

# SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2023: PREMIER LEAGUE & CHAMPIONSHIP ANALYSED





# FOREWORD

Welcome to the inaugural Fair Game Sustainability Index. This report is the culmination of over 18 months of hard work from our large team of world-renowned experts.

Football has been on the road to ruin for decades – since the turn of the century a third of our clubs have gone into administration and several no longer exist.

The Fan-Led Review, chaired by Tracey Crouch MP, offered a fresh direction to football. It was an approach Fair Game fully endorsed. The Sustainability Index seeks to provide the checks and balances to ensure that new vision can become a reality.

The constant Siren Call of the Premier League has encouraged football clubs to overspend and put the very future of their club at risk.

Before the pandemic, the average Championship club spent 107% of their revenue on players' wages. That culture of gambling trickles down the pyramid and has created an unsustainable ecosystem.

It feels like we have been saying this for several years,

but now with the hangovers of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, the tipping point has arrived. So what is to be done? Hand-wringing and grumbling is not an option.

We need to create a new culture that celebrates and rewards the well-run clubs, the ones that see beyond the Siren Call and champion Fair Game's core principles of Integrity, Community and of course Sustainability.

Fair Game has a simple vision: to reclaim football as a sport where every fan can put their shirt on in the morning proud of what it stands for, safe in the knowledge that the traditions and heritage of their club will always be there.

For the Index, we have given each club in the Premier League and the Championship a score, which is a combination of the factors we believe are the essential building blocks of a sustainable club: Financial Solvency, Good Governance, Fan Engagement and Equality Standards.

The first publication of the Fair Game Sustainability

Index provides clubs, and the game's administrators, with a baseline and a benchmark, that can be used to measure football's progress for years to come. And it is with this intended longevity in mind that we charged the very best academic minds in the country to help develop it. They have put in months of research and analysis to provide a robust and realistic index.

See it as a mirror to hold up against our national game. If we intend – as we do – for the Index to become the universally-accepted measure of a club's true sustainable credentials, then this rigour coupled with transparency from clubs is vital.

Equally crucial is your support. Whether you're a journalist, a fan, a club employee or a club owner, change will only happen if we all pull in the same direction. We hope that this first Sustainability Index provides that North Star, and that you find it useful, insightful, and above all, inspiring.

**Niall Couper**  
CEO Fair Game



# CALCULATION METHOD





# AN OVERVIEW

The Index is a remarkably simple concept.

Football is broken. Owners are playing fast and loose with clubs and at risk is those clubs' very existence and with it decades of histories, traditions and community projects. That culture needs to change.

The Index highlights clubs that live by values that both benefit football and help shape a better future and culture for the game we all love.

Fair Game's 34 clubs backed by 40 world-renowned experts identified four key criteria (all of which were prominent in the recent Government commissioned Fan-Led Review into the governance of football). The four are:

- **Financial Solvency**
- **Good Governance**
- **Fan Engagement**
- **Equality Standards**

The Index scores every professional club in the Premier League and the Championship on these four, creating a clear and transparent status report on the health of our

National Game.

In the future, this will be expanded to include all clubs down to National League North and South and the top two tiers of the Women's Game.

The Index brings together existing industry-leading indices and academic expertise to create a robust scoring matrix.

The integrity of the Index is built on constant improvement.

The data is peer reviewed by a team of experts from a range of universities.

As part of the process of continuous improvement, each year the experts and Fair Game's Advisory Council will refine the methodology to improve the Index's usefulness and usability.

Ultimately the aim is that the Index will be run by a new independent regulator for football, creating a new benchmark for the health of football.

# SO HOW IS THE SUSTAINABILITY INDEX CALCULATED?

The Sustainability Index is constructed as the weighted score of four sub-indicators of the Index (we plan to add a fifth sub-indicator on community engagement later). The four sub-indicators and their weights are:

- Financial Solvency (40%)
- Governance (30%)
- Fan Engagement (20%)
- Equality Standards (10%)

**Financial Solvency** is calculated as the weighted sum of:

- Current Assets / Liabilities (30%)
- Short-term loans measure (25%)
- Loans repayable within one year as % of revenue (25%)
- Wages as % of revenue (20%)

*The data comes from official accounts filed with Companies House. Further definitions of the measures are found in Appendix A.*

**Good Governance** is calculated as the weighted sum of:

- Clear governance and CSR compliance (Provided by Responsiball) with 50% weight
- Environmental measure (taken from Sports Positive League's website) with 45% weight
- Living Wage Employer Accreditation with 5% weight

*Details of the scoring from Responsiball and Sports Positive League can be found in Appendix B*

**Fan Engagement** is calculated as the weighted sum of:

- Fan Engagement (provided by the Fan Engagement Index) with 90% weight
- Percent of stadium filled on league match days with 10% weight

*Details of the scoring of the Fan Engagement Index can be found in Appendix C*

**Equality Standards** is calculated by:

- Ratio of women on the club board (50%)
- Recruitment ratio of women and BAME to leadership roles (provided by the Football Leadership Diversity Code) with 50% weight

Where there is no data from the Football Leadership Diversity Code, a zero score was applied. This is also the case where it has been unclear at this stage to determine exactly how many women are among the officers listed on Companies House. We hope that both of these measures will be rectified in our next iteration.

*Details of the scoring of the Football Leadership Diversity Code can be found in Appendix D*





# SUSTAINABILITY INDEX LEAGUE TABLE: PREMIER LEAGUE

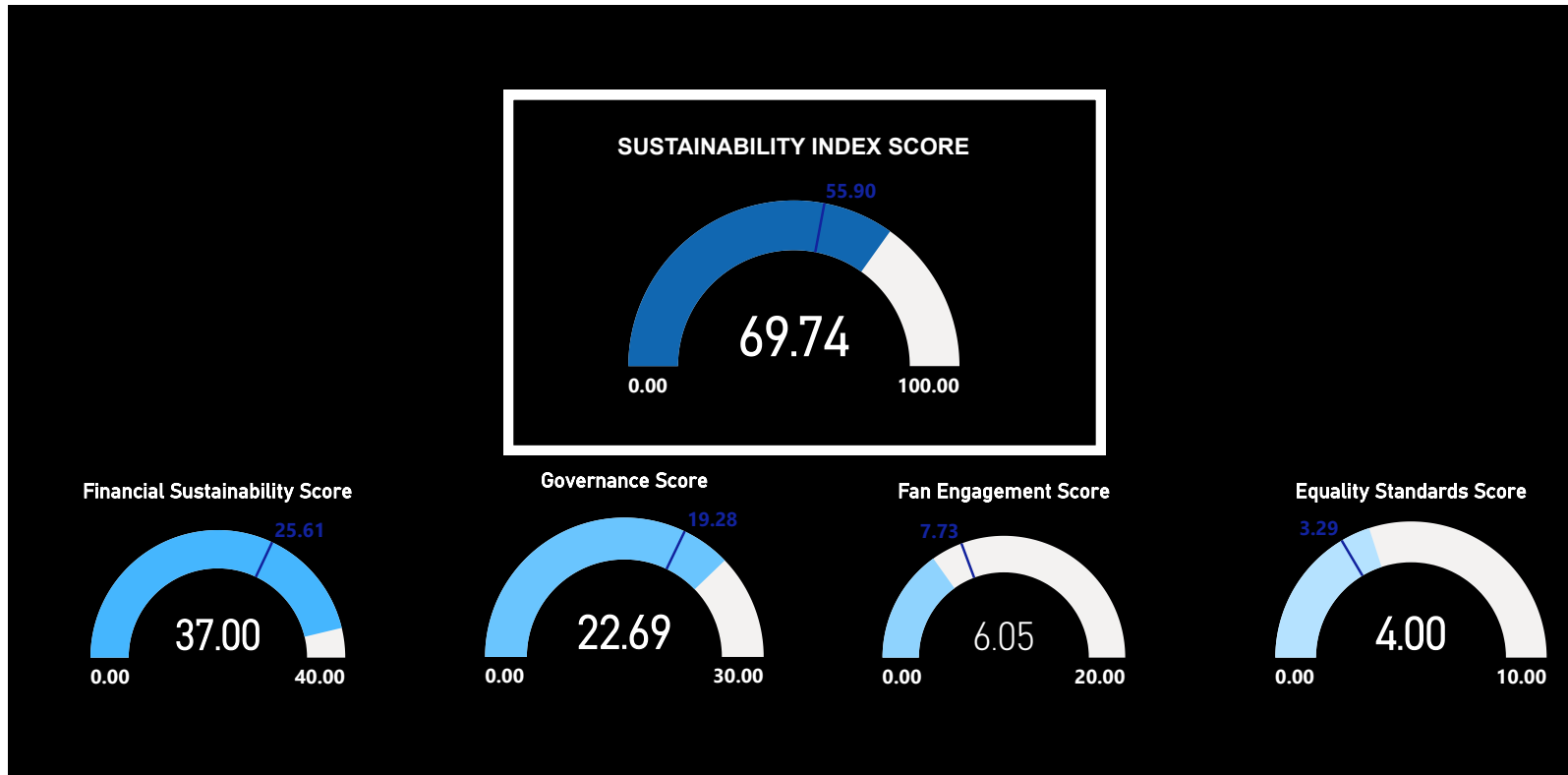
Club	Financial Sustainability	Governance Score	Fan Engagement	Equality Standards	Sustainability Index
Liverpool	32.00	25.95	6.95	5.19	70.09
Southampton	35.40	23.70	9.65	1.00	69.75
Arsenal	37.00	22.69	6.05	4.00	69.74
Tottenham Hotspur	34.00	24.71	5.40	4.78	68.89
Manchester United	34.00	22.95	8.75	0.80	66.50
Everton	28.30	22.54	11.45	2.50	64.79
Brighton and Hove Albion	26.40	23.48	9.65	4.37	63.90
Aston Villa	34.40	18.53	7.40	2.25	62.58
Manchester City	31.50	15.49	7.85	3.35	58.19
Chelsea	26.90	22.24	5.60	3.15	57.89
Brentford	18.50	19.84	11.45	5.09	54.87
Leicester City	16.40	22.50	9.20	6.72	54.82
Fulham	27.80	13.20	9.20	4.00	54.20
Wolverhampton Wanderers	25.40	18.45	7.85	2.25	53.95
West Ham United	24.00	19.54	7.85	1.63	53.01
Crystal Palace	21.80	20.06	6.05	3.44	51.35
Leeds United	26.50	16.61	5.15	1.50	49.76
Newcastle United	21.40	7.69	4.70	5.00	38.79
AFC Bournemouth	9.40	12.94	6.95	3.00	32.29
Nottingham Forest	1.00	12.41	7.40	1.88	22.69

