarkable journey. Full credit must go to those tenacious people who fought to give us back our club. We are on the verge of a monumental step back into Conference football and beyond.

But are we ready? The honest answer is no.

I'm 59, born and raised in Chester. I now live near Mickle Trafford with my wife Liz. Together with our children Tom and Charlotte, we all have common interest, Chester Football Club. I have followed Chester since an early age.

In 1987 I formed my business QHP, an engineering manufacturing company. I built it from scratch and today it turns over £15 million in a tough international market. This experience has been incredible, acquiring skills in all areas of business and commerce.

If I am successful I promise to use my business experience to drive us forward, to get our infrastructure ready for the challenges of Conference and ultimately League football.

In August 2011 my friend Richard Lynes and I were asked by the Board to act as business consultants for the club, to compare and contrast our progress against similar established supporter owned clubs. We chose Telford United and FC United of Manchester, both established 7 years. We visited both clubs and produced a detailed report, which has been endorsed by Lee Carter, Chairman of AFC Telford United and Board Member of the Football Conference. We also discussed an action plan against the report recommendations with dates and names for action agreed.

To date very little progress has been made on these recommendations.

A major reason for this lack of progress is probably the old enemy, TIME. And one thing that I have now is time. QHP was sold two years ago so I am now free to pursue other interests and what better than Chester Football Club?

We must take this opportunity to reignite our board before it stagnates. New members with drive, determination and the necessary skills are essential to complement those already on the Board who back progress.

We need to harness the wealth of skills of our volunteers; there are many people anxious to become involved, and why not? We need a structure to embrace these people, make them feel wanted, reward them.

I need your vote to enable me, along with others, to make things happen. Other CFU members are standing who are good people with drive and knowledge. We need them on the board urgently. They include Steve Ashton, David Evans, John Martin and Mark Howell.

In short I believe I am the right man, with the right experience at the right time.

I would be only too pleased to answer any questions or clarify where I stand. Please contact me on Tony.durkin10@gmail.com or 07971175211.

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Steve Povey

Nominated by Chris Pilsbury and Les Perkins

My name is Steve Povey, I am 46 years old and share my birthday with the blues . Married with four children and one grandchild. I work in Clinical Governance Support at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre with a particular emphasis on Safety and Emergency Planning.

Since the formation of Chester FC I have been the Safety Officer for the club and believe that now is the time that I can offer something more to the club.

I first went to watch Chester in the early eighties, witnessing a then rare victory courtesy of two Peter Zelem penalties. Shortly after Stuart Rimmer and then Harry McNally gave us something to shout about. In the interim the ups and downs have resembled a heart monitor. Until now.

Over the last few years on the Chester FC journey so far I have been able to see the tremendous amount of work done at the club with commitment from a number of people, Mark with the Youth (and his auction skills), Jeff with the tremendous work he has done with the media, Campbell as Secretary and the paperwork, Jane astute as Treasurer. Not forgetting the enthusiasm of Rich as Membership and more before his untimely departure. I am being unfair on the others by not mentioning them. I believe that as we progress further my skills within Health & Safety, build Projects and as a qualified football Safety Officer will be key to allowing Board members to concentrate on particular areas. At present the Chairman holds the Safety certificate for the stadium. If I am elected, the day to day stadium functions would have Board representation and potentially allow other board members to put their efforts into moving the club forward both commercially and on the pitch. Whilst also being available to offer my experience with Estate projects such as potential extensions, alterations to disabled facilities and changes to the current arrangements for which I have already shared a few ideas.

One more promotion would mean a huge change in the Club would be necessary and I hope that I will be able to offer something towards the next Chapter.

The 20th May 2010 birth at the Guildhall will live long in the memory of all of us with the badge unveiling and the speech from FCUM in the presence of his Lordship Daryl Clare, as will 5000+ against Northwich and the noise as Matty McGinn's strike hit the back of the net. Given the opportunity I would love to be a more central part of the club as we take on the Premier League in the 3rd then 4th round of the cup , or even dare we dream, Wembley in the Trophy and on to the holy grail, Football League status.

I believe I have something to offer, I hope you agree and support me.