PRESS RELEASE

JANUARY 2015

**FOOTBALL MAKES US HAPPY**

**EXHIBITION AT THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM CELEBRATES THE CHEERING AFFECT OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME**

Today may have been declared the ‘most depressing day of the year’, but the research behind a new exhibition at the National Football Museum has proven that football is the perfect thing for cheering us up in the winter months.

Researchers have found out that going to games has a range of positive effects on football fans. And they’ve even found out what elements of the game make people happiest.

For fans in the UK it has been revealed that victories against a team’s main rivals, the development of youth players, and the scoring of ‘beautiful’ goals create most happiness.

In contrast to fans in some of the other European countries surveyed, UK fans take less pleasure from victories for the national team, and rank European competition victories as less joyous than those local derbies.

Winning is of course still all-important, with 97.1% of UK fans being ‘happy’ or ‘very happy’ with a win for their team. Just 19.4% remain happy when their team plays well but don’t get the win. However while 70.2% of UK fans say their club scoring ‘a very beautiful goal’ makes them ‘very happy’, 16.6% still have the same reaction to seeing the opposition score ‘a beautiful goal’ AGAINST their team. That means half as many fans enjoy conceding a beautiful goal as much as they enjoy their team scoring a penalty (32.1%).

In the UK the question which caused the greatest percentage of fans to be ‘very happy’ was a win against “a big rival” (86.1%). And a good performance by a home-grown youth player makes 53.3% of fans very happy, compared to just 21.3% registering the same happiness with ‘A very famous and expensive transfer to my club’.

This data comes from the FREE (Football Research in an Enlarged Europe) (2014), European Fans Survey (Online).

A study into life as a football fan conducted across 5 European countries by researchers at Loughborough University as part of the FREE Project has revealed the positive effects that supporting football clubs and attending home and away games has on the fans.

As part of the FREE Project the National Football Museum is currently hosting the pop-up exhibition ‘Whose Game Is It? Football Through The Fans’ Eyes’, with stories, videos and photographs taken from the match-day experiences of 70 fans across Europe.

Dr Borja Garcia Garcia of Loughborough University also suggests the project has also revealed the importance of the social element for match-going fans:

“Football is mostly a social activity for the fans, who use the fixtures as an excuse to get in contact with fellow supporters. The build-up, anticipation and emotions prior to a game fill the supporters with optimism. This is irrespective of the results on the pitch, as fans look forward to the match-day as a whole experience, rather than the 90 minutes of play.”

While that may seem like a rose-tinted view to followers of some teams, this research and the accompanying exhibition show that football fans, despite how it may feel on a miserable January day, always find something to feel happy about.

**-ENDS-**

**NOTES**

The National Football Museum is a registered charity no 1050792. Admission to the museum is free.

Whose Game Is It? Football Through The Fans’ Eyes is open until 1 March 2015.

The exhibition is part of a large European project, FREE (Football Research in an Enlarged Europe, www.free-project.eu) is a collective endeavour of nine European universities, led in the UK by Loughborough University.

The National Football Museum has teamed up with Loughborough University and the rest of the FREE Project to put together 'Whose game is it?'

The FREE Project has received funding from the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) of the European Commission

**Technical data about the survey:**

The collected data set composed of 17 516 responses was subjected to a data cleaning process. The responses that did not include the vital information ‘*country’* were eliminated in the first round of cleaning. Furthermore, the responses that answered less than 20% of the questionnaire were omitted

Due to the differences of the samples by country, the data provided in this report have been weighted taking into account the population (over 15 years) in each of them. This statistical procedure adjusts the weight of each country in the overall scores depending upon its actual population and thus allows to have meaningful ‘European’ aggregate scores. It is an accepted statistical procedure for this type of surveys and it does not affect the validity and representativeness of the data.

For more information and media enquiries please contact Joe or Natalie at Brazen PR on E:footballmuseum@brazenpr.com  T: 0161 923 4994

The National Football Museum Registered Charity Number: 1050792

Website: [www.nationalfootballmuseum.com](http://www.nationalfootballmuseum.com/)

**Notes to Editors:**

The National Football Museum is a registered charity overseen by a board of trustees, and also counts notable names amongst its honorary positions, including Museum President Sir Bobby Charlton, Museum Vice Presidents Sir Alex Ferguson, Sir Trevor Brooking and Sir Geoff Hurst, plus Museum Special Ambassador Mark Lawrenson.

The museum also provides a permanent home for its nationally-recognised Hall of Fame, with new legends being inducted in a prestigious awards ceremony every year.

Entrance is free. To enhance the Museum experience, there are some additional exclusive paid-for interactive exhibits ‘Football Plus+’ to help ensure that visitors enjoy one of the best days out in the city.

Opening Times:

Monday-Saturday 10am – 5pm

Sunday 11am – 5pm

Open Every Day excluding Christmas Eve, Christmas day, Boxing Day, New Year’s Day and Easter Sunday

The venue is fully accessible for wheelchair access

ERDF in the Northwest

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is making a real difference to people and businesses in the North West. With €755 million to invest between 2007 and 2013, ERDF is enhancing the competitiveness of the region’s economy by supporting growth in enterprise and employment.

ERDF in the North West is managed by the Department for Communities and Local Government – for further information visit [www.communities.gov.uk/erdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/erdf).

Mirrorpix is the Official Image Partner of the National Football Museum