# CLUB BY CLUB GUIDE: PREMIER LEAGUE





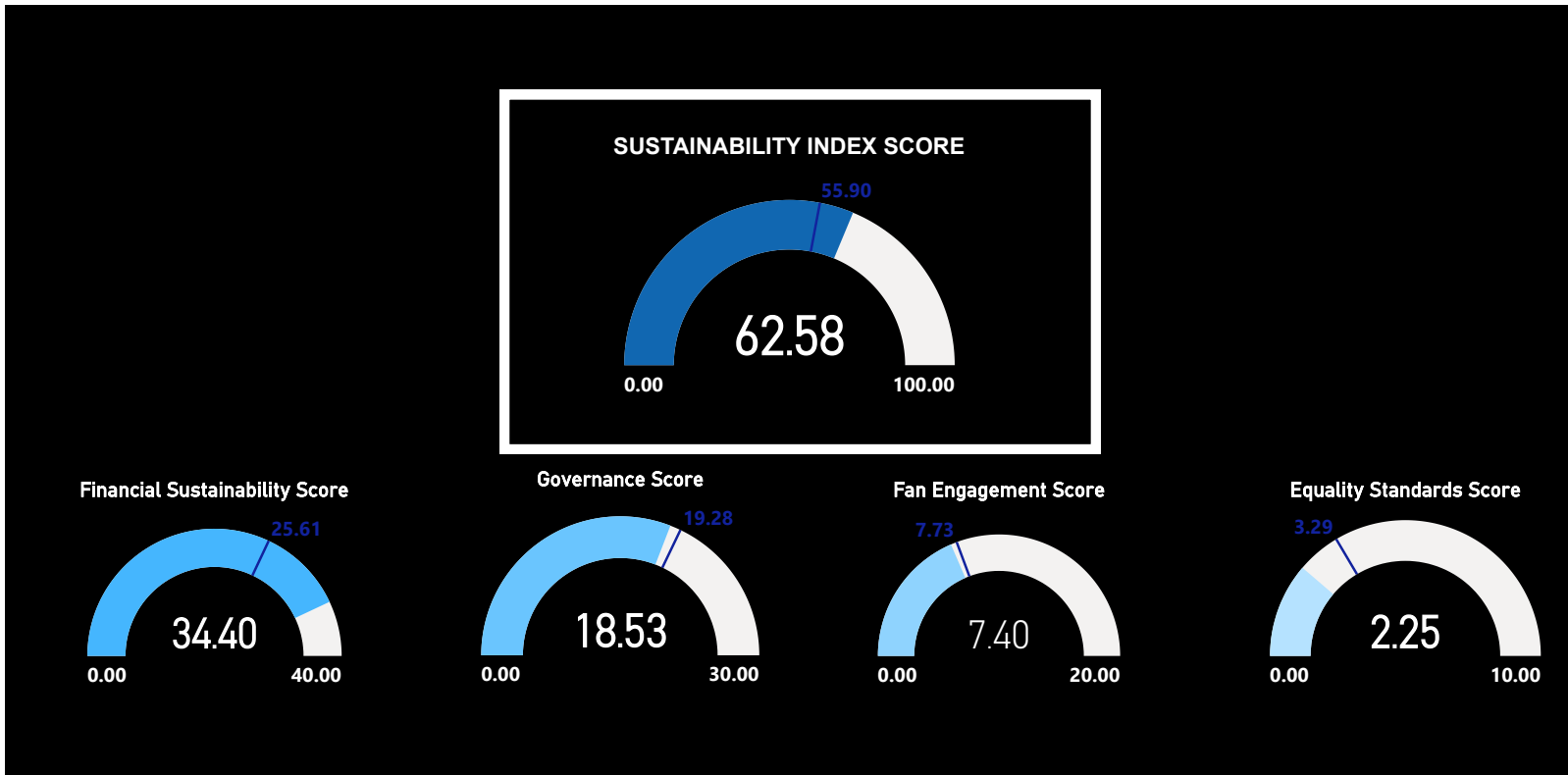
# ARSENAL





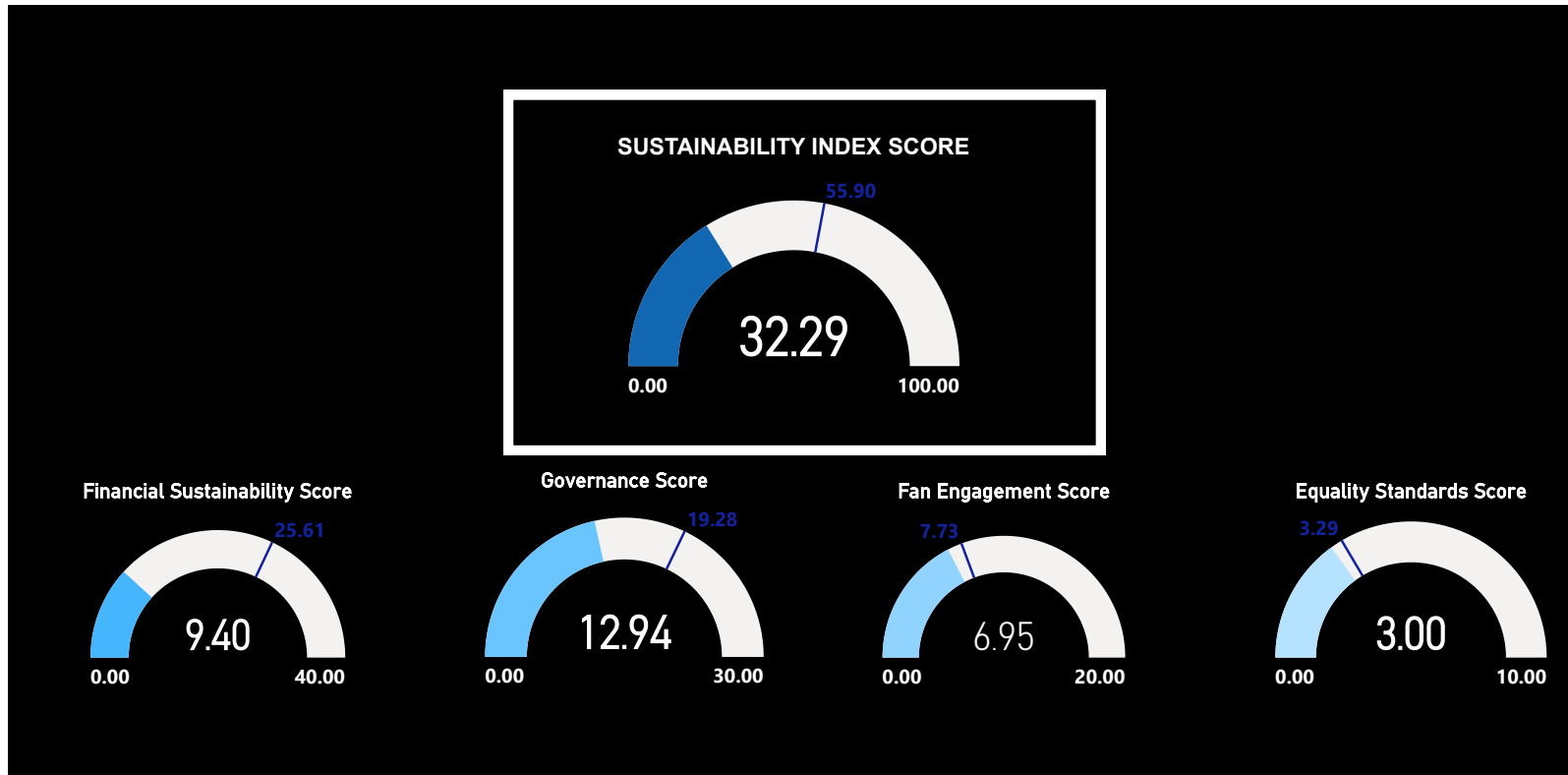


# ASTON VILLA



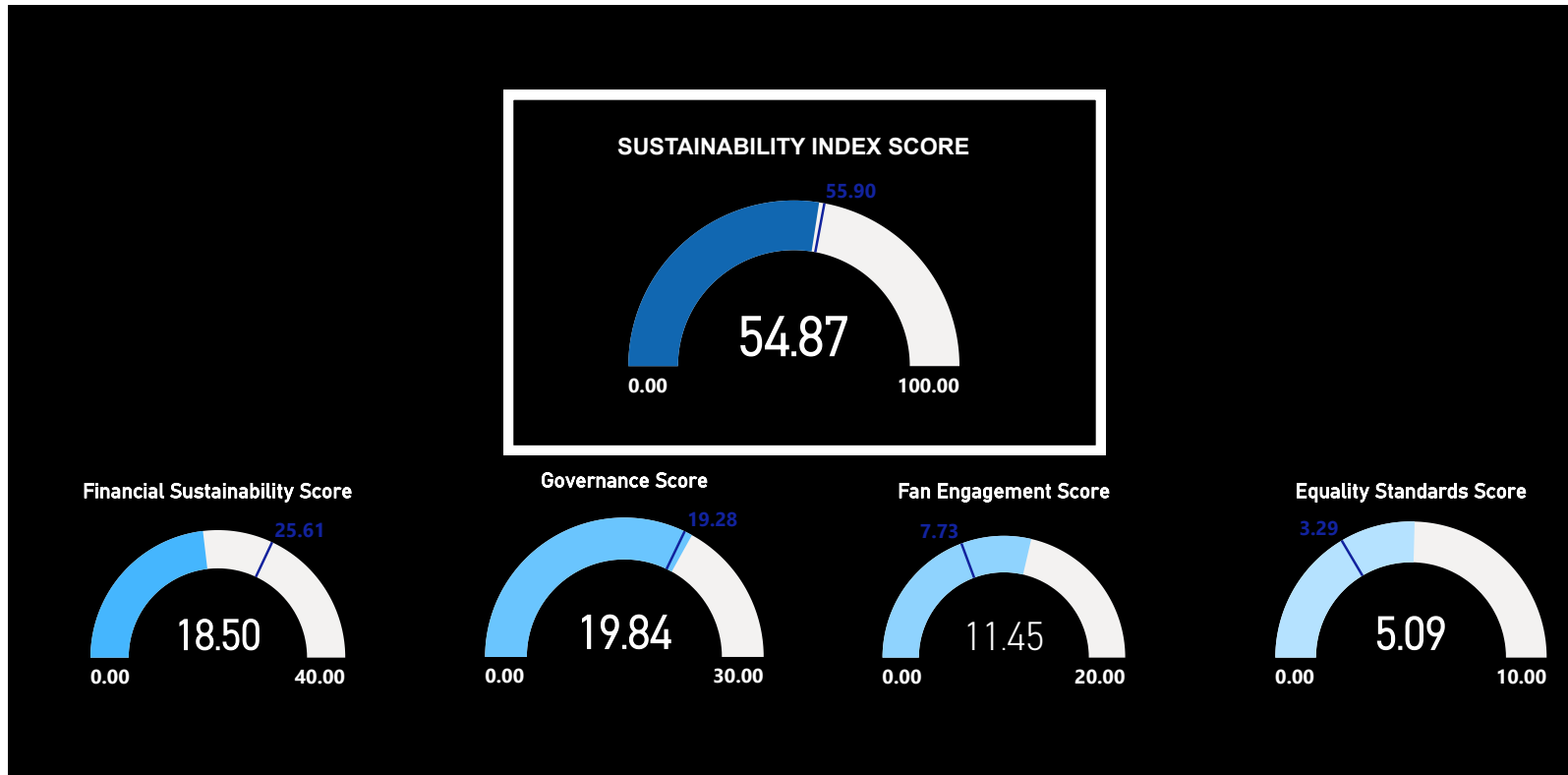


# AFC BOURNEMOUTH



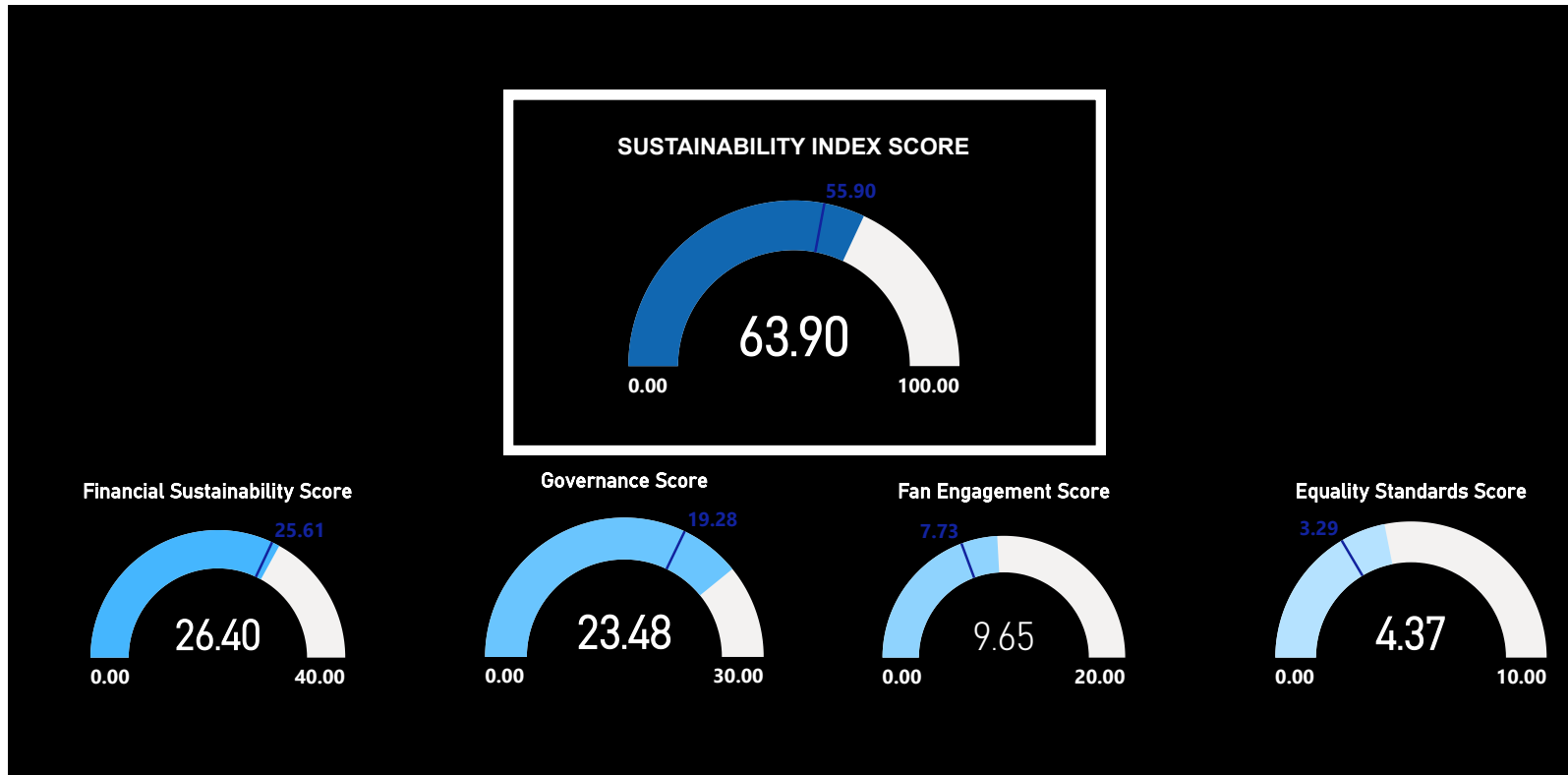


# BRENTFORD



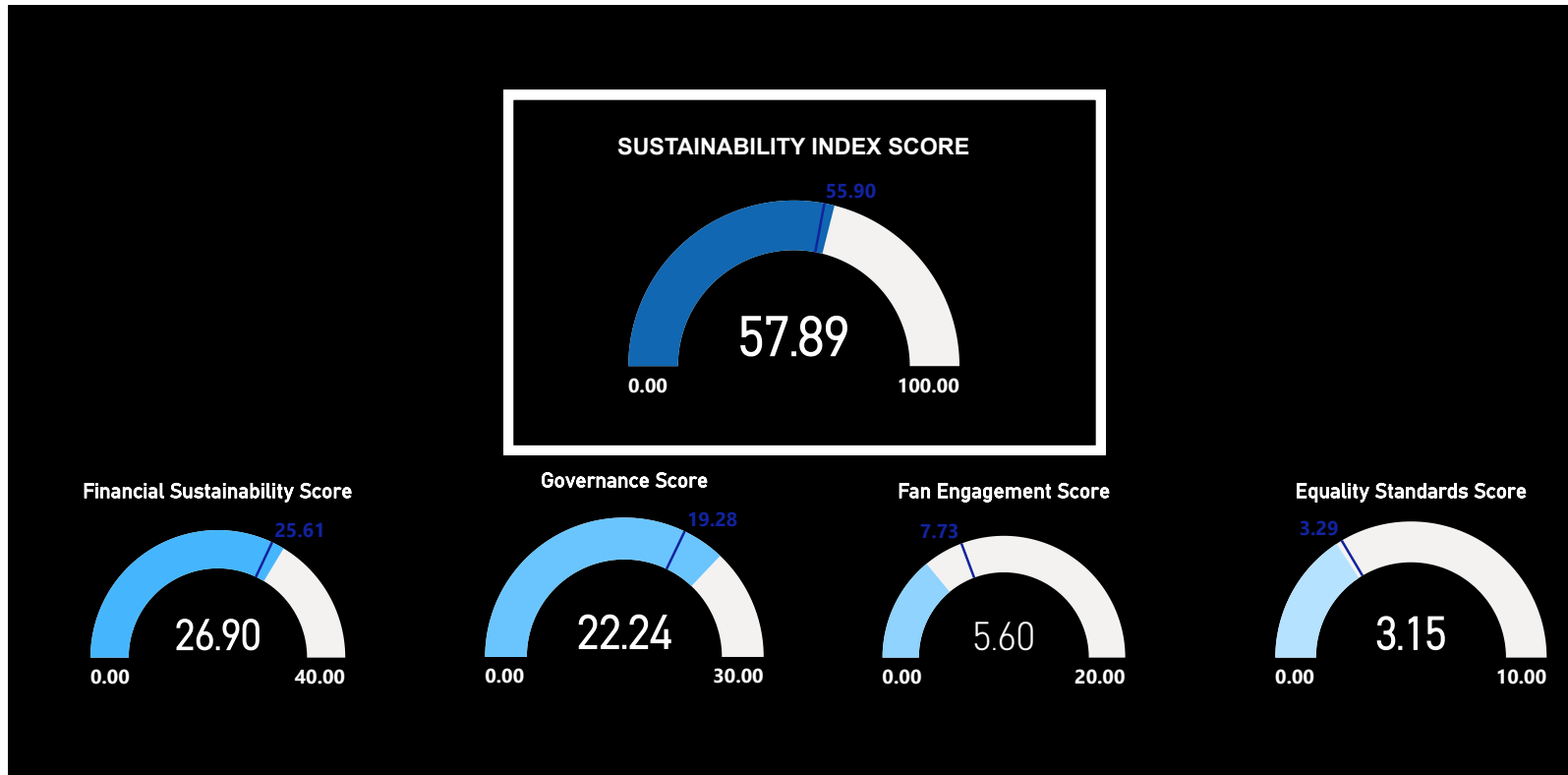


# BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION



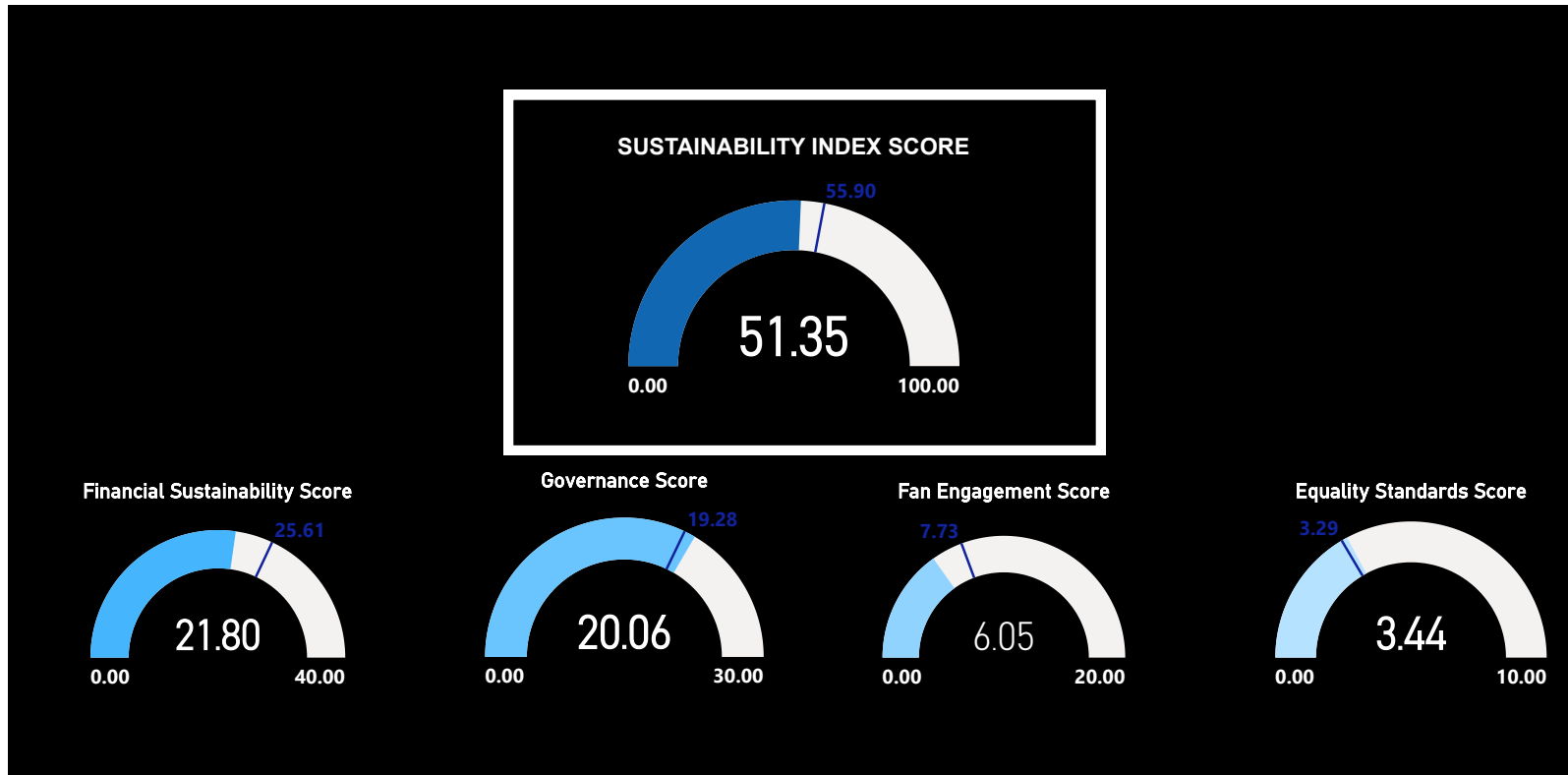


# CHELSEA





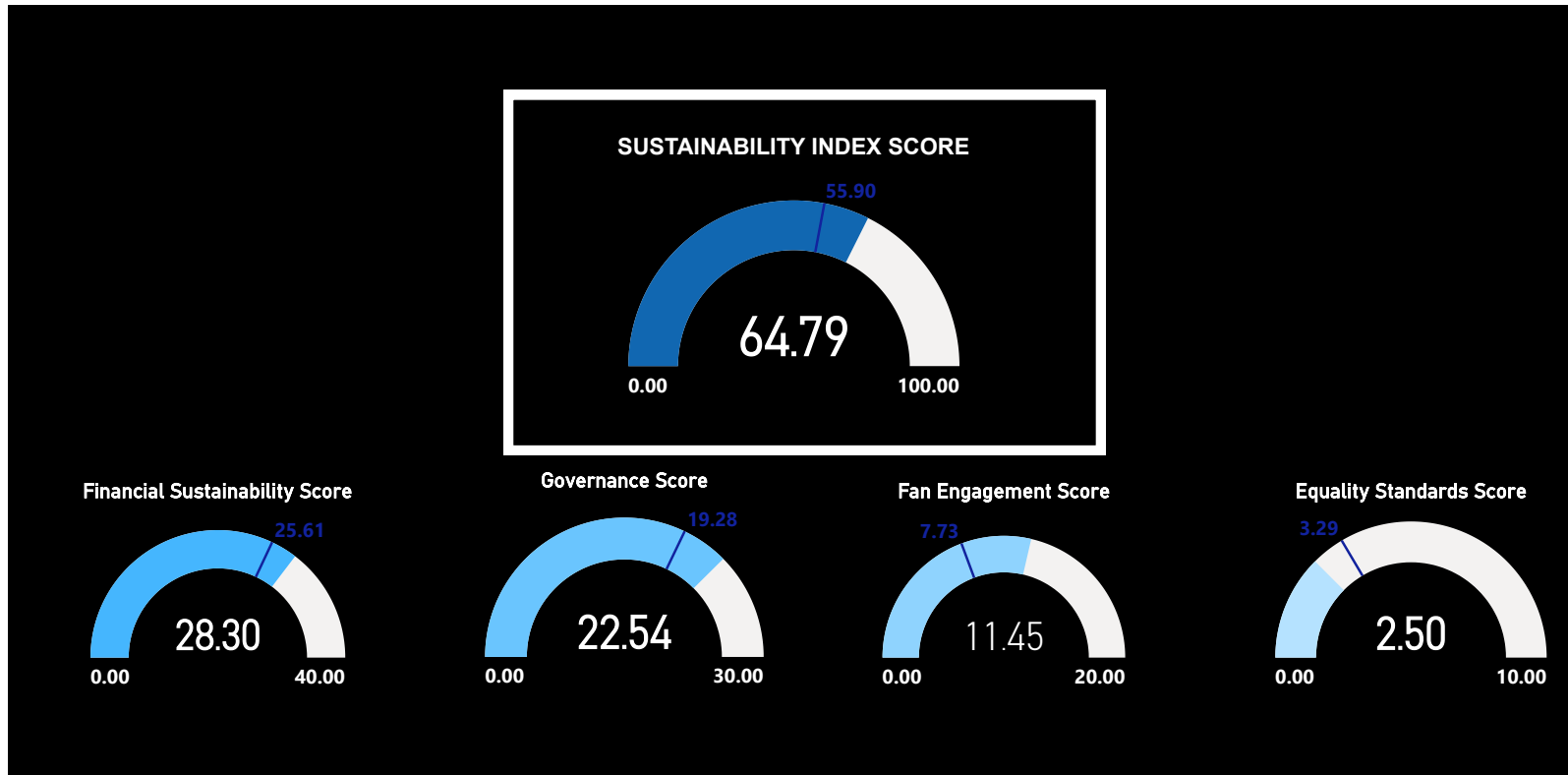
