

RIVERSIDE ATHLETIC FC

Official Response to Fan Campaign on Megafone

15 April 2026

Dear Riverside Athletic supporters,

Thank you for your overwhelming support of this campaign. Over 7,800 of you came together to ask important questions about the future of our club, and the Board takes this level of engagement extremely seriously. Below, we have addressed each of your questions in detail.

QUESTION 1

"What is the club's target timeline for reaching the Premier League?"

The Board has set a clear five-year strategic plan, approved in January 2026, with the ambition of achieving Championship promotion by the end of the 2027/28 season and establishing the club as a competitive Championship side within three years of promotion.

We recognise that a direct push to the Premier League requires sustained investment and stability. Our realistic timeline is to be competing for a play-off position in the Championship by 2030/31. We do not believe in making promises we cannot keep — but we are fully committed to this trajectory and have allocated resources accordingly.

A detailed strategic plan document will be made available to season ticket holders at the end-of-season fan forum on 22 May 2026.

QUESTION 2

"How much will be invested in the squad over the next three transfer windows?"

The Board has committed a net transfer investment of £8.5 million over the next three windows (Summer 2026, January 2027, and Summer 2027). This represents the largest sustained investment in squad building in the club's history. The sporting directors have carried out a thorough assessment of the current squad and have identified specific areas where targeted investment is needed to significantly improve our chances of promotion.

QUESTION 3

"Are there plans to upgrade the stadium and training facilities?"

Yes. The Board has approved a two-phase infrastructure programme:

Phase 1 (2026–2027): A £3.2m upgrade to the training ground, including a new indoor training facility, hydrotherapy suite, and performance analysis centre. Construction begins in June 2026 and is expected to complete by February 2027.

Phase 2 (2027–2029): A £12m stadium redevelopment of the East Stand, increasing capacity from 11,200 to 15,800. This project is subject to planning approval, which has been submitted. The new stand will include improved hospitality facilities, a family zone, and enhanced disabled access.

Both projects are fully funded through a combination of club reserves, a commercial loan facility, and increased sponsorship revenue.

QUESTION 4

"What is the club's strategy for developing youth talent alongside new signings?"

Youth development is central to our long-term strategy and financial sustainability. We have restructured the academy under new Head of Academy, David Moran, and made the following commitments:

- **Category 2 Academy Status:** We are investing £1.1m to achieve Category 2 status by the start of the 2027/28 season. This gives us access to better fixtures, scouting networks, and development pathways.
- **First-team pathway:** A minimum of two academy graduates will be integrated into the first-team squad each season. This is now written into the manager's objectives.
- **Loan programme:** We are establishing a formal loan partnership with two Championship clubs and one League Two club to ensure young players get meaningful game time.
- **Community engagement:** Our community coaching programme will expand to 14 local schools (up from 8), with a dedicated pathway for talented players from underrepresented backgrounds.

QUESTION 5

"How will the club ensure financial sustainability during the push for promotion?"

This is perhaps the most important question, and the Board is acutely aware of the risks of overextending financially. Our approach is built on three pillars:

- 1. Revenue growth:** Commercial revenue has grown 22% year-on-year for the last two seasons. We have signed three new sponsors for 2026/27, and matchday revenue projections are up 15% based on season ticket renewals (currently at 94% renewal rate — the highest in the division).
- 2. Controlled wage structure:** Player wages will not exceed 65% of revenue. This is a hard ceiling endorsed by the Board. We will not repeat the mistakes of clubs who have gambled on promotion and faced financial difficulties.

3. Contingency planning: The club holds a reserve fund equivalent to six months of operating costs. In the event that promotion is not achieved within the five-year plan, the club will remain financially stable and competitive at League One level.

We are also engaging with the EFL's Financial Fair Play advisors to ensure full compliance with Profitability and Sustainability rules ahead of any promotion to the Championship.

We hope this response demonstrates the Board's commitment to transparency and ambition. Your support — both on and off the pitch — is what drives this club forward. We are building something special at Riverside Athletic, and we want every supporter to feel part of that journey.

We will be holding an open fan forum on **22 May 2026** at the stadium where the Board will present the full strategic plan and take questions directly from supporters. All are welcome.

Margaret Thornton

Chair, Riverside Athletic FC

On behalf of the Board of Directors

Riverside Athletic FC · Founded 1896 · Riverside Stadium, Riverside, England

This response was published on Megafone in response to a fan campaign with 7,826 supporters.