



PROUD BAGGIES

SEASON REPORT 2017/18

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INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

I am delighted to be introducing Proud Baggie's inaugural Season Report. When I first had the idea to start a supporters group for LGBT+ fans of West Bromwich Albion, I never imagined that in a little over a year we would have achieved so much.

Whilst performance on the pitch has been far from inspiring at times this season, I am extremely proud of this team and what we have achieved together since our launch. From joining our fellow supporter groups such as Apna Albion at Diversity Day, building our social media presence, through to launching our website in February, the committee has worked tirelessly to make [Proud Baggies](#) a highly respected LGBT+ supporters' group.

I would like to thank our great club, WBA, which has have yet again proved that diversity runs through its DNA by being an ever-present supporter of everything we have achieved to date. We simply could not have got this far without them. Thanks also to the Pride in Football network and the Football Supporters Federation for their advice, guidance and resources!

"I am extremely proud of the team and what we have achieved together since our launch."

Looking ahead, we have ambitious plans for the new season and you can see a taste of what's to come later in this report. Whatever division we end up playing this beautiful game in, one thing is for sure – you'll find us, as always, week in, week out, cheering on the Baggie Boys!

Boing boing!

Piero Zizzi
Founder and Chair
May 2018

VISION, AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Proud Baggies' vision is simple:

Total LGBT+ parity within WBA

Our Mission:

To bring the football and LGBT+ community together to celebrate diversity and increase LGBT+ visibility at WBA FC, making our club a safe and welcoming environment both home and away.

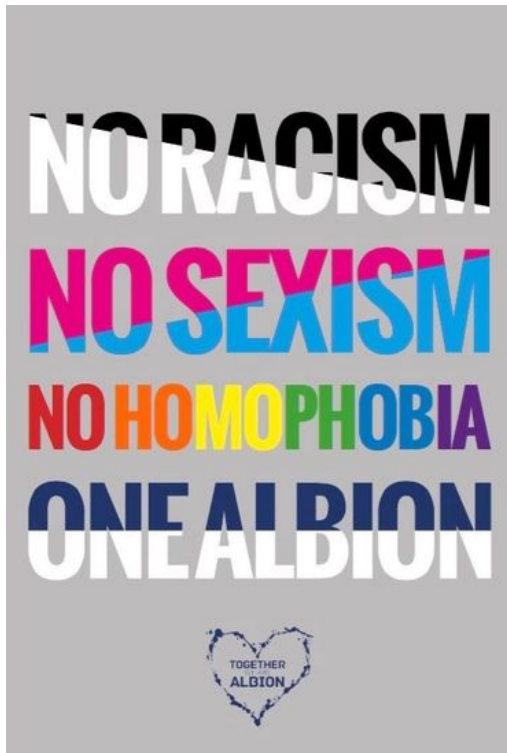
Our Aims

1. Celebrate diversity and provide a safe and welcoming environment for LGBT+ fans and allies both on match days and beyond.
 - Build a social group of members and offer opportunities to meet before, during and after games.
 - Provide forum for discussing all things WBA in a safe inclusive environment
 - Arrange regular social gatherings.
 - Communicate to membership and the community through regular updates via a range of media.
 - Seek feedback from all stakeholders.
2. Work with WBA management to champion awareness of and tackle LGBT+ issues at the club.
 - Hold regular meetings with nominated officers of WBA to discuss LGBT+ issues.
 - Provide advice and guidance on LGBT+ issues.
 - Develop & execute a vision and strategy with the club regarding LGBT+ matters.
3. Partner with other WBA fan groups to promote equality, celebrate diversity & inclusion across all minority groups.
 - Be an active member of the WBA Supporters community.
 - Work & socialise with other fan groups to achieve common goals in equality, diversity and inclusion.
 - Actively promote the work of other WBA fan groups seeking support from those groups.
4. Support other local and national groups in tackling LGBT+ issues in sport and football in particular.
 - Actively support agreed LGBT+ Organisations/charities who share common goals.
 - Be a visible part of the LGBT+ community, both locally and where appropriate, nationally.