# CRYSTAL PALACE





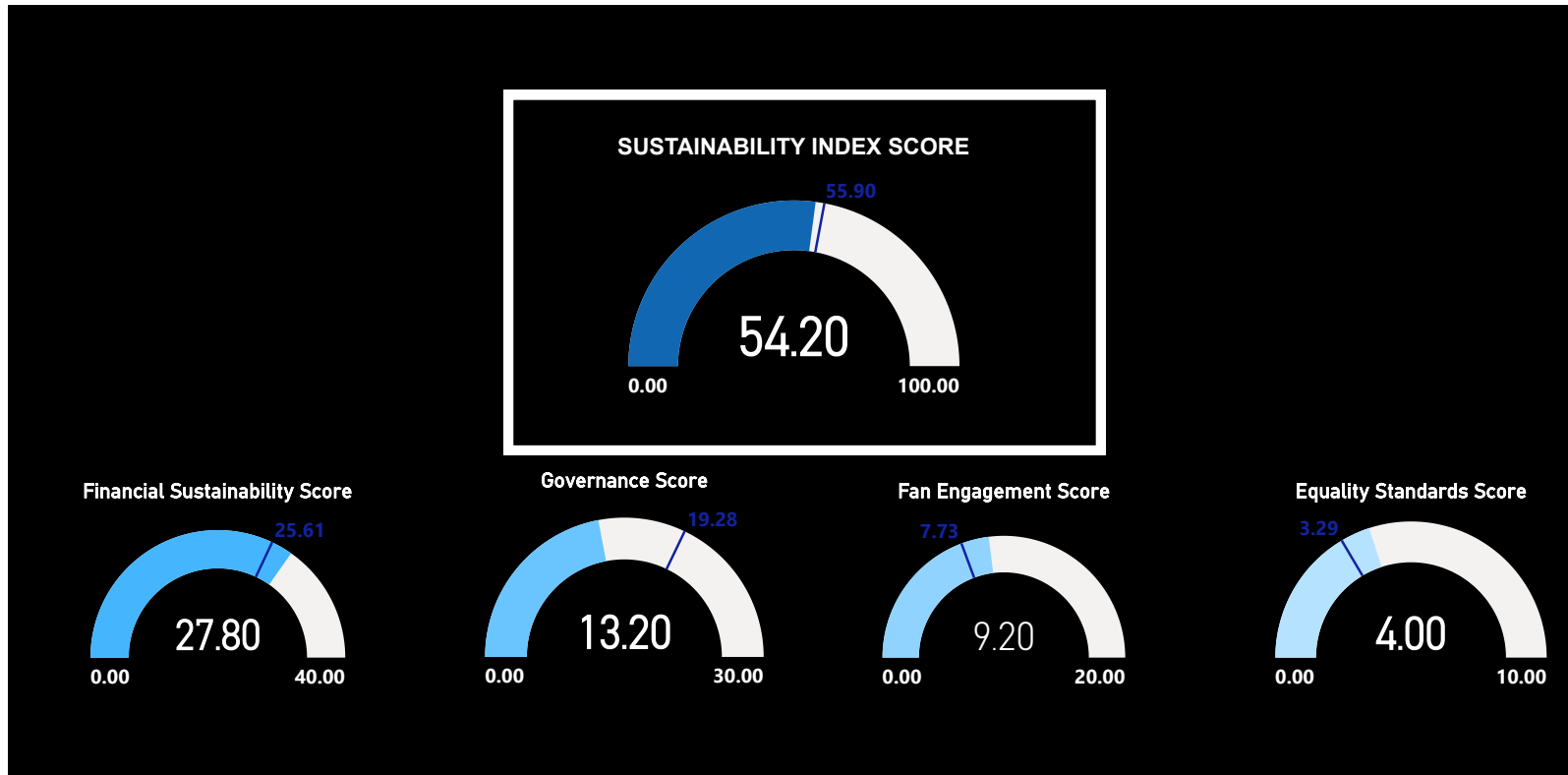


# EVERTON



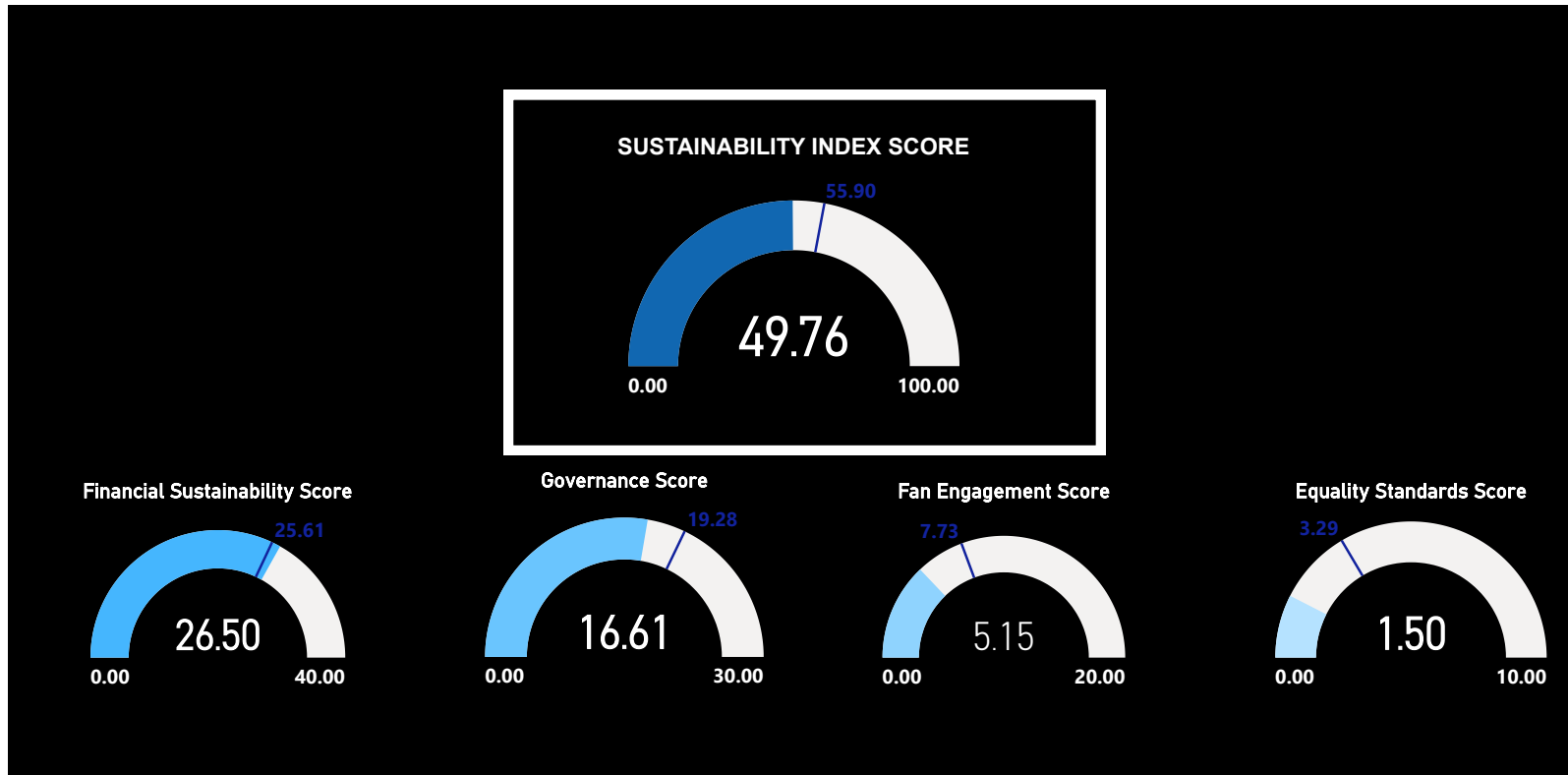


# FULHAM



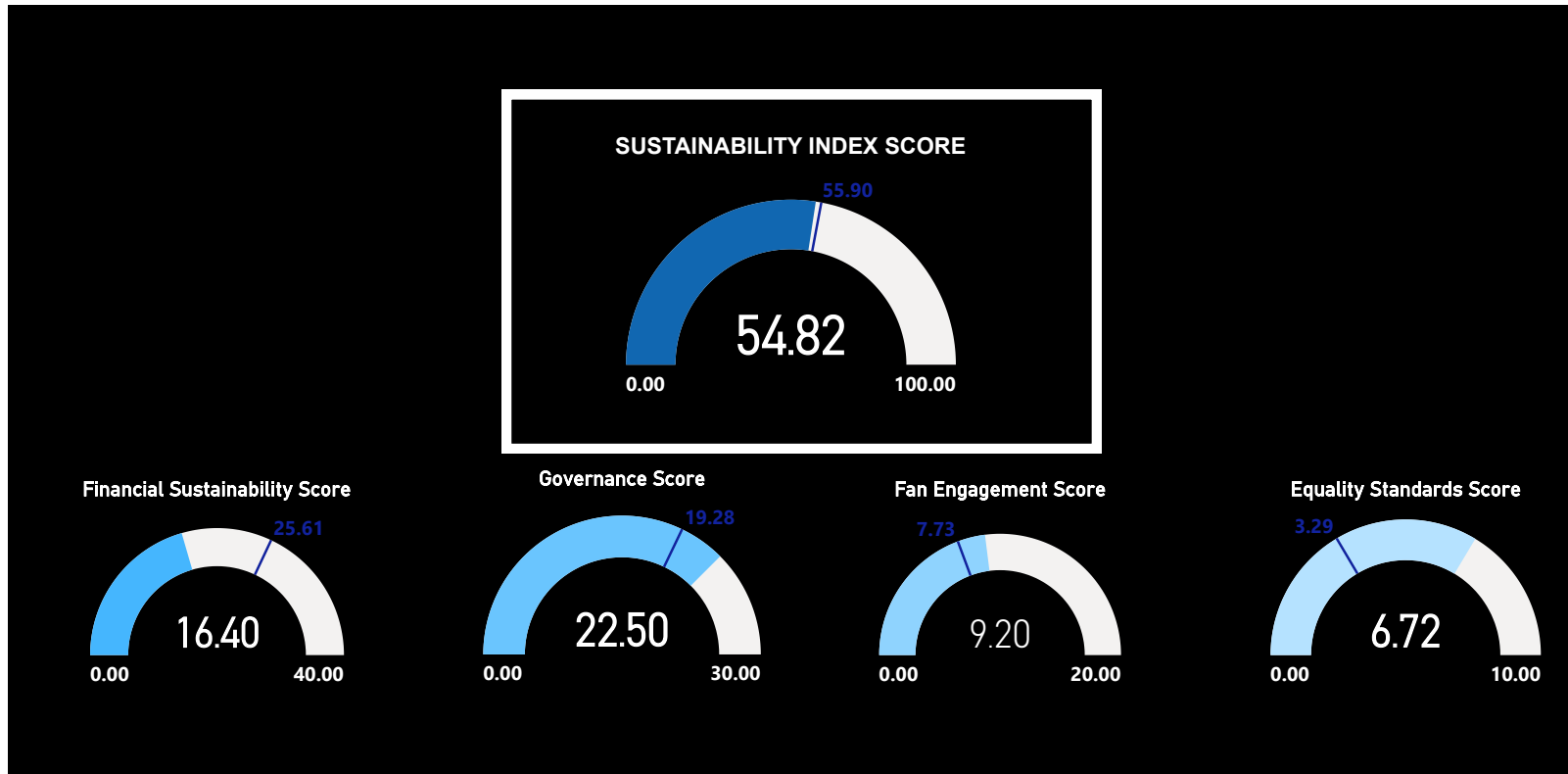


# LEEDS UNITED



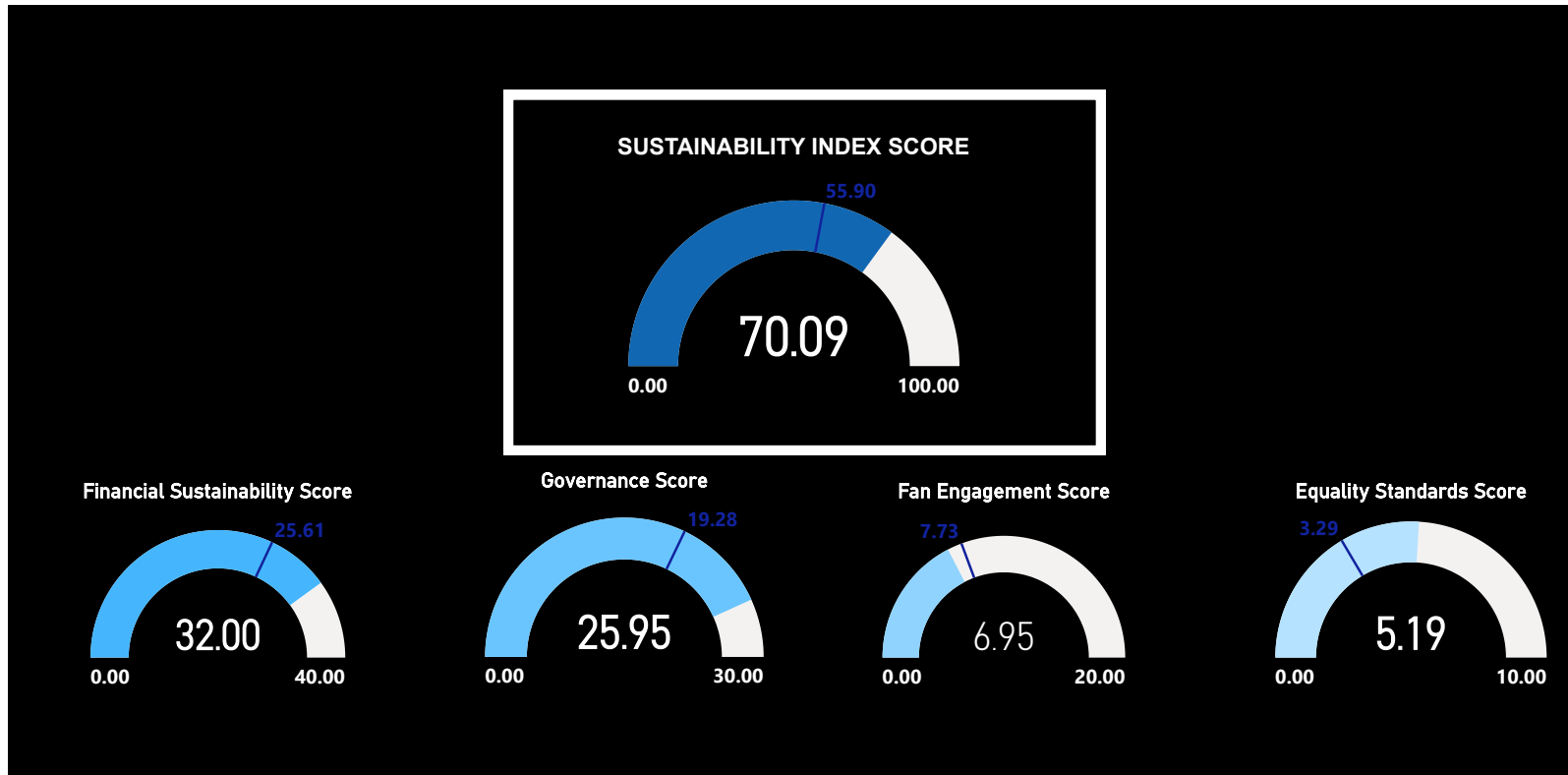


# LEICESTER CITY



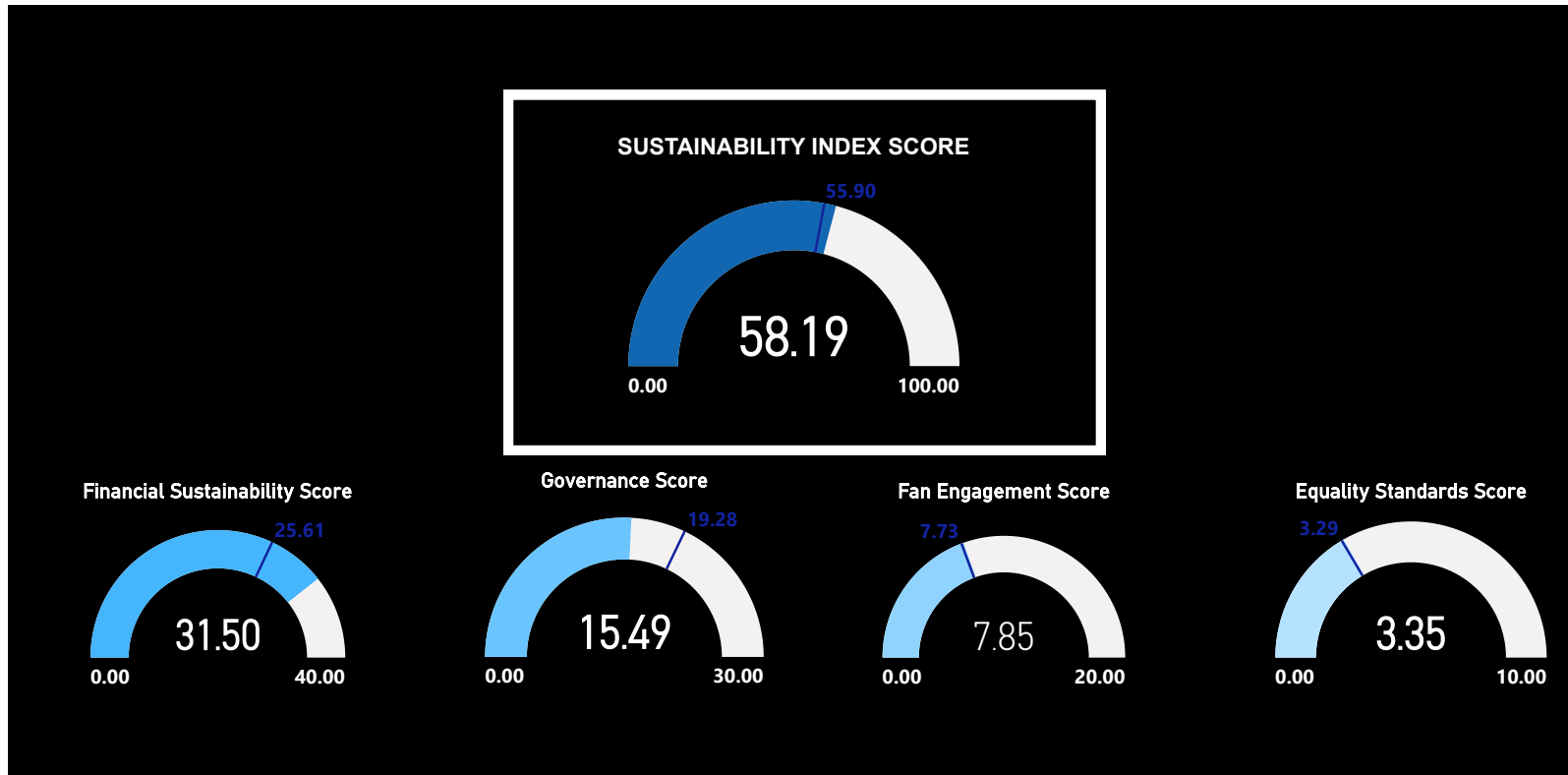


# LIVERPOOL





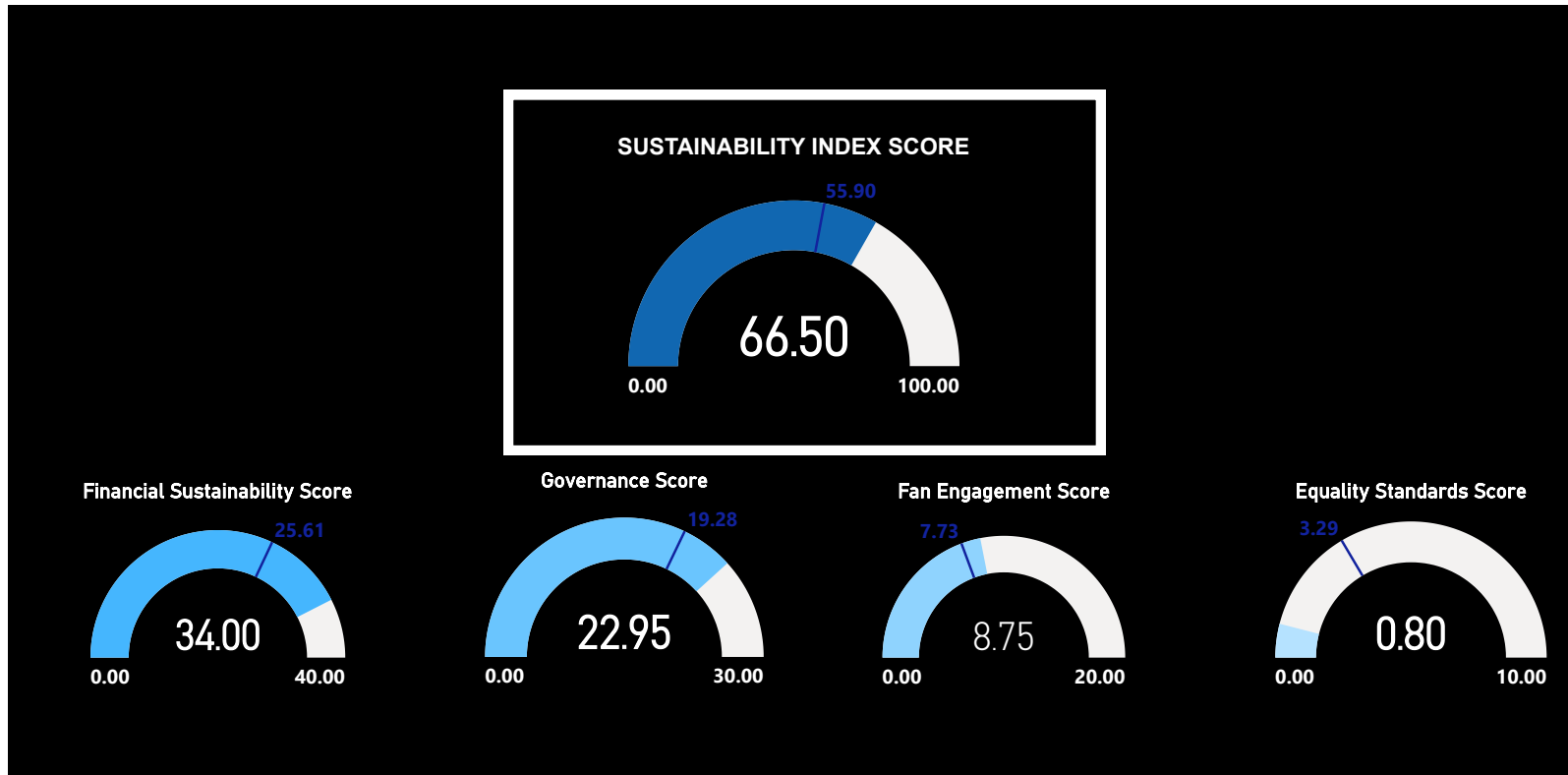
# MANCHESTER CITY





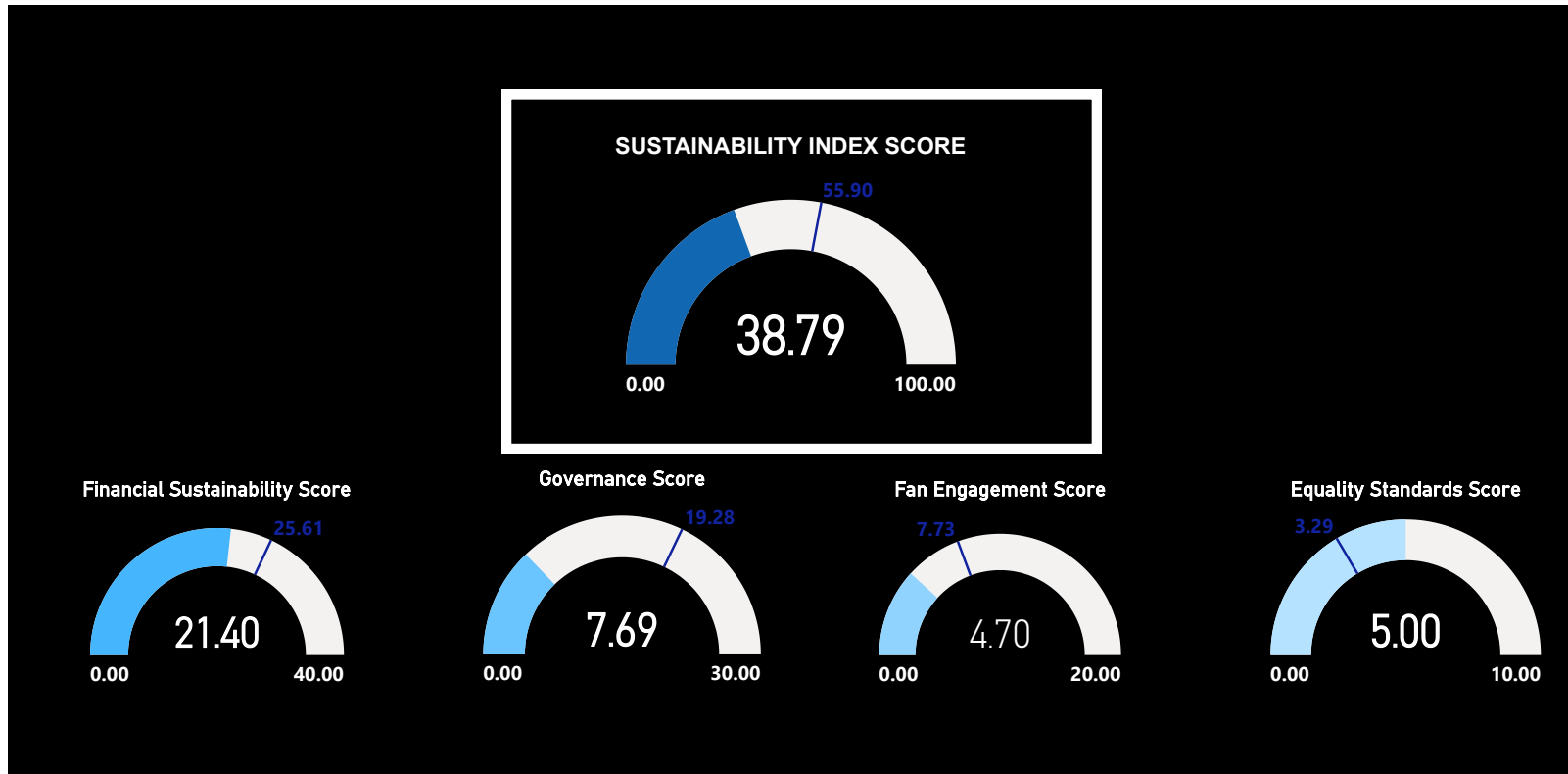


# MANCHESTER UNITED



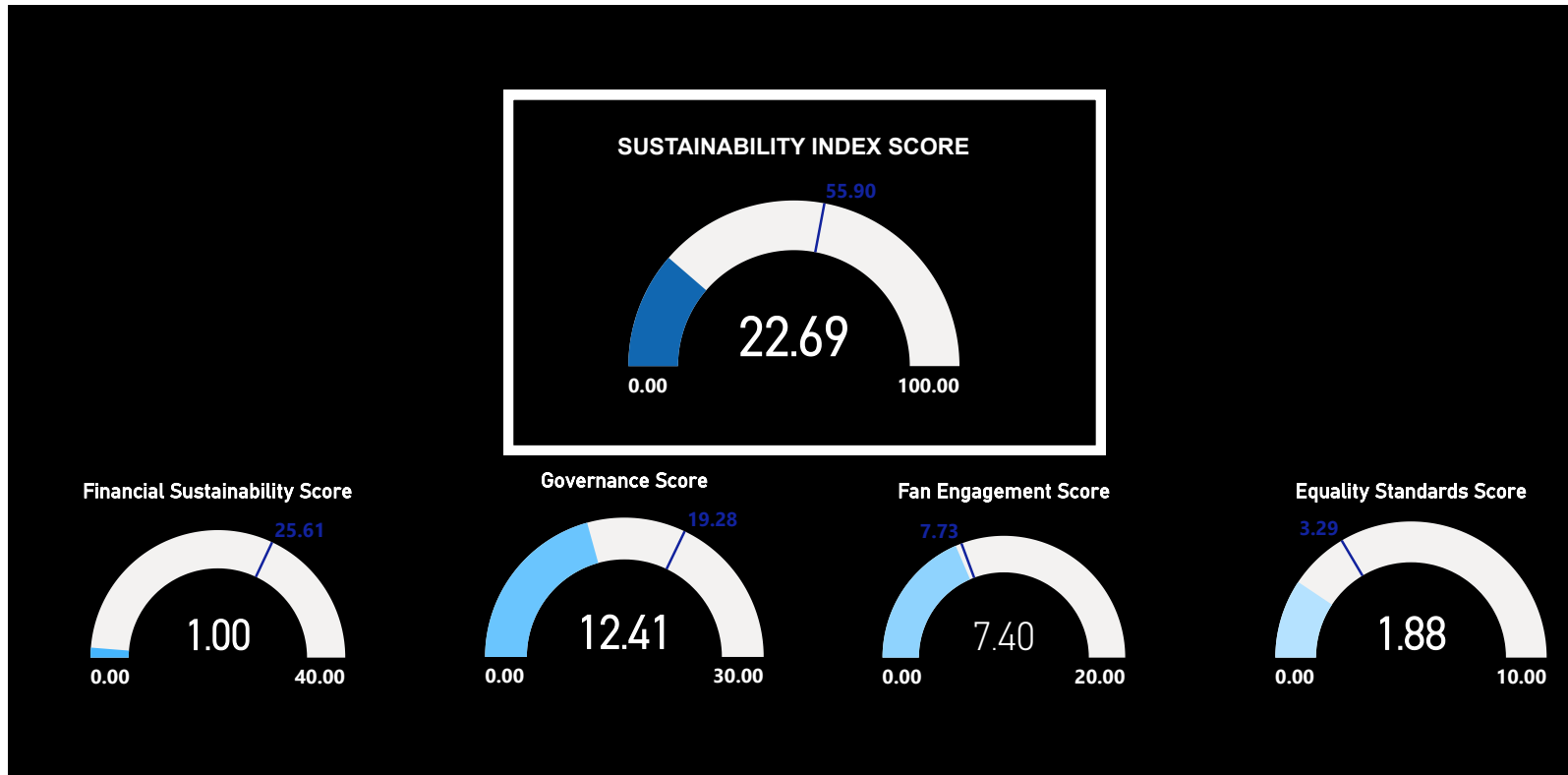


