

# Work of Manchester United Supporters Trust bears fruit in Red Knights

Bankers hoping to launch a £1bn bid to buy United are building on the efforts of fans to



The first public statement put out by the Red Knights about their plans to buy Manchester United prominently reflects the work carried out in the office block Mancunians know better as the place where you are sent to pay off fines if you forget to tax your car. Trafford House, the regional headquarters of the DVLA, is now the official base of the anti-Glazer movement, with Old Trafford rising in the distance from the windows of the third floor where the Manchester United Supporters' Trust has developed contacts from Whitehall to Washington in their attempt to get rid of the men who have saddled their club with debts of £716m and rising.

Their work is voluntary and unpaid, even though the organisation is big enough now (approaching 54,300 members last night) to require a chief executive and a finance director and to have appointed Blue State Digital, the United States-based internet and technology firm used by Barack Obama during

the 2008 presidential election campaign.

The list of patrons includes half a dozen MPs as well as former players including Harry Gregg and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. Must, as they are commonly known, have shown that football supporters can have a collective voice – even if the men in power at Old Trafford did not allow them an automatic place when hand-picking who they wanted to quiz the chief executive, David Gill, on the club's official fans' forum.

Unwelcome at those events, the reputation of Must was reflected by the presence of some of their leading campaigners among the variety of wealthy and well-connected United fans, led by the Goldman Sachs chief economist, Jim O'Neill, who met in London on Monday to discuss putting together a £1bn takeover bid to persuade the Glazers to sell. The statement issued today on behalf of O'Neill and his associates promised "any new ownership model would aim not only to put the club on a sound financial footing, but

also to put the supporters at the heart of everything the club does".

It added: "For such a proposal to be viable, it would require the involvement and support of Manchester United supporters worldwide. As a first step, the Red Knights want supporters to demonstrate their commitment by joining the free online membership of the trust."

The membership ticker at the top of MUST's website immediately started to rise. The "initial target" now is to reach 100,000 members before the end of the season and, in the process, cut out some of the divisions that have previously existed in United's family tree of supporters' groups.

It is a complex process. United have three strong-voiced fanzines, Red News, Red Issue and United We Stand. As well as Must, there is also the Independent Manchester United Supporters' Association (Imusa) and spin-off groups such as Stretford End Flags. There

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