DIVERSITY DAY 2017

On 30th September 2017, West Bromwich Albion FC's home game against Watford was the club's designated 'Kick It Out' fixture, broadened for the first time to include all areas of equality and diversity. The day was a huge success and saw a number of groups from all communities come together to celebrate as one, although we were, of course, disappointed to concede a last-minute equaliser!



We chose this day to officially launch [Proud Baggies](#) and were delighted to share the limelight with our friends and colleagues from numerous supporter groups such as [Apna Albion](#) as well as players from [WBA's women's](#) and disability teams.

As well as being an enjoyable event for all, the day served to highlight West Bromwich Albion Football Club's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. As part of this remit, the club seeks to confront and eliminate all forms of discrimination, whether by reason of race, sexual orientation, marital status, age, ethnic and national origin, disability or gender reassignment, recognizing that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perception to the club.

Launching in this way enabled us to achieve unprecedented levels of exposure both at the club and in the local area. The lead up to the day was a busy round of press, TV and Radio interviews which ultimately resulted in a growth of interest across all our social media platforms as well as a spike in membership, helping us to continue to increase our visibility at the club.



The platform that Diversity gave us so early on in our development meant that we were quickly able to build our reputation and enhance our standing as one of the key supporter groups at the club as well as in the LGBT+ football community.

RAINBOW LACES 2017

The Rainbow Laces campaign in 2017, created by LGBT+ equality campaigners [Stonewall](#), was backed by sportspeople at all levels, from non-league to the Premier League. **Rainbow Laces** aims to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic attitudes in sport.



National teams, leading clubs, top athletes, fans and grassroots players all laced up to come out for LGBT+ people in sport. In 2017, the campaign had its most successful year yet.



[Proud Baggies](#) & Rainbow Laces

[Proud Baggies](#) was pleased to work with West Bromwich Albion FC to support [Stonewall](#)'s Rainbow Laces Week.

The English Premier League's main campaign was centred on the weekend of 25/26 November, which coincided with our away game vs. Spurs.

Along with significant promotional activities, our fellow LGBT+ supporter group, [Proud Lillywhites](#) hosted a post-match reception at Wembley which included the opportunity for promotional photos pitch-side.

We also worked directly with [WBA](#) on a number of additional activities and we believe we were instrumental in the club taking a variety of actions across the campaign week. For example, along with other EPL clubs, WBA supported the campaign via social media and the club website. We also supplied an article which was published as a full page in the programme for the home game against Crystal Palace.



WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

[Proud Baggies](#) has been busy during the season building its brand through our various social media outlets as well as launching its website, [ProudBaggies.com](#).



One of the strengths of [Proud Baggies](#) is its reach on social media platforms. The group has a strong understanding of how digital marketing can be used to present clear messages successfully and quickly gain support amongst a population. This, together with clear aims and objectives has allowed the group to grow followers quickly and extend its reach beyond the club environment.

One of the early aims was to build a close working relationship with the WBA media department and build their trust in the hope that they would repay that in kind by supporting our messaging through their own channels. It is fair to say that expectations in this area

have been surpassed and the support that the club has given to [Proud Baggies](#) has meant that the group's messages have been heard right around the Midlands and beyond, to anyone with a connection with West Bromwich Albion.

Once these media channels had been established, the group set about building its website which was launched in February this year. The site is the main anchor for all [Proud Baggies](#) published



content and serves as a central hub of news and information about the group. It is regularly updated and contains links to all other social media channels. Early analysis of traffic to the site has been promising with interest coming from as far afield as California, Thailand and the Middle East!

The next twelve months will see additional growth of the website with a plan to add a fans guide to gay Birmingham, the Black Country and surrounding areas; additional diary and news items as well more blog content from the team.

PROUD BAGGIES IN THE COMMUNITY

January saw two of our [Proud Baggies](#) committee members invited to speak on LGBT+ issues in football on [Brum Radio](#), Birmingham's brand new independent local radio station. You can listen online at [brumradio.com](#)

Piero & David were guests on Tim Arstall's Monday sports show, *The Forward Factor*, where they discussed issues surrounding homophobia in football and were asked to select the three songs they most associated with the Albion in the 'Changing Room Mix' slot. Following a fair amount of debate, our boys finally landed on *The Liquidator*, *Insomnia* and *Jump Around*, all iconic songs associated with the club over the years.