# NEWCASTLE UNITED



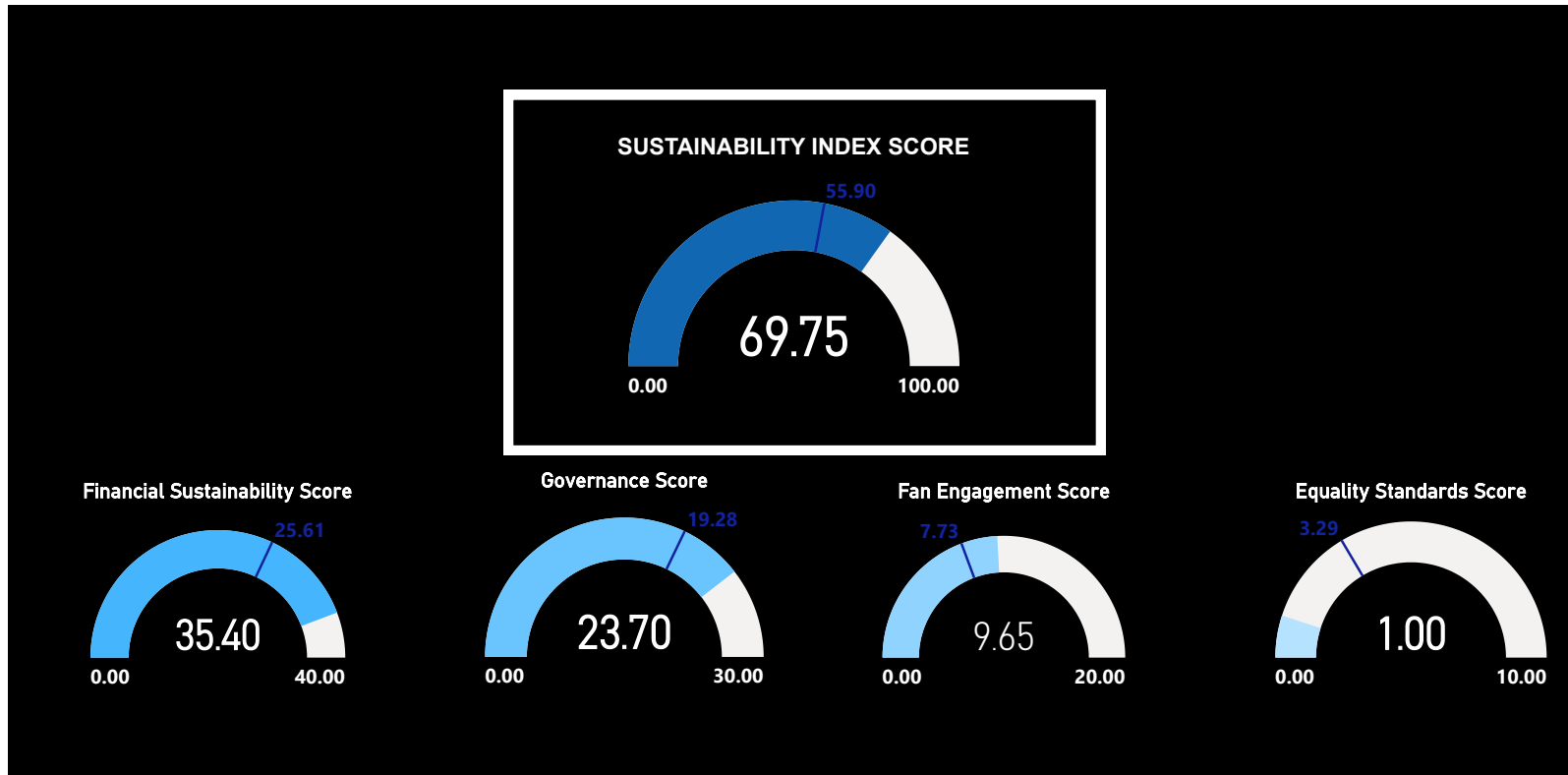


# NOTTINGHAM FOREST



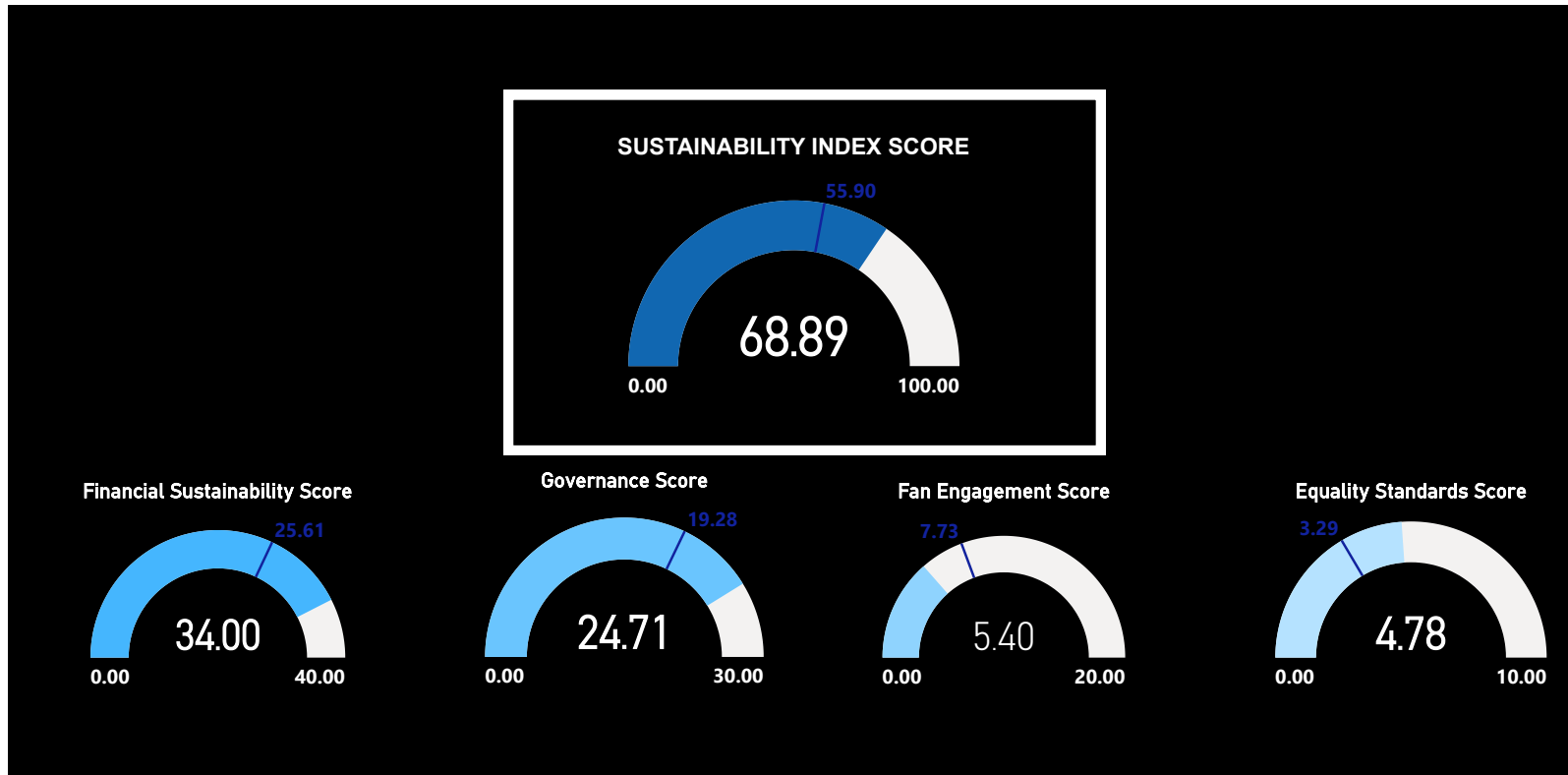


# SOUTHAMPTON



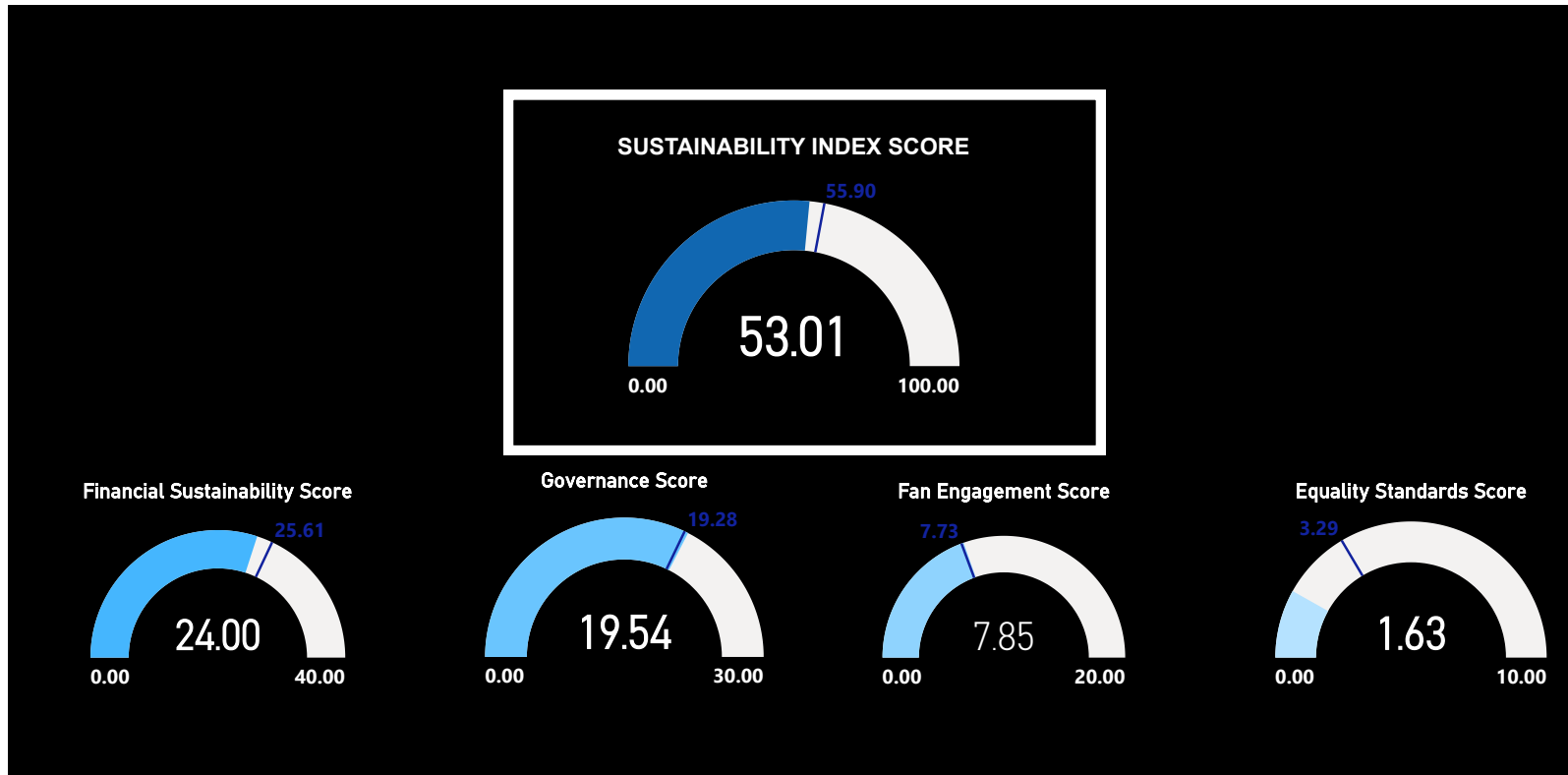


# TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR





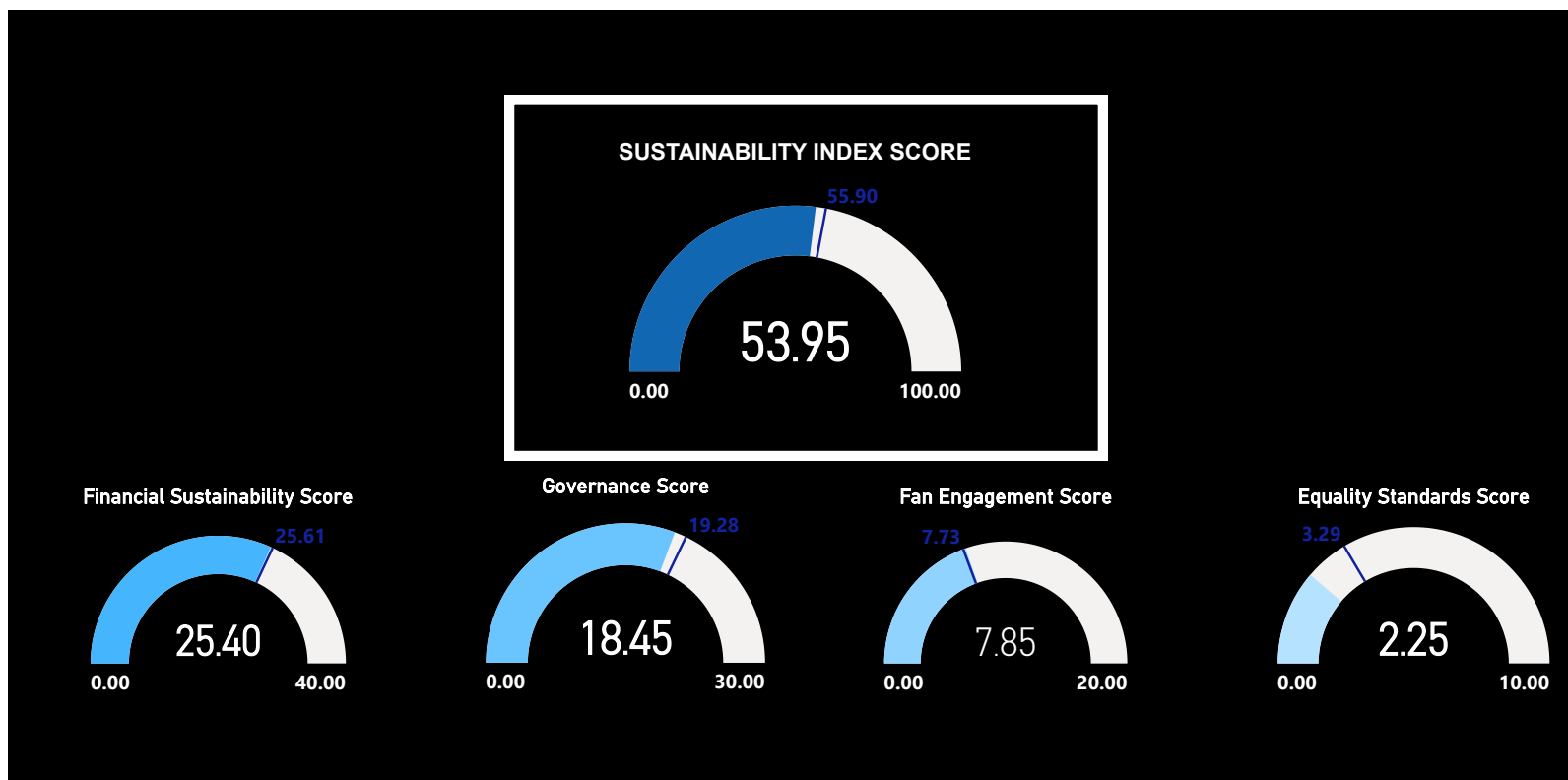
# WEST HAM UNITED







# WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS







ALDERCLAD LIMITED  
INDUSTRIAL CLEANING & ROOFING  
Tel: 01753 841 651  
Email: sales@alderclad.com  
www.alderclad.co.uk

