

Ann Budge – No Hearts players asked to take more than 30% wage cut

Hearts owner

Ann Budge has tonight issued a further statement on the club's official website

offering information to the club's supporters following the decision to utilise

the UK government's Job Retention Scheme and furlough the majority of the club's

non-playing staff. The statement reads:

"Further to our update on Tuesday which outlined action taken by the

club to safeguard jobs, and the club's future in these challenging times, I

wanted to share some further information with our supporters.

As stated earlier this week, we have utilised the Government's Job Retention Scheme and furloughed the majority of non-football

employees. A number of staff continue to work, albeit from

home.

They are carrying out a number of essential functions, including planning for the return of football, keeping in touch with supporters, essential maintenance and importantly ensuring the wellbeing of our employees.

I would like to make it clear that no employee, whether furloughed or working, at any level in the Club has been asked to take a 50% cut. The majority of cuts fall below 30%. Some employees have very kindly offered to take larger cuts or in some cases to forgo their salaries entirely. We should add that we are now investigating the implications of the Job Retention Scheme for our casual workers. We are absolutely delighted at the support received from staff.

We are also planning to furlough all players and while discussions are still ongoing with the first team squad, we would like to make it clear that since the introduction of the Job Retention Scheme, no player has been asked to take more than a 30% reduction in wage.

A number of players have already agreed to our proposed terms. Steven Naismith is standing by his original offer to accept a 50% cut and indeed one of our younger players is refusing to take any wages at all over this period. We thank every player for their support and hopefully we will conclude all discussions very soon.

Much has been reported about the Club's stance in

asking all staff, including players, to accept temporary wage cuts while other clubs have negotiated on the basis of wage deferrals. I have explained to all first team players individually and indeed to the SPFA why we believe this is the most appropriate course of action for Hearts.

In the same way that the impact of wage cuts impacts every individual differently, depending on their personal commitments and lifestyle, so too, does this current crisis impact differently upon different clubs. We do not all have the same business model. For example, we do not all have the same wage structure. While some clubs choose to pay lower basic wages topped up by bonus payments, other clubs pay higher basic wages and make less use of bonuses. Hearts fits into this latter category which, in this current situation, means we have a bigger challenge.

Similarly, we do not all have the same ownership structure. Clearly some clubs have private owners while others are owned by groups of investors. Access to investment capital during periods of crisis can therefore be very different for different clubs. Hearts is, of course, different again, given that we are on the cusp of moving to fan ownership.

I have a legal obligation to transfer majority ownership to the fans and not to seek external investment from

other

sources. I also have a moral obligation not to burden the club with football debt, that can never be written off, where I would simply be passing this problem on to the new owners...the fans.

We will continue to discuss these issues but at this point in time we believe that asking for wage cuts is the most appropriate way to safeguard the club, not just in the short term, but in the medium to long term. We also believe it is morally the right thing to do when everyone on the planet is faced with making sacrifices.

We thank the fans, our sponsors and our business partners for their continued and unwavering support and will continue to share accurate and honest information with you across our own channels.

While these are difficult and uncertain times, the club continues to do its utmost to stand by its employees, fans, sponsors and the wider community.”