

Petrie's pleas for Hibs fans to back the team



Hibs Training Ground

Hibs Chairman Rod Petrie has made a passionate plea to supporters to back the team by buying season tickets.

In a statement issued on the club's website, Petrie has set a target of an additional 3000 season ticket sales before the campaign kicks off on 5 August. So far the club have sold in the region of 7000 tickets which is approximately the same as last year, but with the financial implications surrounding a newco Rangers being admitted into the third division, he is determined to raise sufficient funds for Pat Fenlon to improve the squad.

The gates at Easter Road have been falling for some time, but last year's number dropped by 2000 following the disappointing results and performances under previous manager Colin Calderwood. Hopes that the lapsed fans would return this year have failed to materialise with many still angry about the allocation of cup final tickets which saw existing season ticket holders limited to one unless they renewed.

The statement reads: "The new dawn of Scottish football is upon us. Decisions have been made. A 12-team SPL will kick off this season with Dundee FC filling the vacancy created by Rangers FC moving into Division 3 of the SFL. This is what supporters wanted. This is what the overwhelming majority of 42 clubs voted to make a reality. Clubs have been enriched by making decisions backed by their supporters.

"The decisions were based on a desire to protect our league, but they come at a substantial financial cost. The full extent of the shortfall will only be revealed in the coming weeks and

months – but every club, including Hibernian, is likely to see a significant reduction in revenues. Scottish football and its funding partners are working together to assess whether and to what extent they can support the new landscape of league football.

“Decisions have been made about Rangers FC. Now it’s time to make decisions about Hibernian FC.

“The dynamics of football have changed. Clubs must rely more on what can be generated by supporters. In the new era, the level of success enjoyed by each club will be defined by the contribution that its supporters can make to help. Some clubs will struggle to cope with the transition. A change in the funding structure of football two weeks before the start of the season is not what anyone had planned.

“Hibernian is no different from every other club in the SPL. We are not insulated from the issues that affect every other club. We have the potential to be better off than some because of the historic levels of support for the club. In some ways we are worse off. We are starting from a lower base. Two years of poor sporting results have hit attendances. The Cup Final result hit hard and deep. We need to put these disappointments behind us. We have a major job on our hands to build a competitive squad for next season.

“Two years of losses have eaten into our reserves. We need to live within our means and balance the books. If our income is down then we need to cut our costs or find replacement income. The squad that Pat Fenlon assembles for next Season will now be defined by the financial contribution that Hibernian supporters are able and willing to make to replace lost central revenues.

“The difficult financial economy means that not everyone can do this year and next year what they did last year and the year before. There are many reasons not to buy a Season

Ticket. For those who are able, there is one compelling reason to buy one – your Club needs you.

“Let’s work together. Let’s march forward into the new era of Scottish football as one of the dominant forces in the game. To do that we need to sell at least another 3,000 season tickets. That is our target. It sounds a lot – but we know that there are over 2,000 supporters who have not renewed season tickets from last season and that there were lapsed season ticket holders in the season before that. Together we can do it.

“Our priority is the next few weeks. The start of the Season is two weeks away. The transfer window closes in six weeks. The prospects for sporting success within our league have improved, but we need a squad that is competitive within the league. We need to help the Manager all that we can. Around the country, supporters are rallying to help their clubs. Now is the time to show how much Hibernian means to us. We cannot sit back and wait.

“To those who have contributed already, thank you for supporting your team To those who have the ability to help but are unsure, speak to other supporters, contact the Club. Can you find it within yourself to rally to the cause and contribute to the success of Hibernian FC?

“If we can get through the short term difficulties of the weeks ahead then we can get involved in the debate about the structure of our league going forward. Supporters have long expressed a wish to see a bigger league. Some of the barriers to that have gone. We will continue to consult with supporters as we move forward. A seismic shift has occurred in our game. Change brings opportunity. Let’s work together to make sure we seize that opportunity for our Club.”

Meanwhile, Hibs under 20 team have reached the final of the Foyle Cup in Derry. Two goals by striker David Paul and

another from Jay Doyle was enough to ensure victory over Finn Harps, and the youngsters will now meet Ballymena in the final tomorrow.