**GLENWOOD**  
www.glenwooddecoratingsupplies.co.uk

Full Production Audio Visual Backline  
Events and Equipment Hire  
Sound Stage Lighting  
**MTA**  
www.mtaevents.co.uk your event in one hand

**Swale Auto Sales**  
www.swaleautosales.co.uk  
Proud Supporters Of Darlington F.C.

**tts** total solutions  
tts events  
For all your event requirements  
www.tts-events.co.uk  
Tel: 01753 841 651

DARLINGTON LADIES  
FC  
Darlington

Adams Bathrooms

PROPERTY  
PLC

REARW

MTA

omel

Watson  
woodhouse

DARLINGTON FC  
KINGSTON GROUNDS

**CKJ Interiors** Tel: 01757 641 648

**SPORTSWEAR**  
PERSONALISED SPORTS CLOTHING

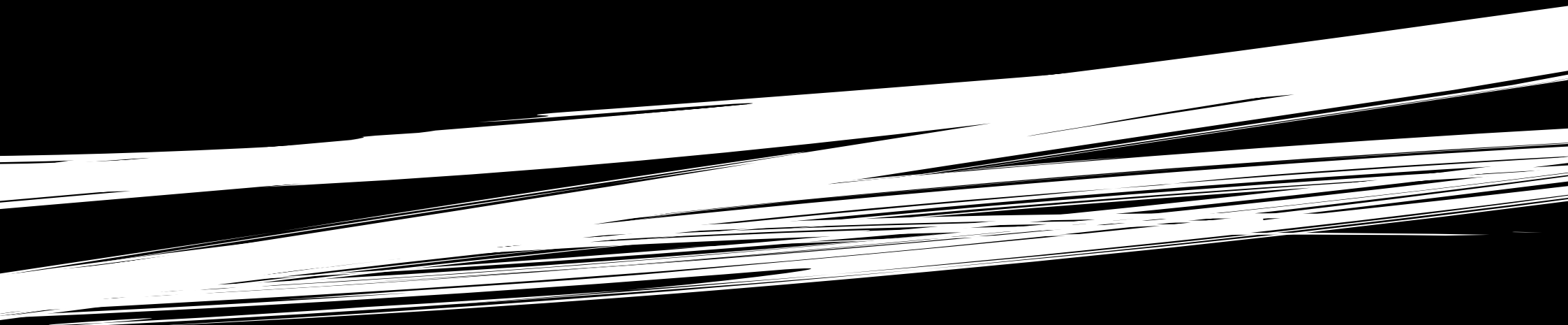
Darlington  
BIG ON SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY  
Darlington  
Building Success



# SUSTAINABILITY INDEX LEAGUE TABLE: CHAMPIONSHIP

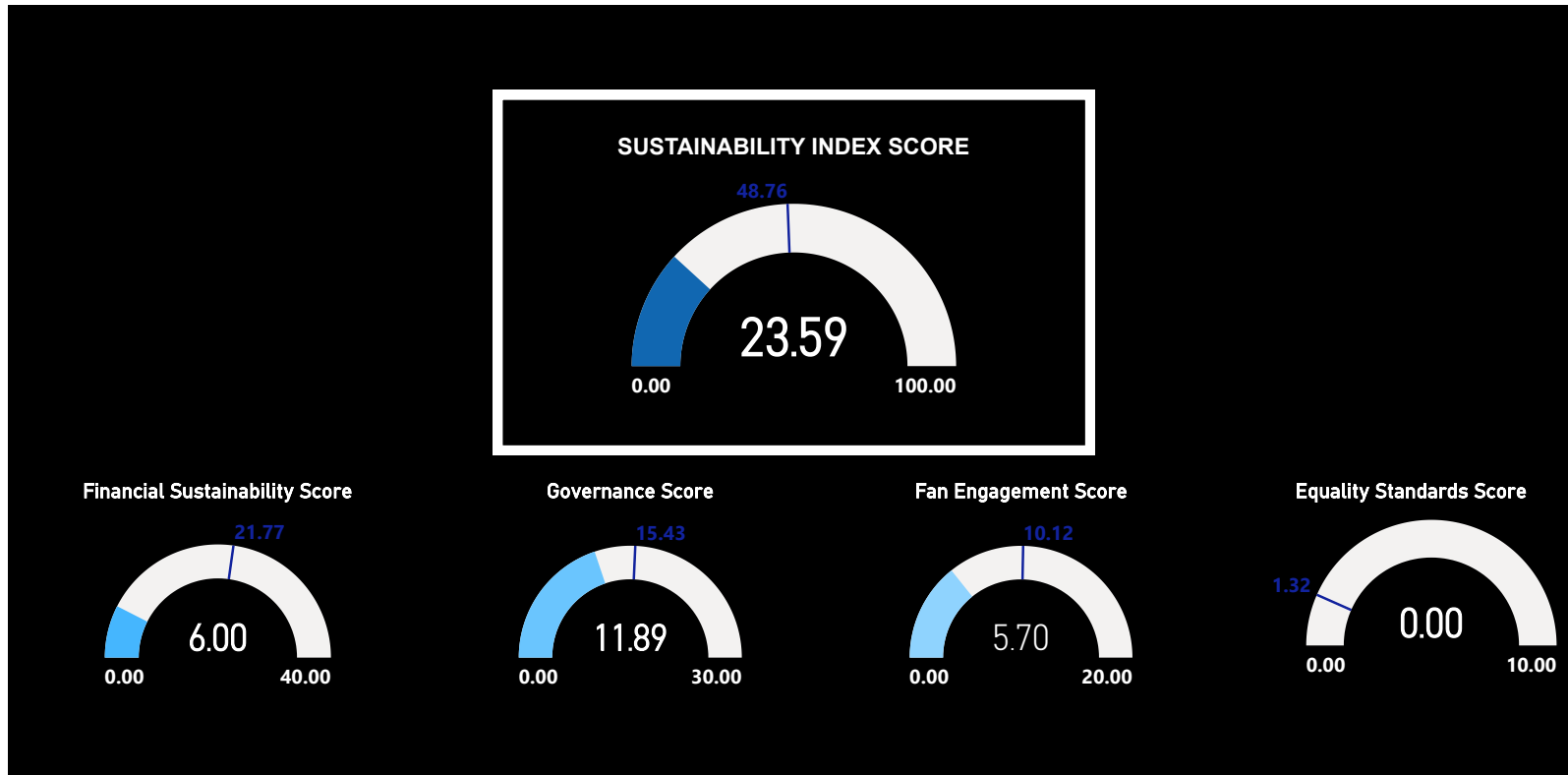
Club	Financial Sustainability	Governance Score	Fan Engagement	Equality Standards	Sustainability Index
Norwich City	29.20	23.03	15.50	2.86	70.58
Burnley	35.40	18.49	9.20	0.94	64.03
Swansea City	33.80	12.94	13.25	2.50	62.49
Sheffield United	34.00	13.99	8.30	0.71	57.00
Luton Town	29.00	14.70	11.90	0.00	55.60
Watford	25.70	17.51	5.60	2.81	51.63
Huddersfield Town	29.00	13.46	7.90	1.25	51.61
West Bromwich Albion	32.40	10.58	4.95	2.00	49.93
Sunderland	34.00	9.00	6.75	0.00	49.75
Millwall	26.00	11.10	11.05	0.00	48.15
Bristol City	24.50	12.15	7.45	0.00	46.60
Blackpool	23.20	12.68	7.85	0.00	43.73
Rotherham United	24.70	9.00	5.85	3.00	42.55
Reading	6.00	13.46	14.70	0.00	34.16
Hull City	10.00	11.63	7.05	0.00	28.68
Stoke City	3.20	14.51	7.90	3.00	28.61
Preston North End	10.00	12.94	4.80	0.00	27.74
Cardiff City	10.00	9.00	8.40	0.00	27.40
Coventry City	3.20	13.20	6.15	4.38	26.93
Birmingham City	6.00	11.89	5.70	0.00	23.59
Queens Park Rangers	1.00	10.05	9.70	2.00	22.75
Blackburn Rovers	0.00	12.15	8.40	1.00	21.55
Wigan Athletic	5.00	9.00	7.50	0.00	21.50
Middlesbrough	0.00	12.15	6.55	0.00	18.70

