



## WHERE HAS OUR ARSENAL GONE?

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Dear Ivan,

As you may know, our mid-season survey was published in December and sent to all members of Where Has Our Arsenal Gone. This has now closed for submissions and over 2,300 responses were received; we are collating answers and will share the results with you shortly.

In the meantime, it appears that the full implications of last year's ticketing review are starting to hit home. From the season's start, the new ticket pricing structure was viewed with great cynicism. For many, it was a perceived case of giving with one hand, taking back (and then some) with the other. Of course reduced ticket prices for the lesser games are welcome, yet the flip side is the ever more extortionate pricing for our more glamorous fixtures. I think you'd be hard-pressed to find any football fan who considers the club's Category A prices (£62 to £126) reasonable.

Was the overall plan of the ticketing review merely to address the increasing number of empty seats for our bread and butter games, in the belief that Category A fixtures would sell out no matter what the price? The extremely slow ticket sales for Manchester City (indeed Manchester City fans even boycotting the fixture due to cost) and more empty seats at every game seem to indicate a misjudgement.

The clear perception of our members, the club's wider support, and indeed the supporters of any big club, is that the Premier League takes priority over all other competitions; it's the yardstick by which success is measured. However we realise our club's ambitions have shifted. When even our manager describes finishing in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> place as a "trophy", more important than the FA Cup and League Cup, this shows how the club 'values' domestic cup competitions. Indeed the media and supporters around the country blame the bigger clubs for devaluing the domestic cups in the pursuit of Champions League riches, cash over glory.

Therefore the question has to be asked, how do Arsenal justify the Swansea FA Cup replay as a Category B game, some 30% more expensive (cheapest ticket) than the league fixture which was Category C?

Now of course we realise that the club made it clear subsequent to the ticketing review, that Champions League and FA Cup games would be either Category A or B in terms of pricing. However, it's common knowledge that the club do this because if Category C prices were charged for cup matches – which let's not forget are considered lower priority than league games – it would mean that a general admission supporter who'd paid to go to every home game would have paid less than a season ticket holder. This in turn questions the club's value of loyalty. Season ticket holders who pay large amounts up front (and many have done so for decades) get no recognition or benefit.



So in other words it's a case of win win for the club and lose lose for supporters. Season ticket prices could have been reduced, and Category C prices could have been applied to suitable cup games. Instead season ticket prices remain high, and the club increases the price for general admission fans who want to see us play Swansea in an FA Cup 3<sup>rd</sup> round replay. Milder terms in recent communications we've received put this down to "greed" and "profiteering".

We put it to you and your fellow Board members that Arsenal's core support gained nothing from the ticketing review. Despite the spin around cheaper prices (for games the club was struggling to sell out anyway) the review merely demonstrated short sighted, regressive business thinking from corporate minds. Minds operating in an industry which is built on the love and loyalty of its core supporters.

Considering all of the above, as we approach the time of year when the Board starts to consider pricing for the 2013-14 season, we call upon the club to put some clear, progressive, 'fan friendly' thinking into how ticket pricing affects supporters.

We call for, at the very least, a freeze on all ticket prices for the 2013-14 season.

If the Board truly values the loyalty and love towards The Arsenal from its core support, then measures need to be taken in giving a helping hand financially, coupled with initiatives designed to recognise what The Arsenal truly is: its supporters. We have already put some of this thinking to the club as to how this can be achieved, and the ball is very much in your court.

We call upon the Board of Arsenal to do the right thing.

Up The Gunners.

**Where Has Our Arsenal Gone?**