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Fans seek to take over football club

Supporters fear for Hendon's future

by ALEX GALBINSKI

Supporters of Hendon FC are set to take the first steps towards taking over the club at a meeting on Saturday.

Since the death of chairman Ivor Arbiter in July and the agreement over the sale of the team's ground at Claremont Road, Cricklewood, the future of the Greens has been less than clear.

The Arbiter Group, which owns Hendon FC, is looking for an organisation to take over the running of the club, and a trust formed of supporters has always been high on the list of possibilities.

The sale of Claremont Road to property developer Kings Oak for just under £20 million was agreed last year, and Hendon FC are expected to

move to Cophall Stadium, Mill Hill. But restrictive covenants on the land which prevent building on the Claremont Road ground have held up the sale. A final decision will have to go to the Lands Tribunal.

And if the move goes ahead, it is far from clear how much money would be passed on to the football club. The Arbiter Group is expected to make in the region of £5m from the deal, with Barnet Council, as the owner of the freehold, also benefiting. Council papers reveal that only £300,000 is needed for improvements to Cophall.

Bryan Roberts, of the Supporters' Trust working group, hopes that Saturday will see the formation of a trust which will eventually take control of the club.

"We are in the dark as much

as anyone else [as to what is happening to the club]," he said.

"It seems extremely unlikely that Hendon FC will be able to play at Claremont Road past the current season. Our first objective would be to try to increase the fans' input into how the club can be run.

"Our only concern is to see Hendon FC, in some shape or form, operating in the future."

Club secretary Graham Etchell added: "We are 100 per cent behind the supporters and what they are doing is for the long-term future of the club."

The open meeting will be held at 1.30pm, before the home Ryman Premier League match against Braintree Town, at the club's banqueting suite at Claremont Road.

Fans to meet before clash

It is a big day for Hendon on Saturday — on and off the pitch.

The Greens will be hoping to put an end to a run of four straight defeats when they host promotion-chasing Braintree Town at Claremont Road.

Earlier, fans will be meeting to discuss the possibility of setting up a supporters' trust in a bid to assure the club's long-term survival at the highest possible level in non-league

football. All Hendon supporters are invited to the open meeting, which takes place in the banqueting suite at 1.30pm (see Page 9 for full story).

Saturday's match should see the return of former Hendon favourite Eugene Ofori.

He left Claremont Road for The Iron earlier in the season. The game kicks off at 3pm.



Uncertain future: given the proposed sale of Hendon FC's Claremont Road ground, supporters are worried about the survival of their club

JONATHAN GOLDBERG