# CLUB BY CLUB GUIDE: CHAMPIONSHIP



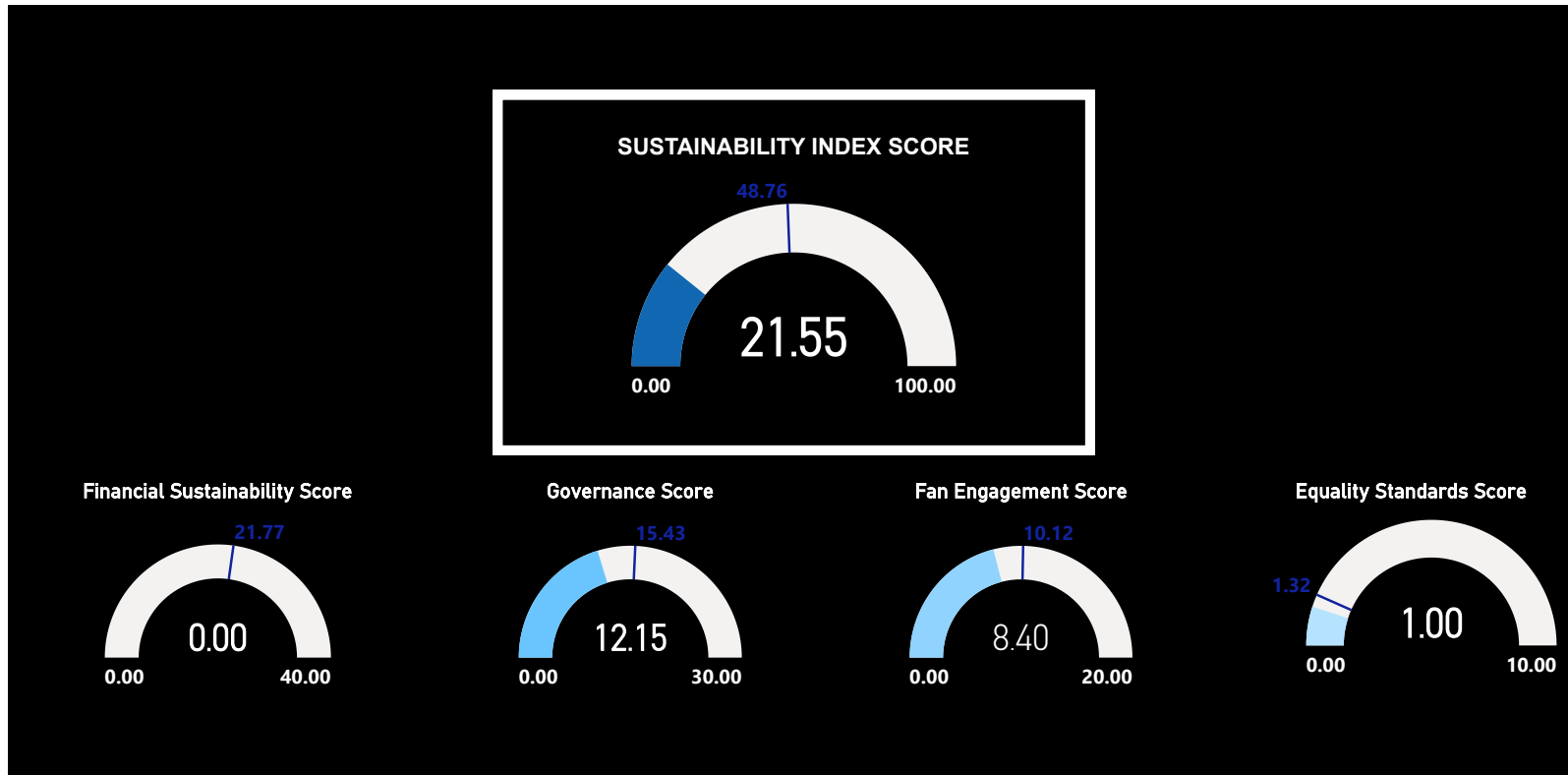


# BIRMINGHAM CITY



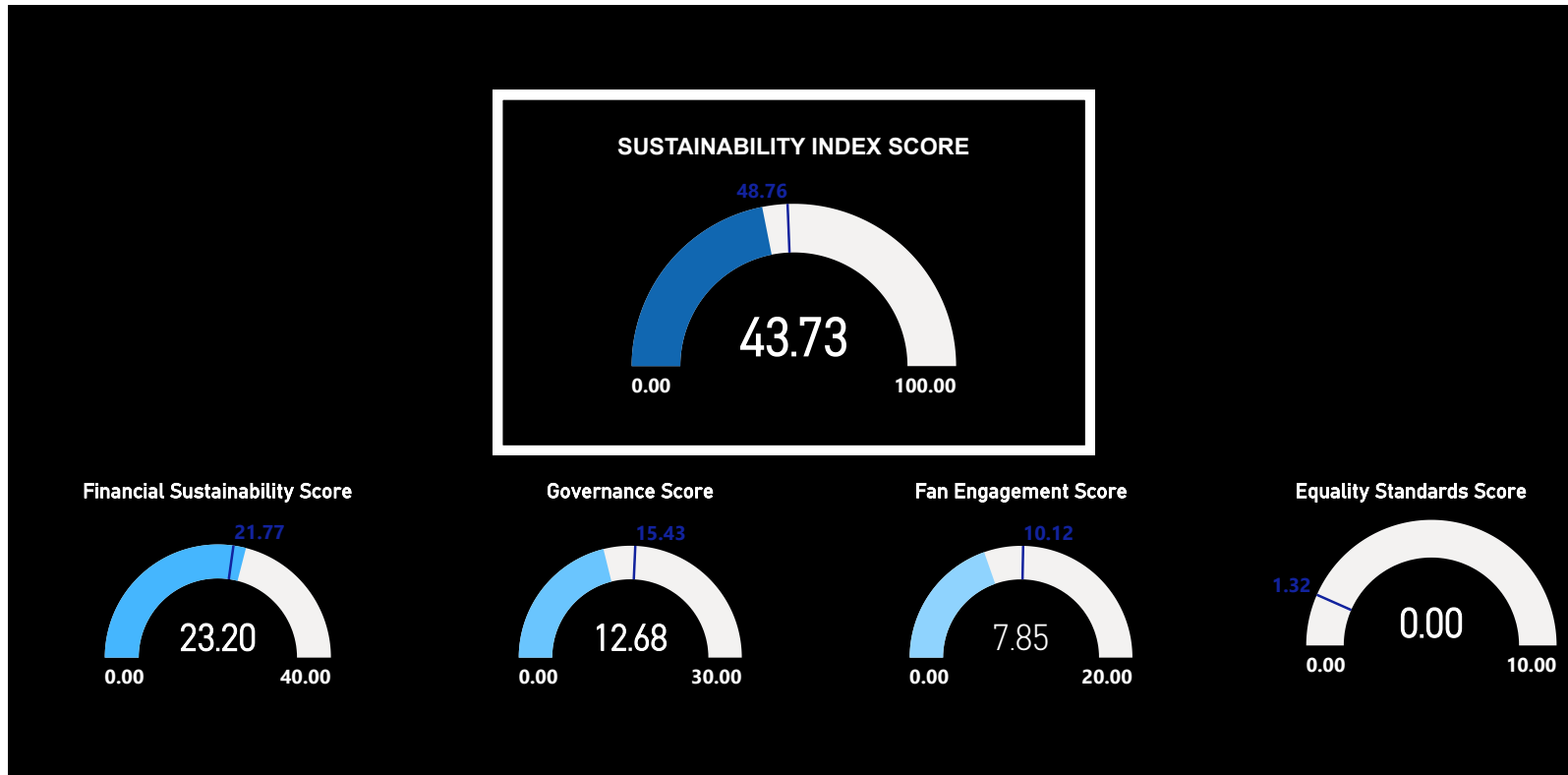


# BLACKBURN ROVERS



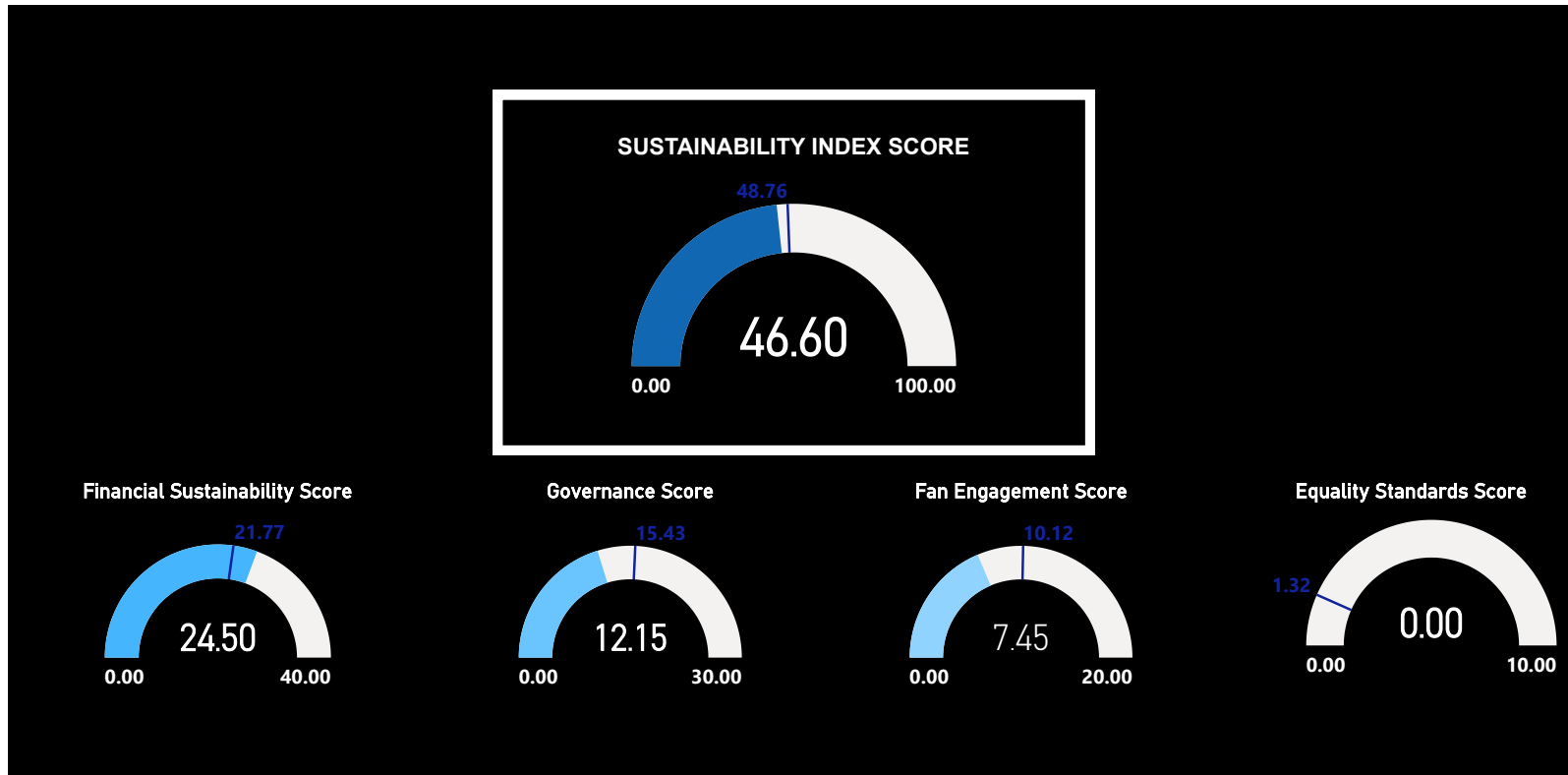


# BLACKPOOL





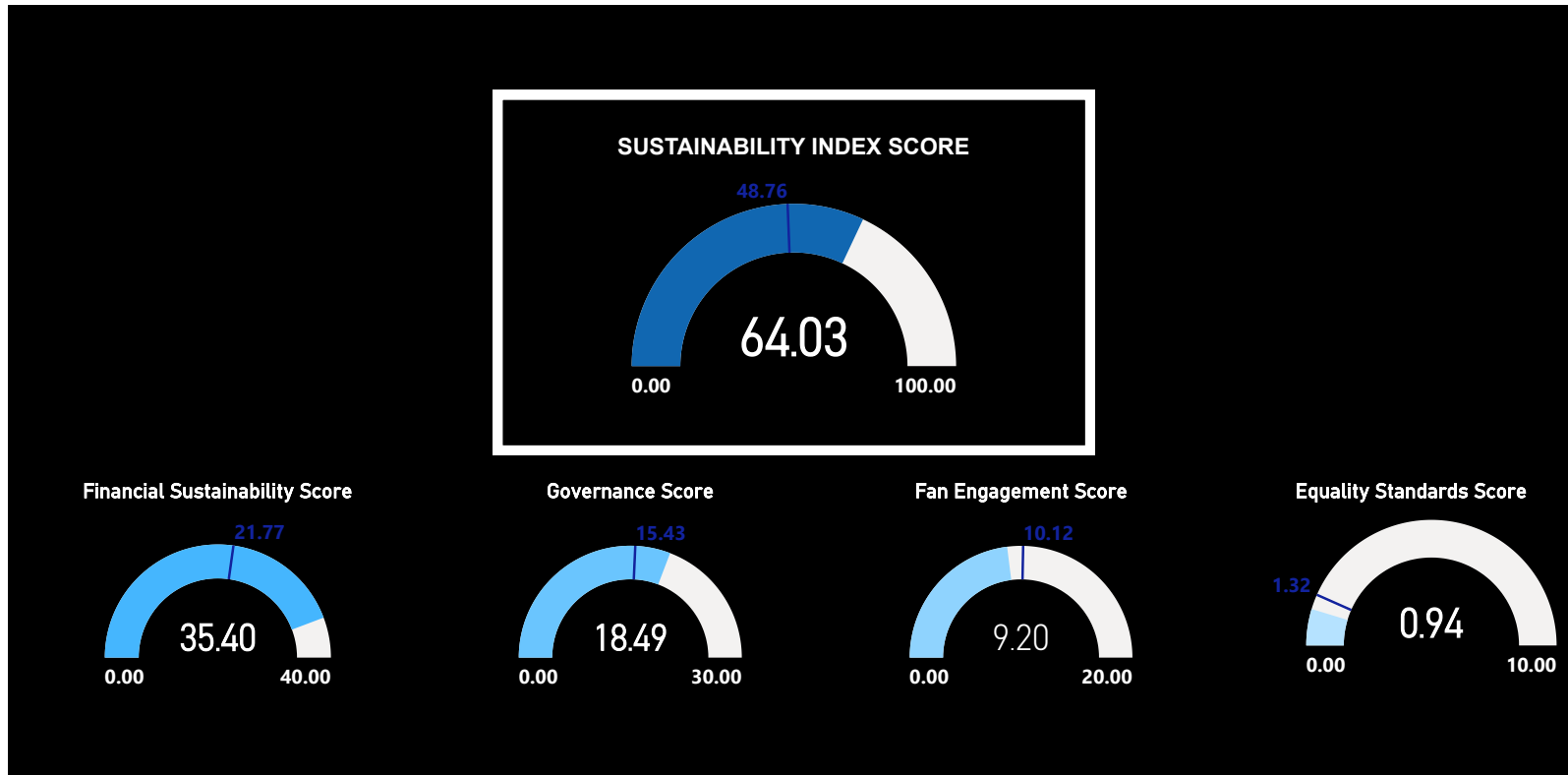
# BRISTOL CITY





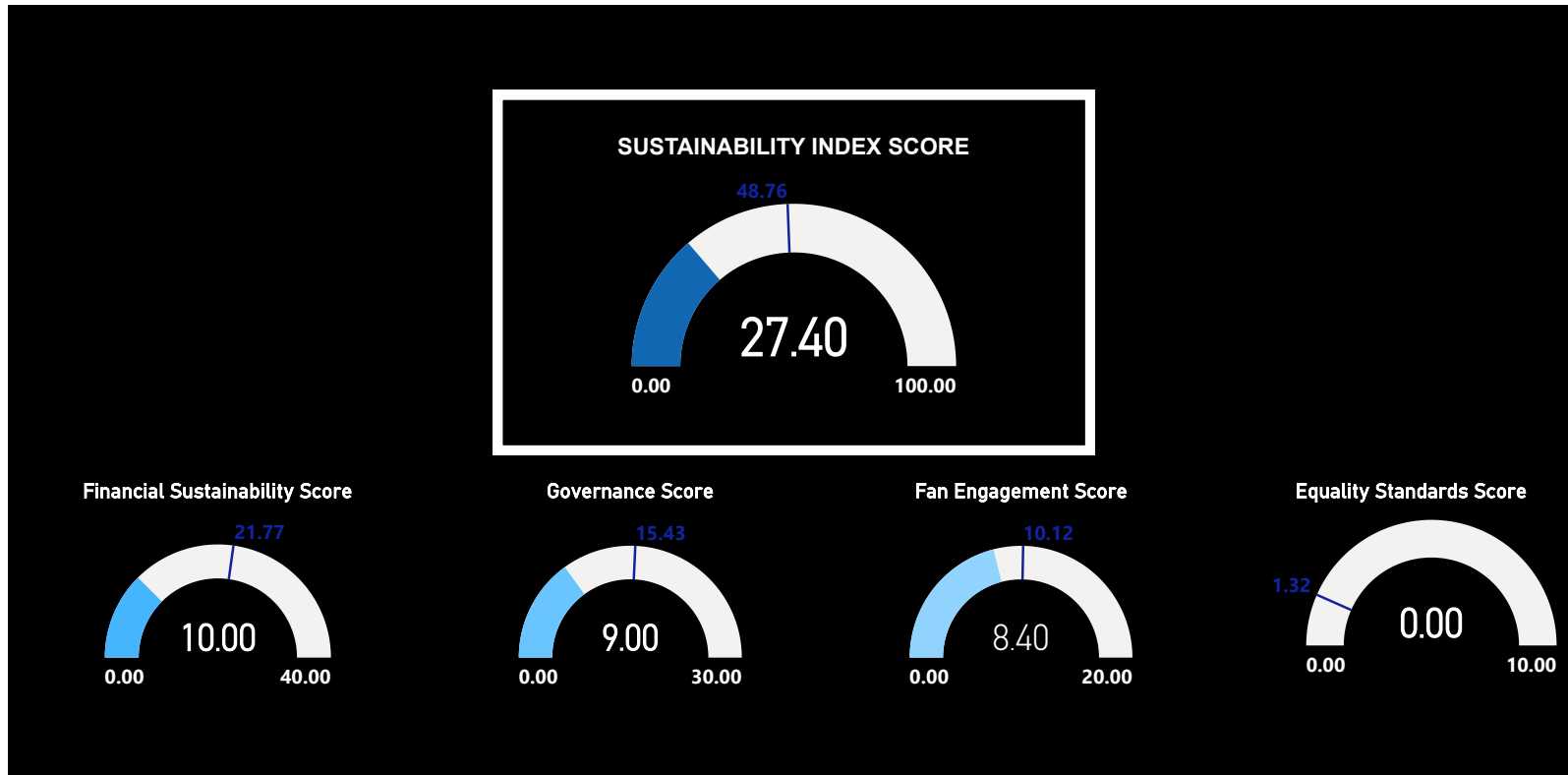


# BURNLEY



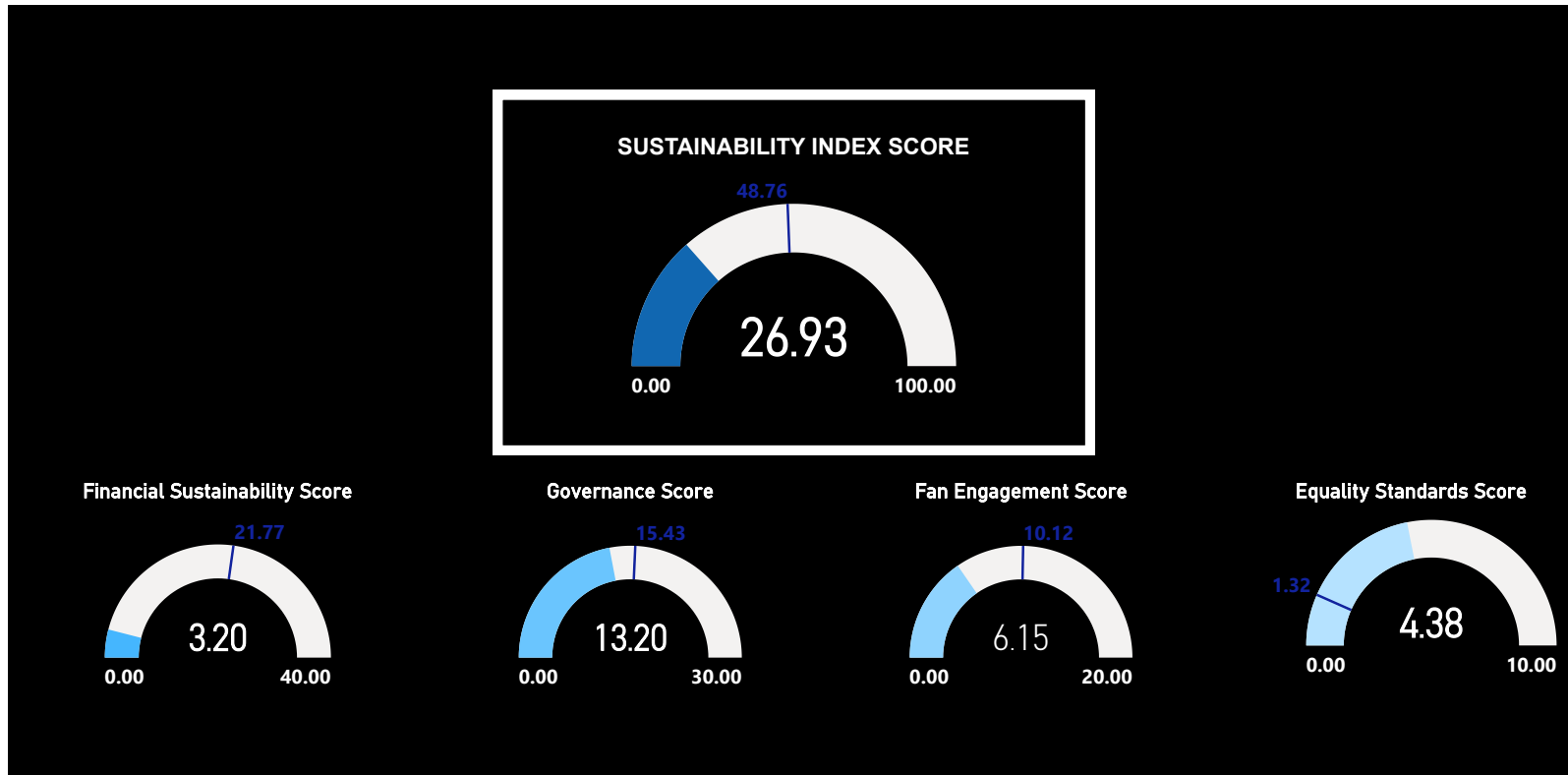


