



Champions League Final events

BUDAPEST

EMIRATES SCREENING

VICTORY PARADE

AUGUST 2026

Introduction

Ahead of the Champions League final in Budapest the AST held an online meeting on Tuesday 26 May which was attended by more than 320 members.

At this meeting we discussed arrangements for the Final in Budapest, the screening at the Emirates and the Champions parade. We were joined by Karen Smart (Chief Operating Officer) and Tom McCann (Venue Director) who gave detailed information on how everything would work. This senior level of engagement with Arsenal was a good example of Club and Trust working together. We also know that the feedback Arsenal received from ourselves and supporters did make a difference to decisions they took in planning these events and how they then communicated them.

The focus of the meetings was to assist in making everything work as smoothly as possible at the time. We said that following the events we would take feedback on how things had been arranged and lessons learned for next time.

We therefore undertook a post-event survey which is summarised in the following report. Every piece of feedback we received is included in the appendices. This report will be submitted to Arsenal, the Arsenal Advisory Board (AAB), Football Supporters Europe (FSE) and UEFA. It will also help to inform AST policy development and issues we raise with the Club and football authorities.

Methodology

The survey was sent to all AST members through its newsletter platform. 221 written responses were received with 391 answers given (124 on Budapest, 128 on the Emirates Screening, 139 on the Victory Parade).

This report is a qualitative summary of written comments, not a statistical poll of satisfaction.

Members could raise more than one issue in a response, and some respondents did not attend the event they were commenting on. The report therefore uses directional terms such as "many", "frequent" and "a smaller number" rather than converting thematic comments into percentages.

Executive Summary

Overall, member feedback was positive about the scale and significance of the three events, but the experience varied at particular pressure points.

1. **Budapest** was widely viewed as a well-run and welcoming host city, most frustrations focused on access to tickets and catering at the Final in both the fan parks and the stadium;
2. **The Emirates** screening created a valued community setting with most concerns focusing on entry and exit arrangements; and
3. **The Parade** was described positively with words like historic, joyful and memorable but many found the experience undermined by crowding, transport disruption and limited visibility of the parade itself.

Themes running across all three events

- **Community and shared experience.** Members repeatedly valued being together with other Arsenal supporters. Pride in the fanbase, a strong atmosphere and a sense of occasion were key positives.
- **Information mattered most when conditions changed.** Advance communications were often praised and the AST communications were singled out for praise, particularly for Budapest. But members wanted clearer real-time information when routes, access points, stations or timings changed.
- **Crowd flow shaped impressions.** Positive experiences inside an event were sometimes undermined by bottlenecks on arrival or departure. Families, older supporters and disabled supporters felt these effects most acutely.
- **Basic facilities were often not good enough.** Water, toilets, food service and transport were raised as important issues in warm weather and large crowds; where provision was limited, these issues dominated otherwise positive accounts.

1. Budapest and the Champions League Final

OVERALL SENTIMENT: Positive.

Members commonly separated a well-organised host-city and stadium experience from two pronounced areas of dissatisfaction: slow catering in the fan park and stadium, and the limited supply and allocation of tickets.

What members valued

Many respondents described Budapest as an excellent host city and the trip as a memorable experience despite the result. The city was viewed as welcoming and easy to navigate, with friendly local people and a relaxed atmosphere. Free public transport and airport-to-fan-park shuttle arrangements were repeatedly appreciated.

The route and march from the Arsenal fan park to the stadium were particular highlights. Members also praised the separation of supporter groups, the atmosphere created by Arsenal fans, and club touches such as flags, T-shirts and the tifo. Stadium entry was frequently described as smooth, with ticket checks, stewarding and policing generally seen as proportionate, friendly and safe.

Advance information from Arsenal, UEFA and the AST briefing was also positively received; the WhatsApp updates were singled out as useful.

Fan park and stadium catering

The clearest and most consistent criticism concerned food and drink provision. Members reported queues of 30 minutes to more than an hour at the fan park, with similarly slow service at some stadium outlets. Comments described too few service points, understaffing and inefficient processes, including individual drinks being poured only after ordering. Some supporters left the fan park or abandoned queues entirely.

The concern was not limited to convenience or alcohol. Members repeatedly referred to difficulty obtaining water and food in warm conditions, describing the lack of fast access to hydration as a welfare issue. Choice, stock levels, seating, shade and toilet standards also attracted criticism. At the stadium, slow service and food selling out compounded the problem for supporters on tightly timed day trips.

Ticket access, allocation and pricing

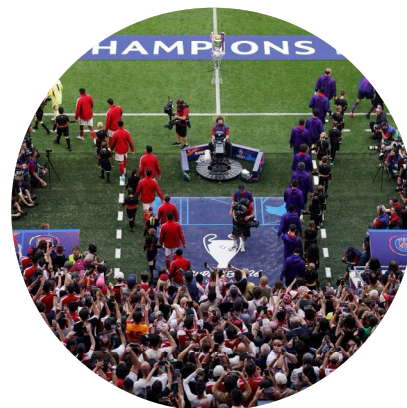
A substantial strand of feedback came from members who were unsuccessful in the ballot or dissatisfied with how priority was determined. The dominant view was that UEFA's allocation to participating clubs was too small, leaving too many genuine supporters without access while high-priced resale tickets remained available. Members wanted loyalty and actual attendance to be recognised more finely than a broad season-ticket-holder category; views differed on the precise criteria, but the desire for greater differentiation was consistent.

Those who obtained tickets often found the UEFA mobile-ticket process workable, and the option to link orders so groups could sit together was praised. However, some reported a clunky purchasing interface, app log-outs or poor signal at entry, uncertainty about seat location and price category, and stress caused by being told to carry a passport when checks were not ultimately made. Travel and accommodation inflation was another recurring concern, with some members making complex journeys or paying steep premiums.