On a more serious note, our team gave their views on tackling homophobic chanting in the ground. 'We're more interested in educating people rather than condemning them and we believe the issue is more about of awareness of how these chants affect people than anything else' said David Price, Proud Baggies' Treasurer.

If you missed it first time around, you can listen again here:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/BrumRadio/forward-factor-fa-cup-3rd-round-mayhem-ashes-flops-coutinhos-barca-delight-08012018/>



In the last six months, [Proud Baggies](#) has also appeared across a range of different media, including three separate articles in the [WBA](#) match day programme, an interview on Radio WM and launch day coverage on BBC Midlands Today. Our Patron, radio and TV presenter Richie Anderson has also featured prominently, being one of a series of Match day 'Fans Champions' as well as showcasing his own film on homophobia in football on BBC One's *The One Show*.

The group has also received support and acknowledgement from a number of other public figures, including well known midlands-based comedian Joe Lycett and British quadrathlon champion Helen Russell.

As a prominent member of [Pride in Football](#), the alliance of LGBT+ fan groups, [Proud Baggies](#) was pleased to represent the West Midlands at last years' Call it Out Symposium, an event where fans, club staff, police, campaigners, academics and other stakeholders met to review progress and address LGBT+ issues in football. The event was a great success and included key note speakers Mark McAdam, Danny Watts and Paul Elliot.

This season has also seen us build partnerships with a number of organisations closely aligned with our objectives. These include Smethwick Police who have been incredibly supportive of our plans and proudly donned their Rainbow Laces & [Proud Baggies](#) T Shirts when we met them in February; as well as [Birmingham City University](#), [Birmingham LGBT](#) and Sandwell Beam (see page 10) all of whom we look forward to working with more closely over the coming months.



Proud Baggies partnership with [The Football Supporters Federation](#), through its [Fans For Diversity](#) initiative and more specifically its Diversity and Campaigns Manager, Anwar Uddin has allowed the



group to build its presence in the community through the funding of [Proud Baggies](#) flags, which facilitate visibility at events such as Birmingham and London Pride as well as t shirts which our members have been proudly wearing whilst out and about!

Building these partnerships and associations will be pivotal to our future growth as an important part of the local LGBT+ community. As a group we believe that we have a specific opportunity to harness the power of sport and the brand of a nationally recognised football team in the region to offer a unique perspective on the LGBT+ experience.

Alongside the club's charitable arm, [The Albion Foundation](#), over the coming months, we hope to develop a series of programmes and activities for use both inside and outside the club.

Of course, the primary aim is to provide a welcoming environment for LGBT+ supporters and throughout the season there have been numerous opportunities for match day meet-ups both home and away. At every game at The Hawthorns, [Proud Baggies](#) facilitates meet-ups with LGBT+ fans including away support. Utilising the neutral secure space of the fan zone, the group have met many members and fans from opposing LGBT+ supporter groups. The belief is that this will steadily grow over the course of next season, fueled hopefully, by improvements on the pitch and consequently in our league standing, whatever league we end up in!

SANDWELL BEAM

March saw [Proud Baggies](#) join forces with [Sandwell Beam](#), a local emotional health and wellbeing service who provide drop-in sessions for children and young people between the ages of 5-18 years old, or up to 25 for care leavers, with advice, signposting and support with any low level concerns relating to emotional health and wellbeing.



Their fantastic team of Youth Workers, Therapists and trained Wellbeing Volunteers offer young people guidance on a variety of topics. Their specialist staff members provide caring advice and guidance in areas including anxiety, mood management and self-esteem.

Located in comfortable surroundings and a relaxed atmosphere, they have a variety of online resources that can be accessed if young people just want to browse some information. They also run a range of therapeutic and wellbeing groups and workshops for young people and parents/carers to access throughout the year.

More than one in four LGBT+ young people have tried to take their own life at some point and more than half have deliberately harmed themselves. Bullying is a common problem and often young LGBT+ people do not have an adult at home, school or elsewhere that they can talk to. The [Proud Baggies](#)' team understand through personal experience the importance of promoting positive mental health and wellbeing amongst LGBT+ young people which is why they are delighted to be supporting [Sandwell Beam](#) on all LGBT+ issues, offering advice and guidance to the team as required. This builds on work previously supported through attendance at LGBT+ awareness sessions at local universities and colleges.