# CARDIFF CITY



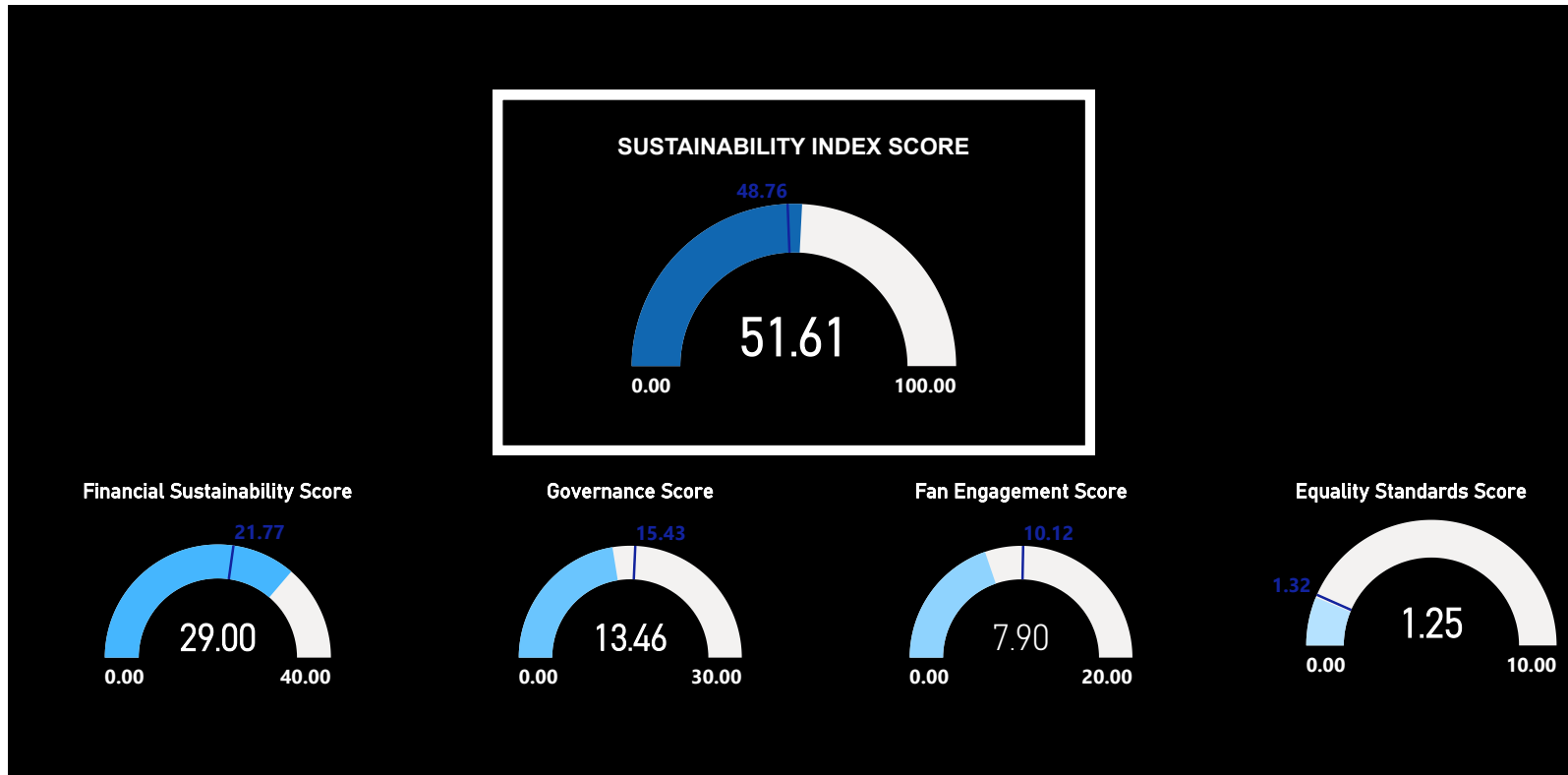


# COVENTRY CITY



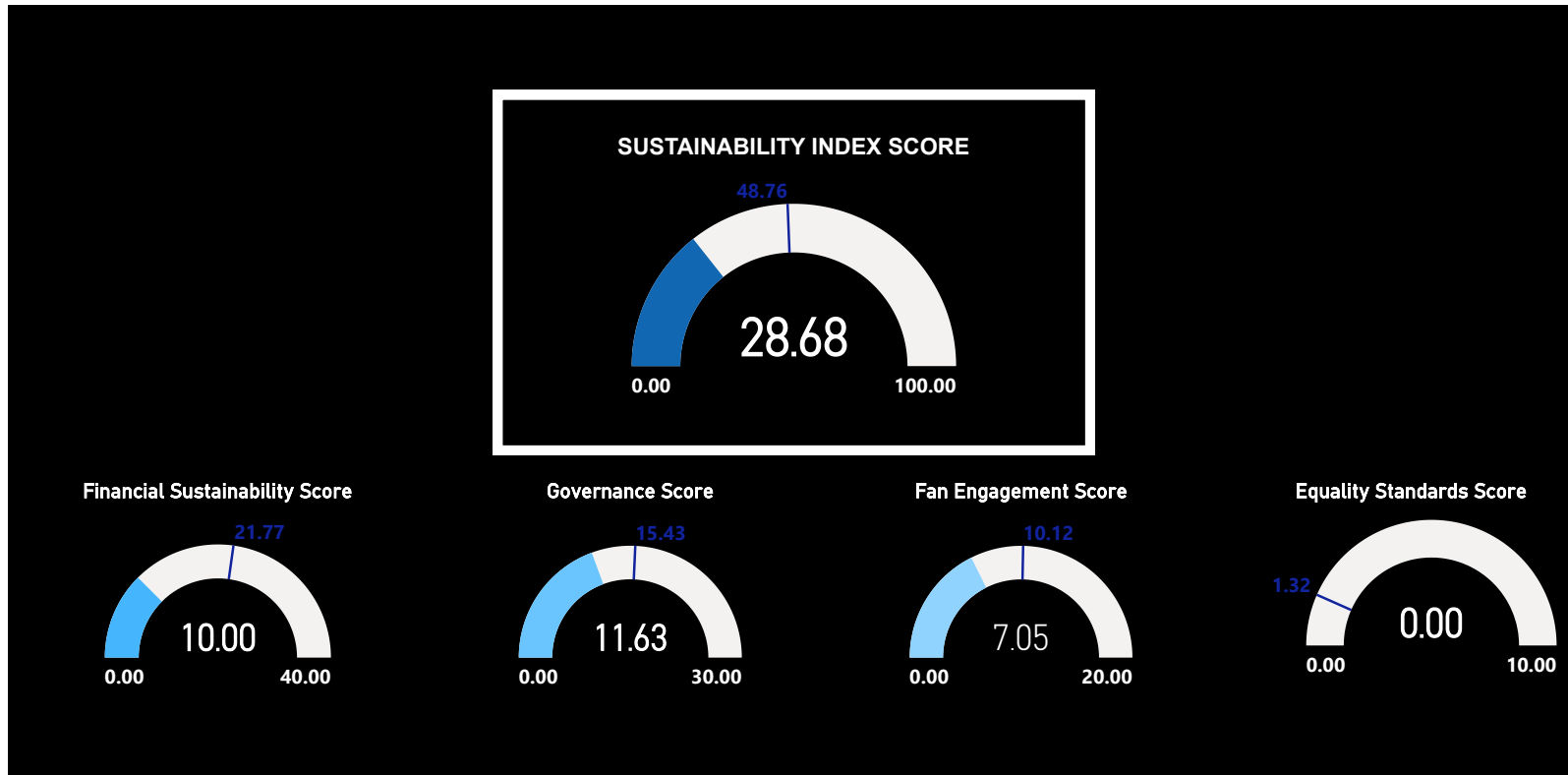


# HUDDERSFIELD TOWN



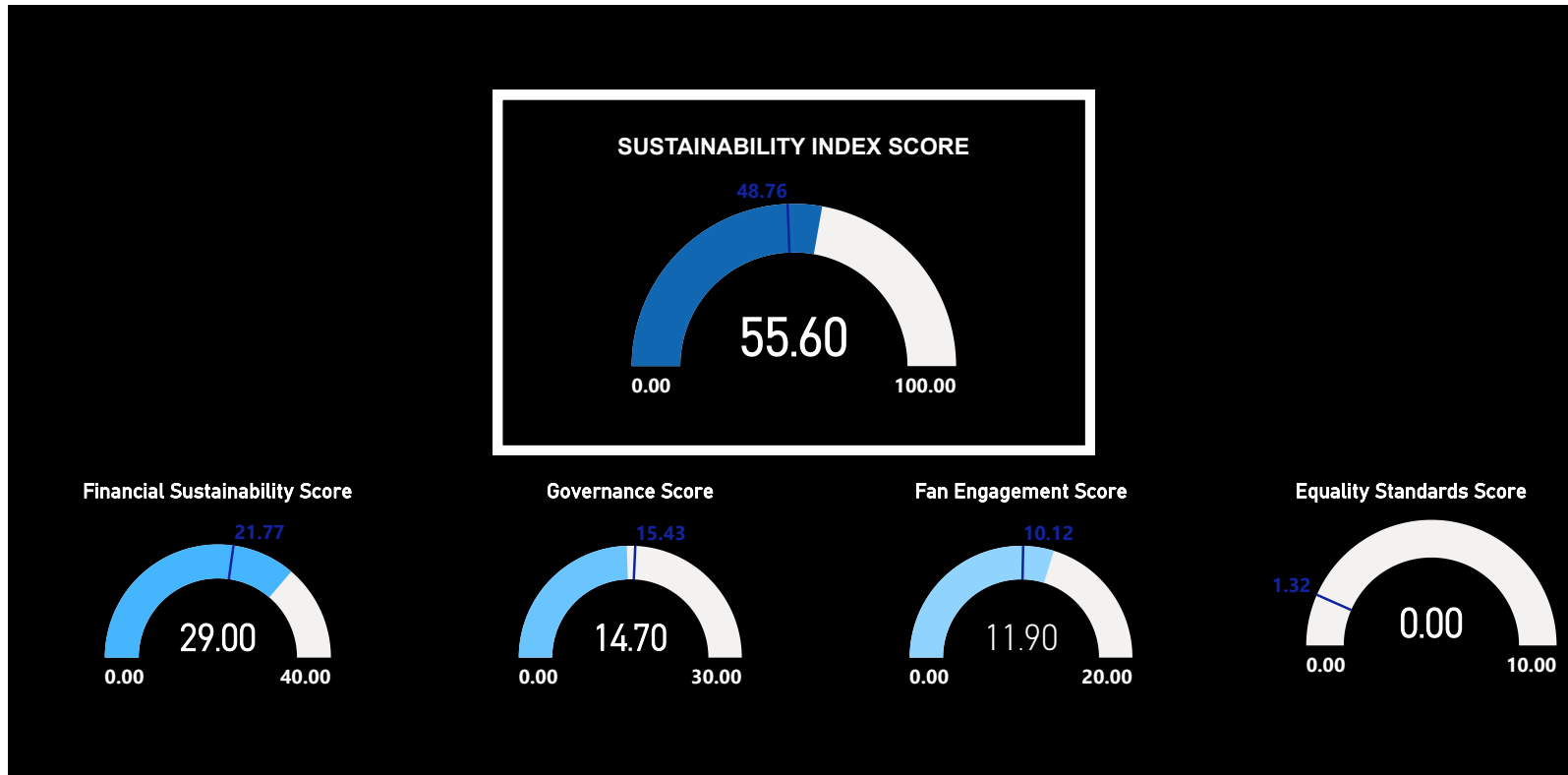


# HULL CITY



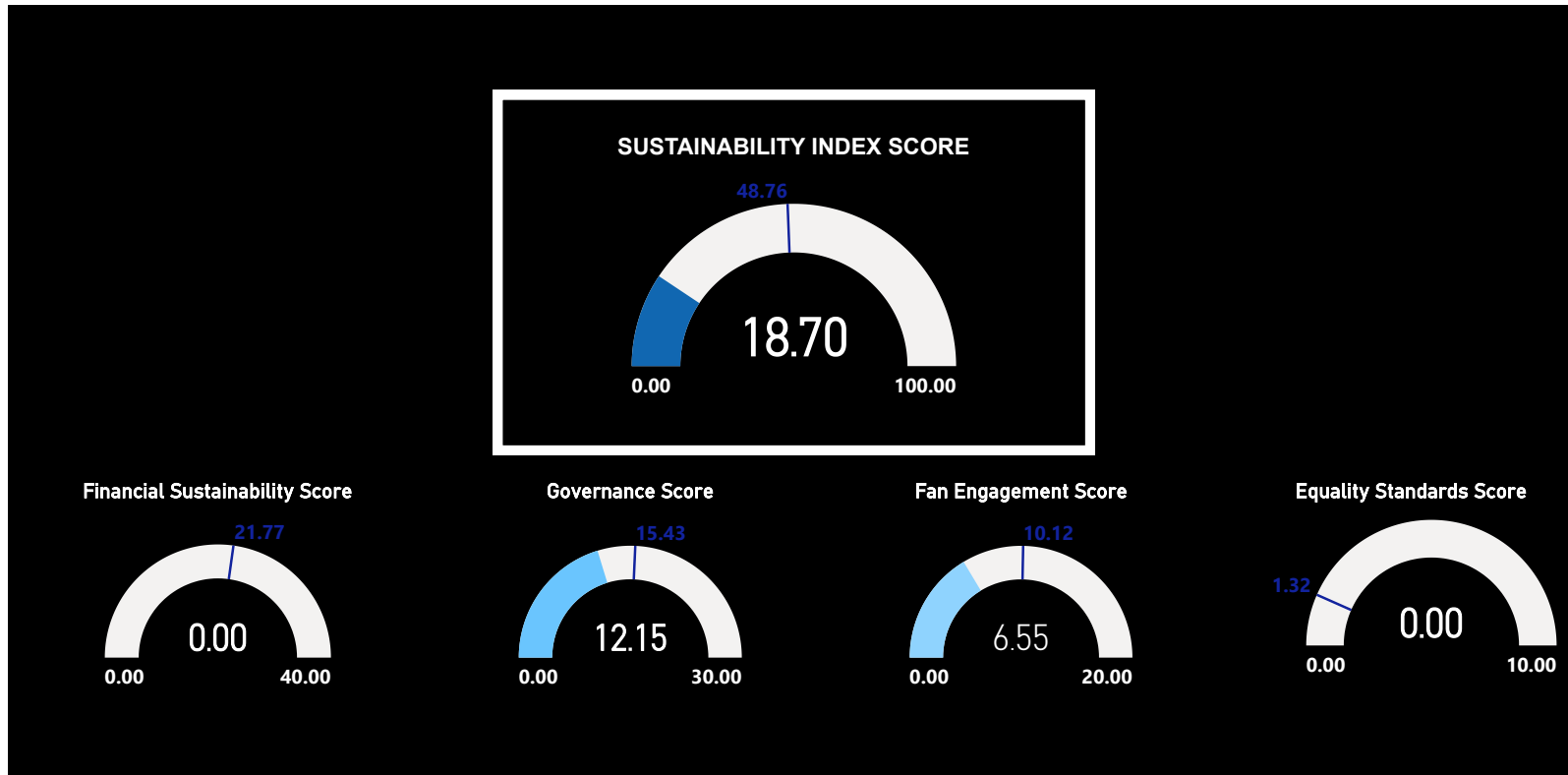


# LUTON TOWN





# MIDDLESBOROUGH





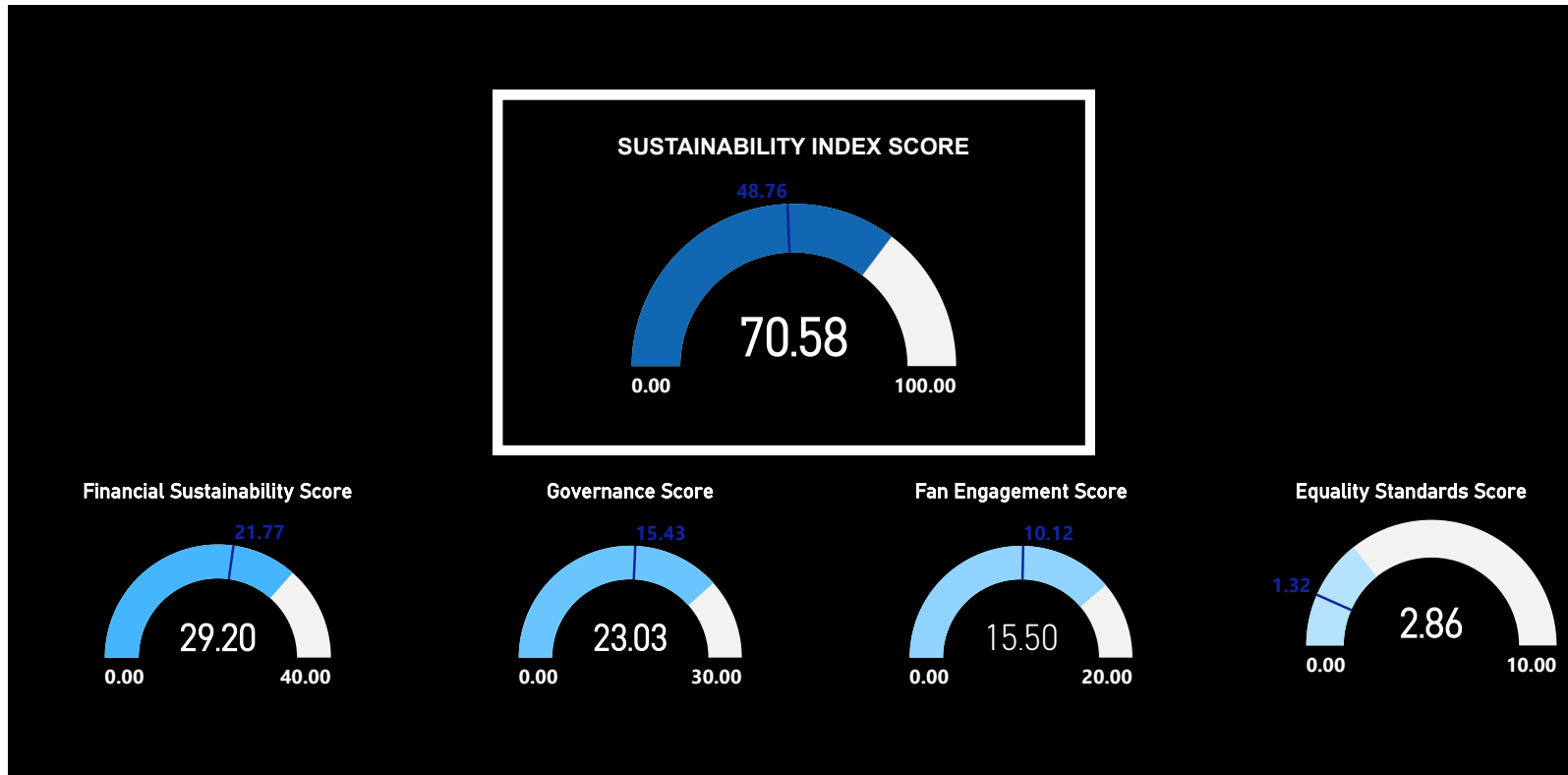
# MILLWALL





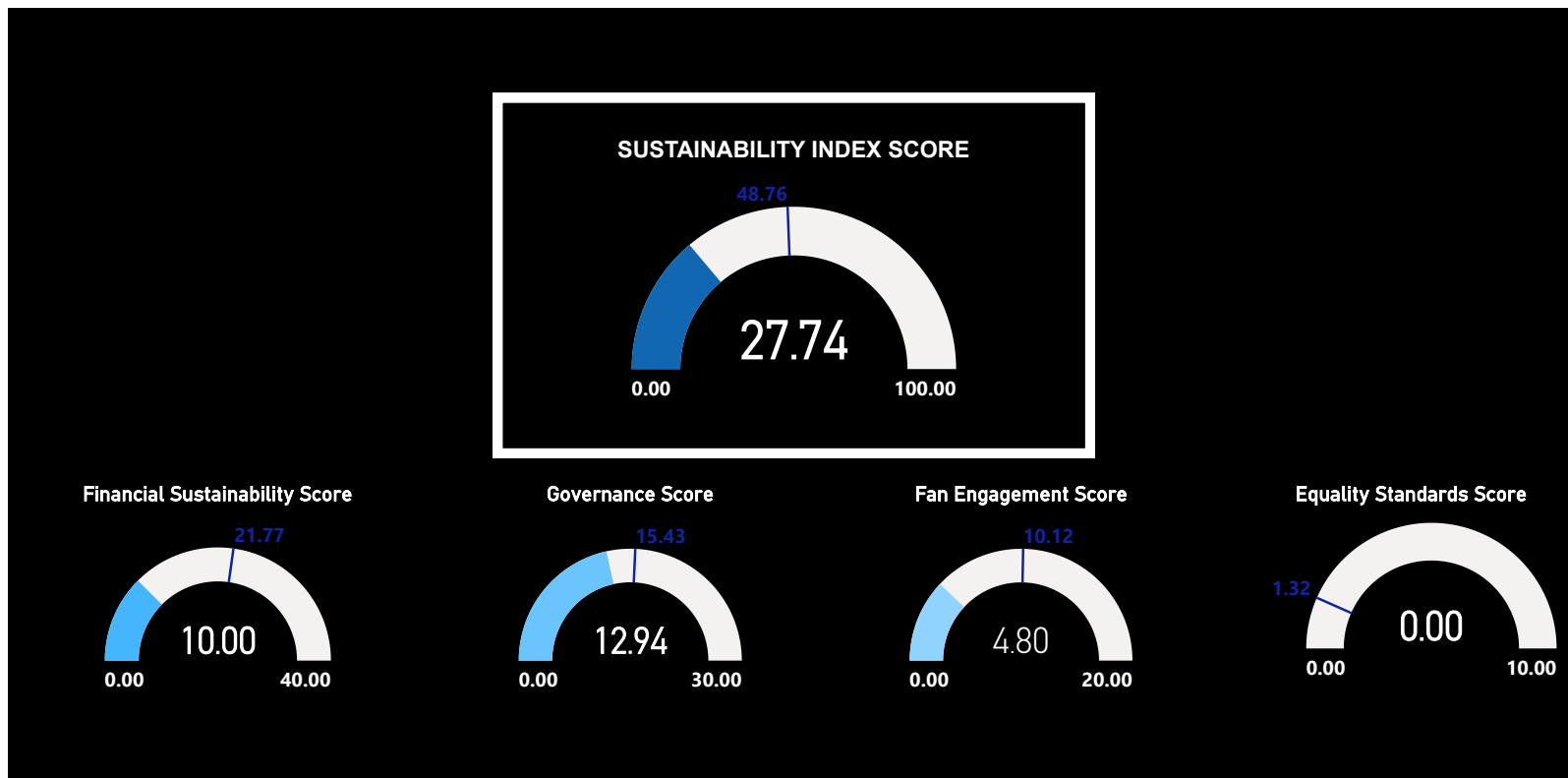


# NORWICH CITY



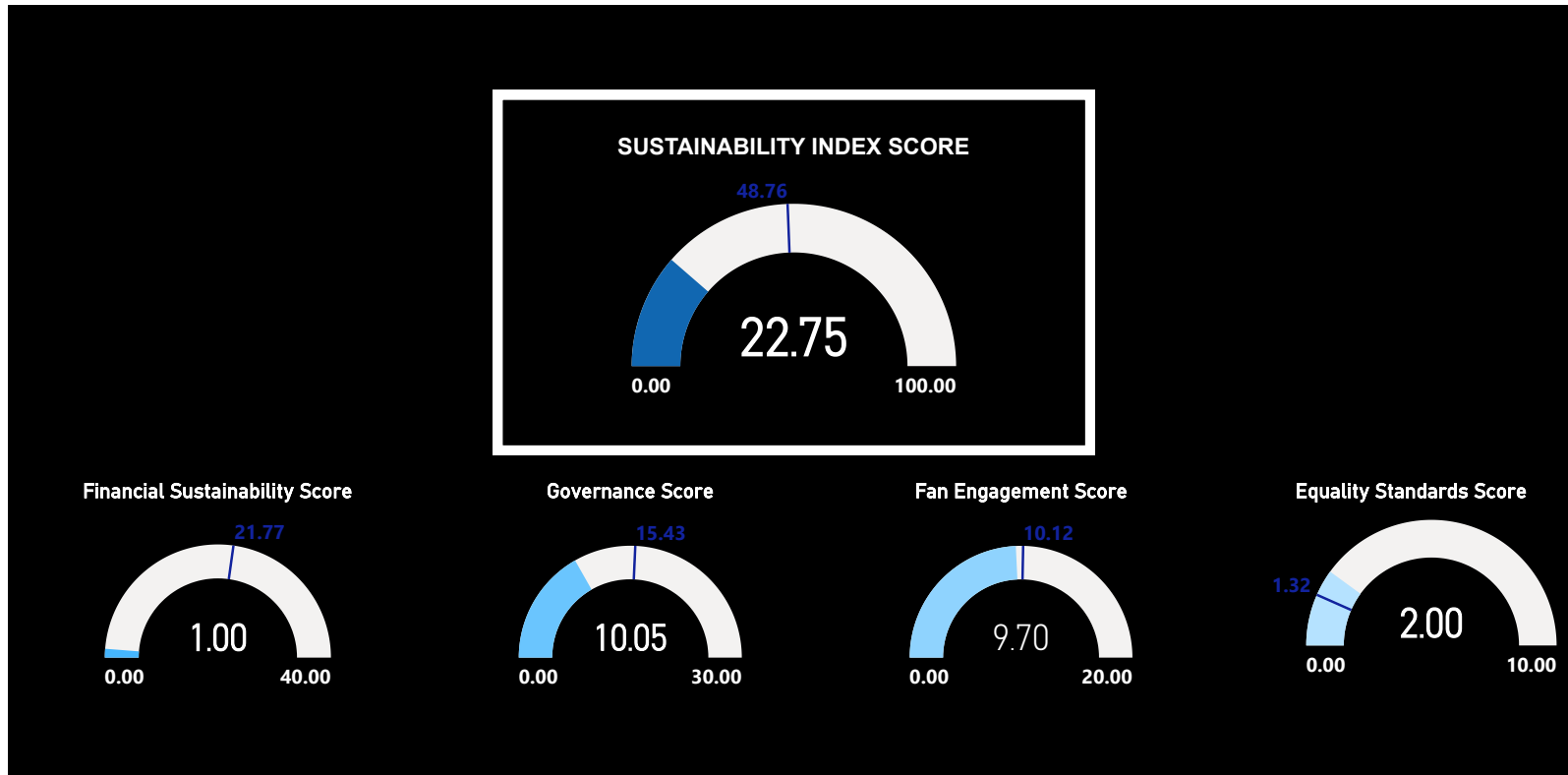