Safety, accessibility and other points

Most comments about policing, stewarding and stadium access were positive, but a smaller number described holding points, unclear queues, unhelpful stewards or difficult assistance for disabled supporters. One account involving a supporter with Parkinson's and another from a wheelchair user underlined the need to consider long walking distances, assistance points and accessible travel.

Members also raised isolated concerns about beer cups being carried or thrown in seating areas, allowing the admission of water bottles, and post-match direction away from the stadium.



2. Champions League Final screening at the Emirates

OVERALL SENTIMENT: Broadly positive.

Members appreciated the chance to watch together at home and many enjoyed the atmosphere, value and in-stadium presentation. The strongest criticism concerned restricted approaches and exits, with several respondents describing crowd compression and distress after the match.

What members valued

The screening was widely welcomed as an inclusive way for supporters without final tickets to share the occasion. Many members described the event as enjoyable, atmospheric and fairly priced, although some reported that they did not receive notifications from the club about the ticket sales process. The scale of the attendance helped recreate a matchday feeling, and respondents praised the club for opening the stadium, the pre-match build-up and, in many areas, helpful staff and smooth turnstile entry.

Views of the screens varied by seat. A number of members found the picture clear and the screens larger or better than expected, while others reported that the ball was difficult to follow, sightlines were poor or temporary technical problems affected the build-up and opening minutes. This variation appears to have depended significantly on location in the stadium.

Approach, entry and exit

The most serious concern was crowd movement around the stadium. Temporary closures and barriers connected with preparations for the following day's parade diverted supporters from familiar routes. Several members said advance or on-the-day information about open access points was inconsistent, including for parking and step-free routes.

After the final whistle, respondents described large numbers being channelled towards a limited number of exits and bridges. Comments referred to slow movement, pushing, crowd compression and children becoming distressed. Some supporters said nearby exits appeared closed or were described as unavailable, only to be open later. These accounts were not universal - others left without difficulty - but the consistency of the concern made post-event departure the main theme.

Food, drink and the viewing environment

Queues for refreshments and programmes were frequently mentioned, although experiences differed across stands and arrival times. Allowing drinks at seats divided opinion. Some welcomed it, but others described beer being thrown during celebrations, sticky floors, discarded cups and obstructed aisles. For these respondents, the policy reduced comfort and created avoidable safety concerns, particularly for children.

Other comments included requests for more or larger screens, improved sound in some areas, clearer information on what facilities would be open, and better provision for families and disabled supporters. A small number also felt the post-match entertainment or music did not match the subdued mood after the defeat.



3. Arsenal victory parade

OVERALL SENTIMENT: Strongly positive about the occasion.

Members repeatedly called the parade historic, joyful and memorable, and many praised the long route and the decision not to create a single static focal point. Constructive feedback centred on crowd density, transport and dispersal, real-time information, and brief or obscured views of the team buses.

What members valued

The parade generated the most positive feedback across the survey. Members spoke of community, pride and togetherness, and many were impressed that an event of unprecedented scale felt celebratory and, in their location, safe. The extended route was widely seen as a sensible response to the turnout because it distributed supporters across a larger area. The inclusion of Arsenal Women, tifos and confetti, and the club-funded clean-up were also positively noted.

Many respondents supported the decision not to hold a static trophy lift, accepting that a single gathering point near the stadium or Town Hall could have created an unsafe concentration. Others remained disappointed that the traditional speeches and presentation were absent, but even some of those comments recognised the logistical challenge. Experiences varied substantially by location: quieter sections such as parts of Petherton Road, Green Lanes, Clissold Park and Essex Road were described as relaxed and family-friendly, while major junctions and transport hubs felt much more pressured.

Crowding, crossings and dispersal

Crowd density was the principal concern. Some members reported well-managed barriers and visible stewarding; others described closed crossings, bottlenecks and moments when they felt penned in or at risk of being crushed. The position was often most difficult after the buses had passed, when large numbers moved towards the same stations and steward or police direction was less visible.

Station closures and changes to public transport were a recurring source of frustration. Members described long walks, uncertainty about which stations were open, and congested routes towards Finsbury Park, Highbury & Islington, Angel and King's Cross. Several felt the event itself had been planned more effectively than the dispersal phase. Families with children, older supporters and people with mobility needs were particularly affected.

Visibility, timing and live information

After waits of several hours, many members saw the buses for only a few seconds and felt they travelled too quickly. Red flares and dense smoke frequently obscured the players at the moment the buses passed. While respondents generally recognised that supporter behaviour was not wholly within the club's control, the loss of visibility was one of the most repeated disappointments.

Advance route information was often praised, but members wanted more precise and live information on the day: the buses' current location and direction of travel, expected arrival times by section, changes to crossings and stations, and guidance towards less crowded or more family-friendly viewing areas. Mobile connectivity made video streams unreliable in the largest crowds, increasing the value members placed on simple location and timing updates.



Facilities, accessibility and local impact

Toilets, bins and access to water or shops were limited for the duration of the wait in some areas. Members noted heavy litter and isolated antisocial behaviour, while also welcoming the speed of the subsequent clean-up. Disabled respondents reported little or no designated viewing provision, and several comments called for clearer information on accessible and family-suitable areas.

One detailed response from a local resident described late or inaccurate information, problems obtaining the correct wristbands, restricted access to homes and mobility routes, and delayed cleaning of urine, glass and rubbish. This was a distinct but important perspective: the celebratory experience for visitors could coincide with significant disruption for residents immediately around the stadium.