EQUALITY ADVISORY GROUP

An independent advisory group to help the club's Equality and Diversity Programme, the EAG is another key feature in the club's efforts to achieve Advanced level of the Premier League's Equality and Diversity Standard.

The group is made up of five volunteers from beyond The Hawthorns whose role is to help fulfil the club's aspirations to be ever more inclusive and welcoming to all supporters and visitors. They will join club officers Richard Garlick (Director of Football Administration) Rob Lake (Director of The Albion Foundation) and Jane Taylor-Kane (HR Officer) in helping shape Albion's future strategies in this field.



Proud Baggies are delighted, that HR Director and [Proud Baggies'](#) Secretary Neil Basterfield was selected to join this team, giving them a voice at the top table in helping shape diversity and inclusion for all groups within the nine legally protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).

Foundation chief Rob Lake said: "The first meeting was excellent. We have got a really good group who are going to play a big part in this area of the club's operations. All the members are extremely knowledgeable and are challenging to us. There will be no sugar coating - which is what we want."

SEASON 2018/19 AND BEYOND

This is an ambitious group with high expectations and long term aims that will see it take a wider role within both the football and LGBT+ community. [Proud Baggies](#) represents a unique opportunity to harness the strengths of a nationally recognised institution within the West Midlands to promote diversity, inclusion and good citizenship whilst at the same time, improving the football experience for LGBT+ fans who may otherwise stay away from games.

Ultimately, our aim is to grow LGBT+ attendance at games, supporting the club in what we hope will be a successful season.

Other plans for next Season include further development of our links with schools, colleges and universities within the area as well as local charities to deliver a programme of outreach work.



We will also look to support the club's commitment to equality through active involvement in shaping and delivering a series of actions that will see improvements in the WBA experience for LGBT+ fans.



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In addition, through our direct involvement in the Equality Advisory Group (EAG) we will support the club's efforts in all areas of diversity and inclusion, including but not limited to age, race and gender matters.

On the social side, we will continue to grow our membership base and offer more opportunities for meet-ups both before, during and after games as well as outside of football, where we will organise a variety of events to suit all tastes. We will also be representing West Bromwich Albion FC at both Birmingham and London's annual Pride events and the annual [Pride in Football](#) 'Call It Out' Symposium.

Nationally, we will be utilizing our links with [Pride in Football](#), the [Football Supporters Federation](#), [Kick it Out](#), [Stonewall](#) and others to help shape and drive the anti-discrimination agenda in football offering input and supporting wherever possible.

PROUD BAGGIES COMMITTEE

The small but perfectly formed committee currently consists of six hardworking volunteers:



[Piero Zizzi](#)

Chair

Not as Italian as he sounds, born and brought up in Birmingham, been a Baggie all his (relatively short) life.



[Sarah Robinson](#)

Vice Chair

Hardcore supporter and serial campaigner for good causes. Likes to commit to impossible cycling expeditions on a whim.



[Neil Basterfield](#)

Secretary

Devastatingly handsome, intelligent with a youthful appearance and exuberance. Also the author of this page.



David Price

Treasurer

Seasoned globe trotter and our money man. Effortless recall of useless Albion information from any era. Test him if you dare!



[Jordan Muckley](#)

Campaigns

Quiz Master and Drag Race super fan. If you can't find him at the Hawthorns try at Eden Bar.



[Richie Anderson](#)

Patron

When he's not on every radio and TV show in the area, he's probably in the middle of a ridiculously difficult charity challenge.

You can find out more about our committee at ProudBaggies.com/meet-the-team

CONTACT US

You can follow our progress or get in touch with us via a variety of channels:



Proudbaggies.com



[@wbalgbt](https://twitter.com/wbalgbt)



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[wbalgbt](https://www.youtube.com/wbalgbt)



[wbalgbt](https://www.linkedin.com/wbalgbt)

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OUR PARTNERS AND FRIENDS