# PRESTON NORTH END



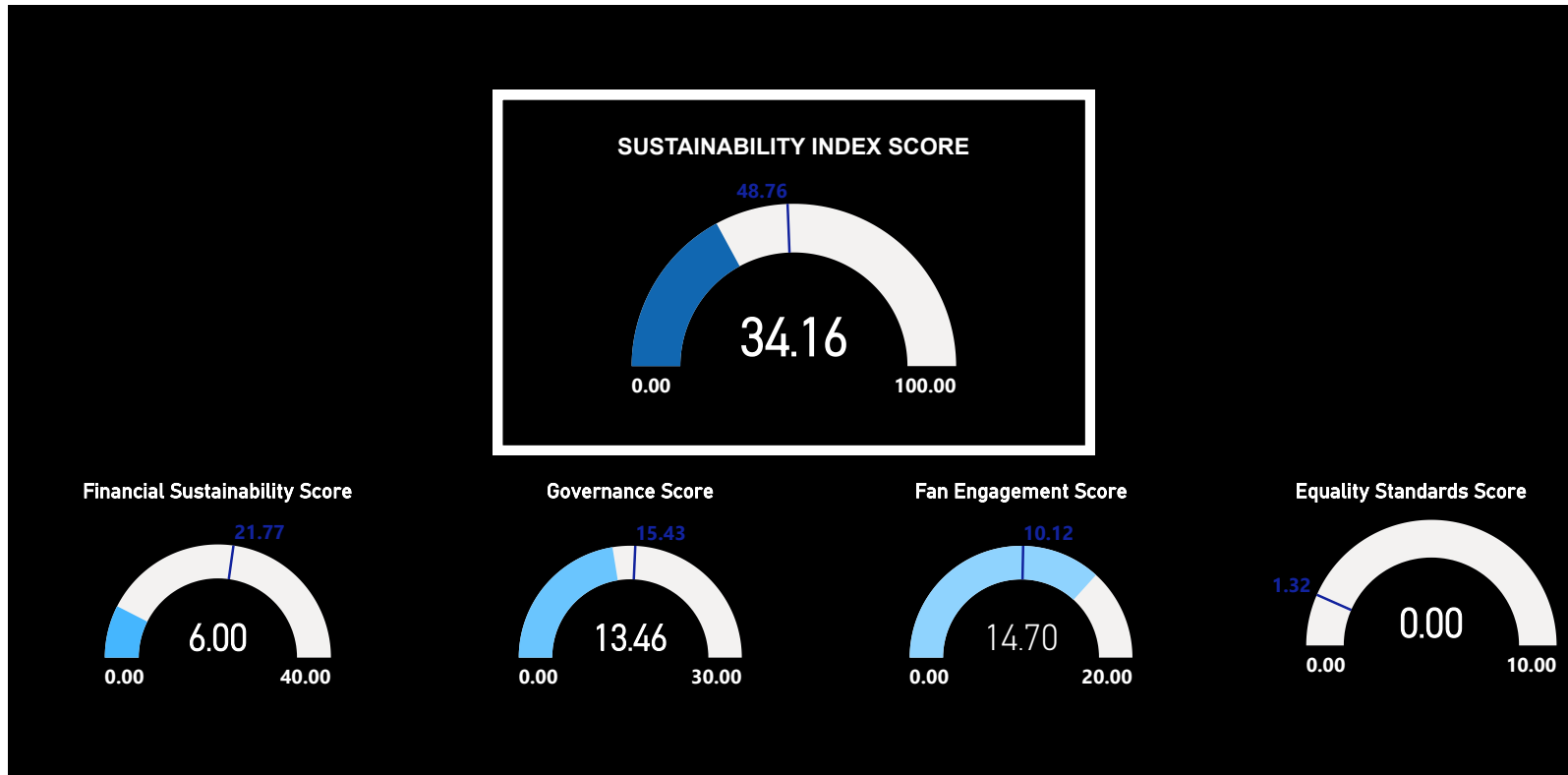


# QUEENS PARK RANGERS



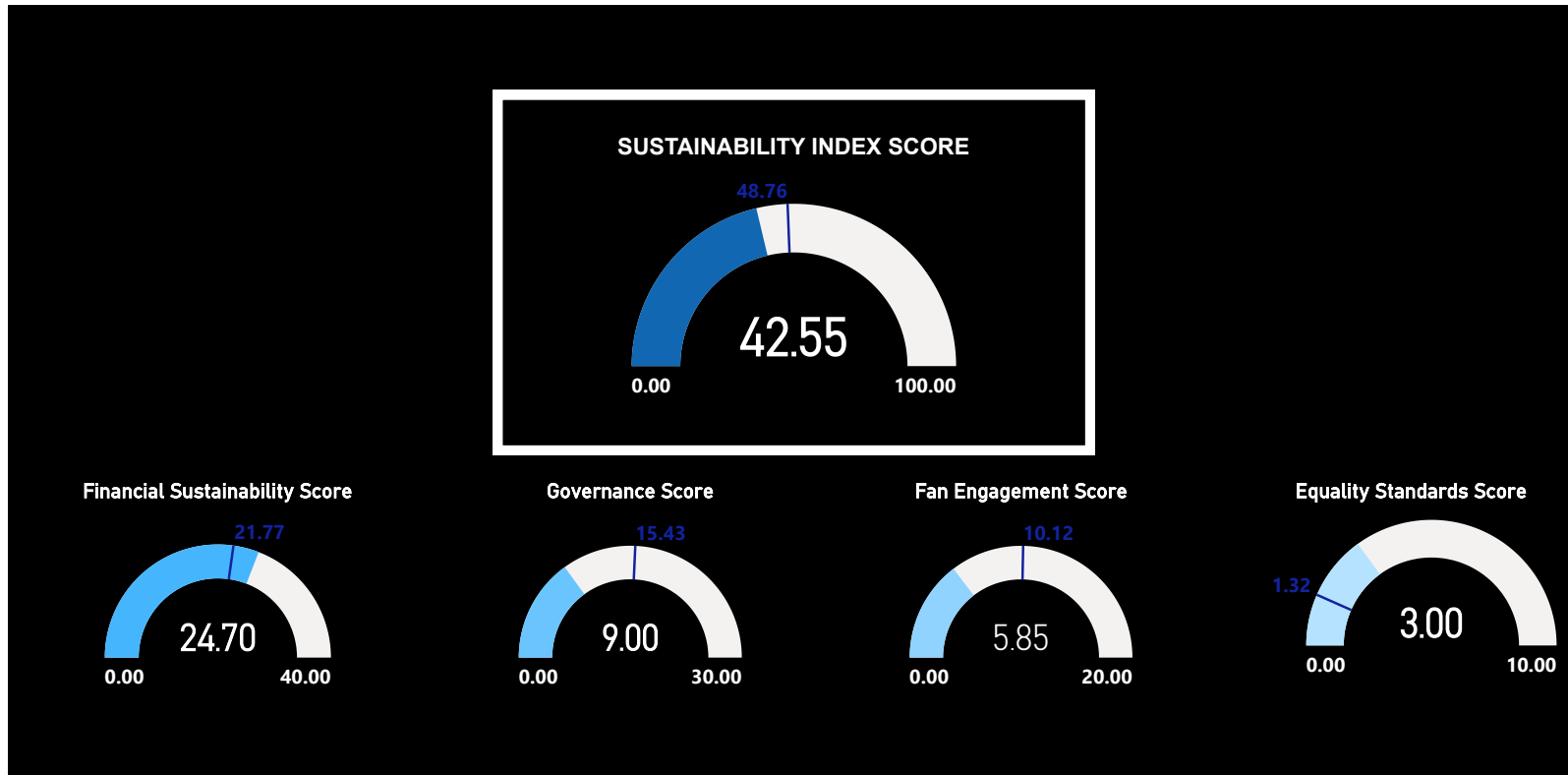


# READING





# ROTHERHAM UNITED



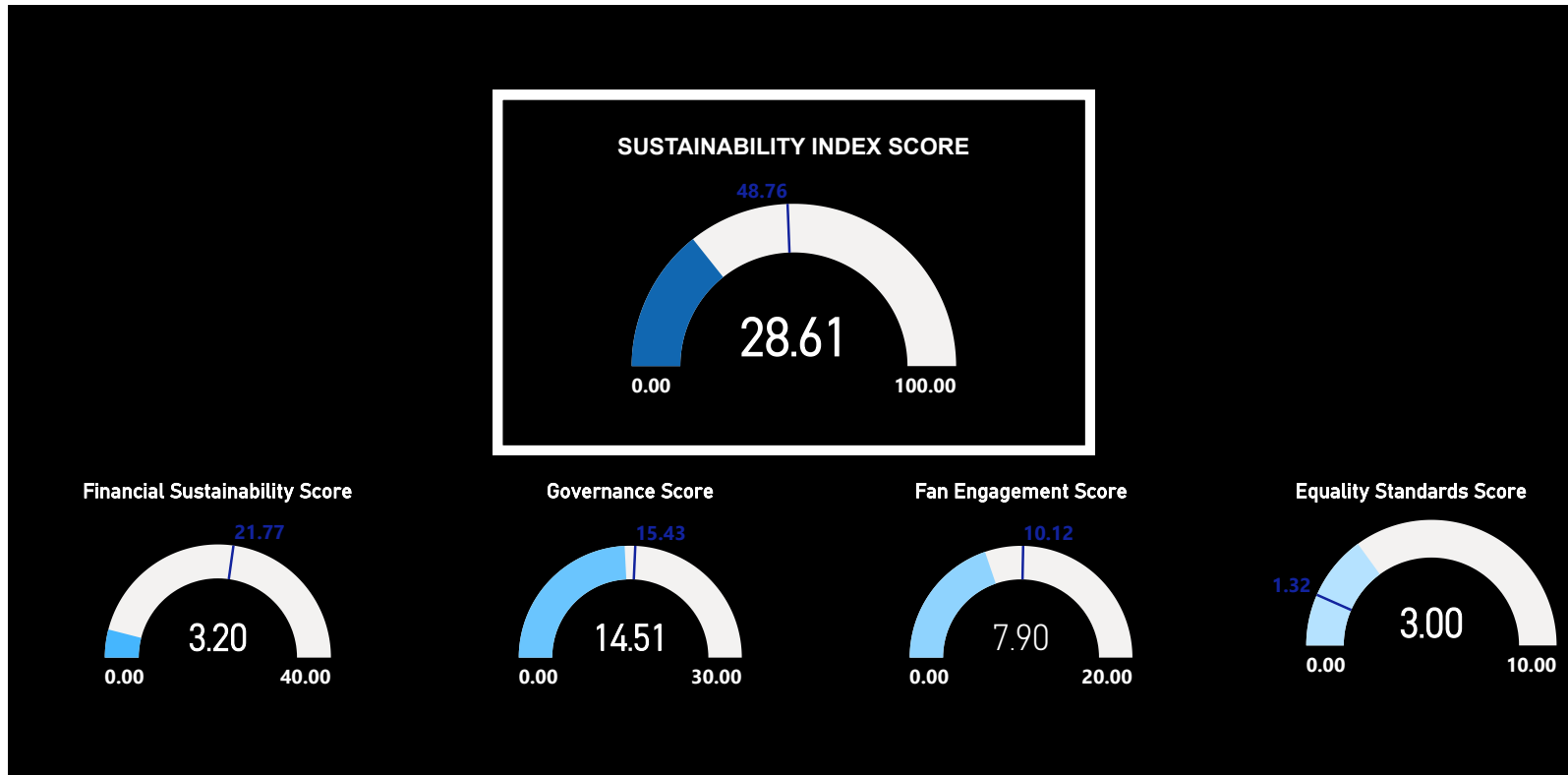


# SHEFFIELD UNITED



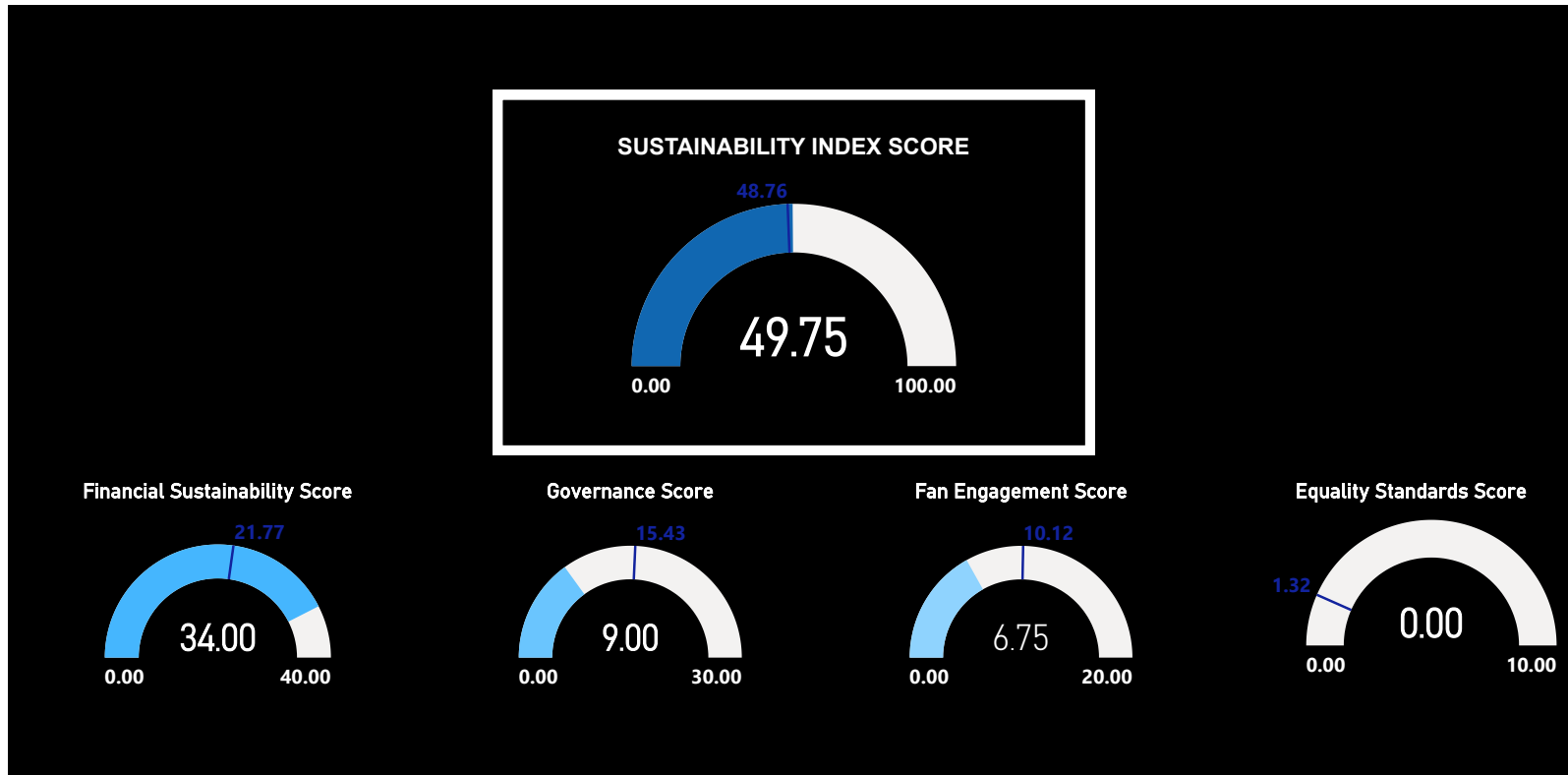


# STOKE CITY





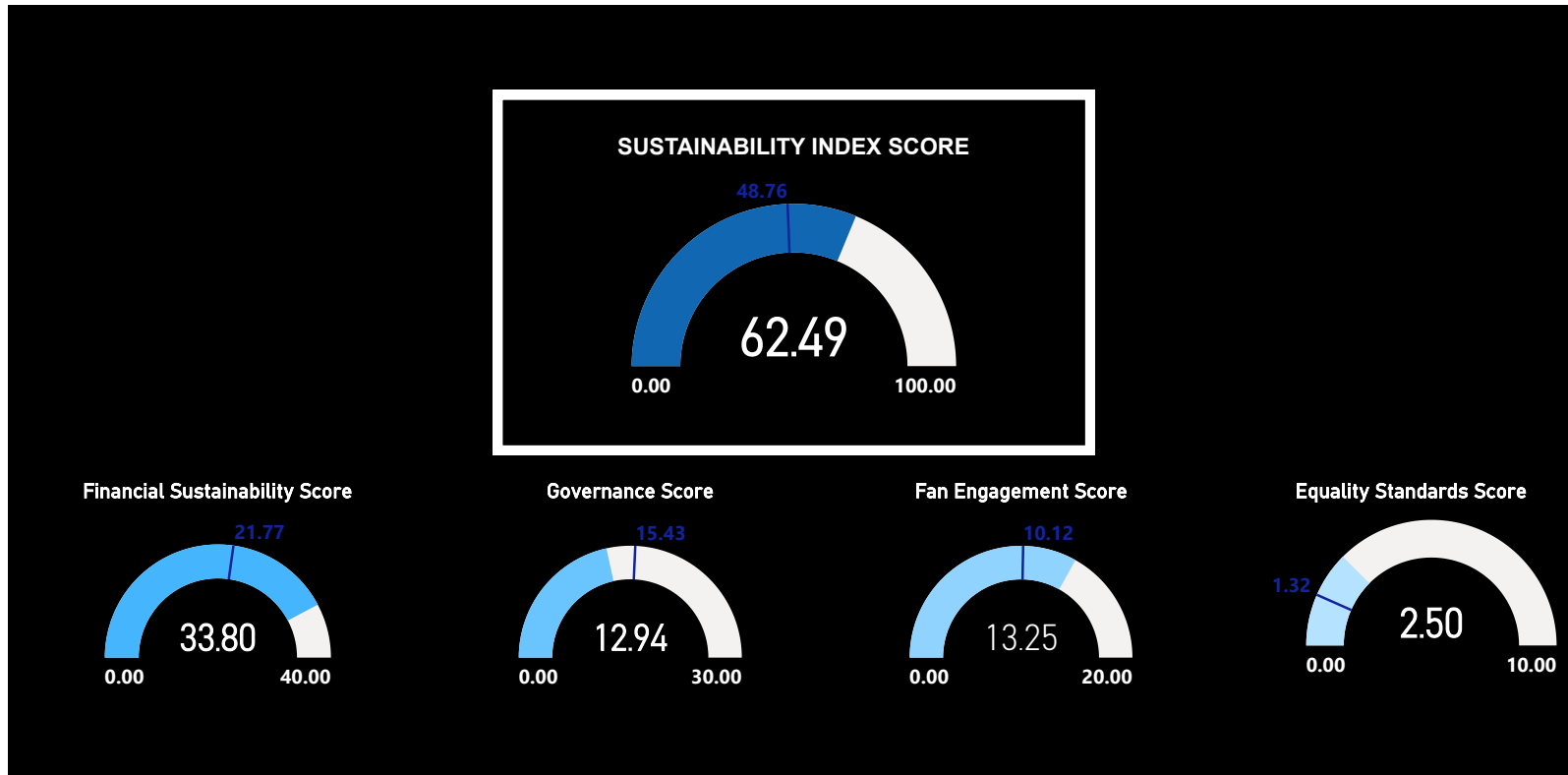
# SUNDERLAND





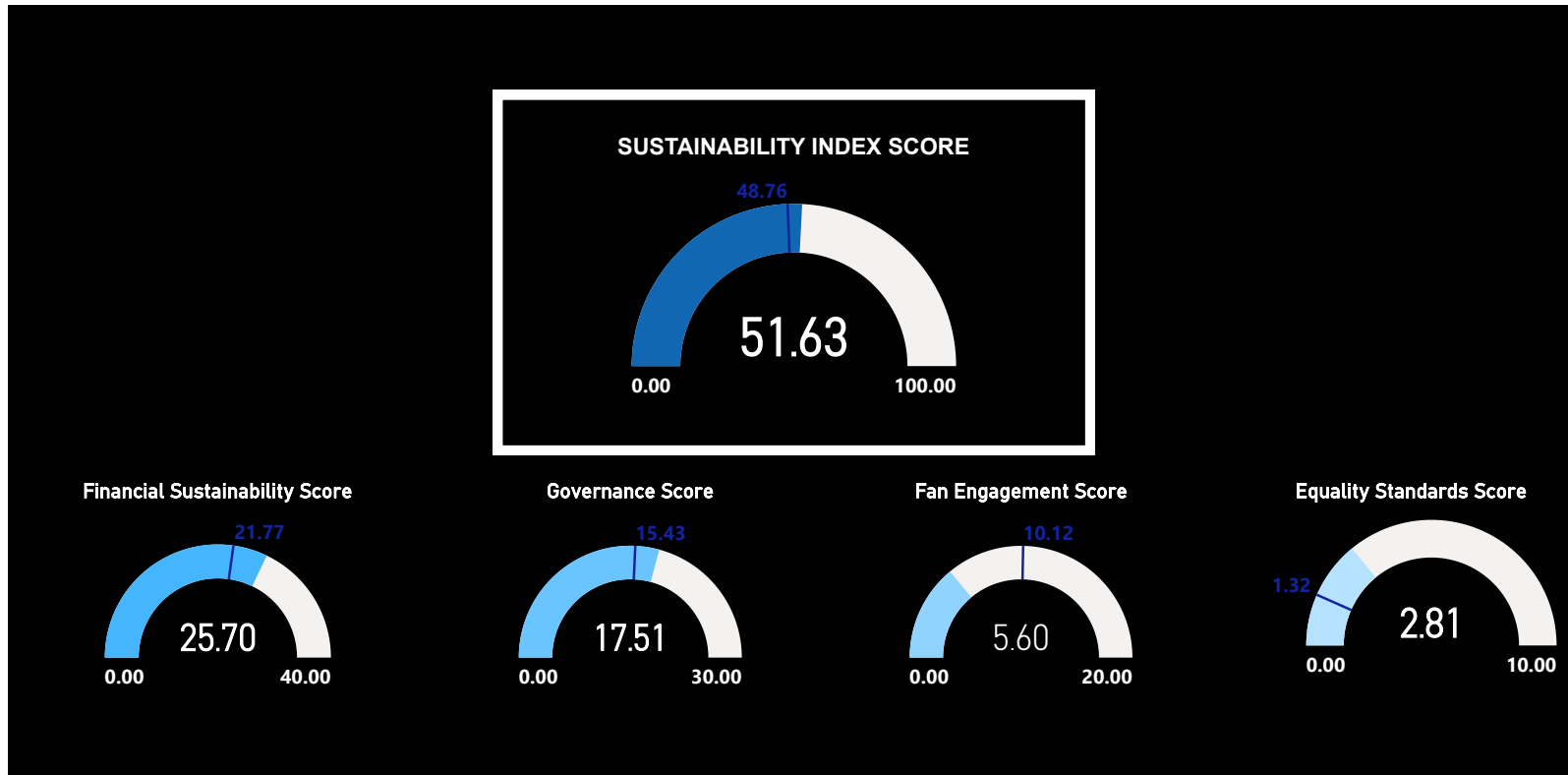


# SWANSEA CITY



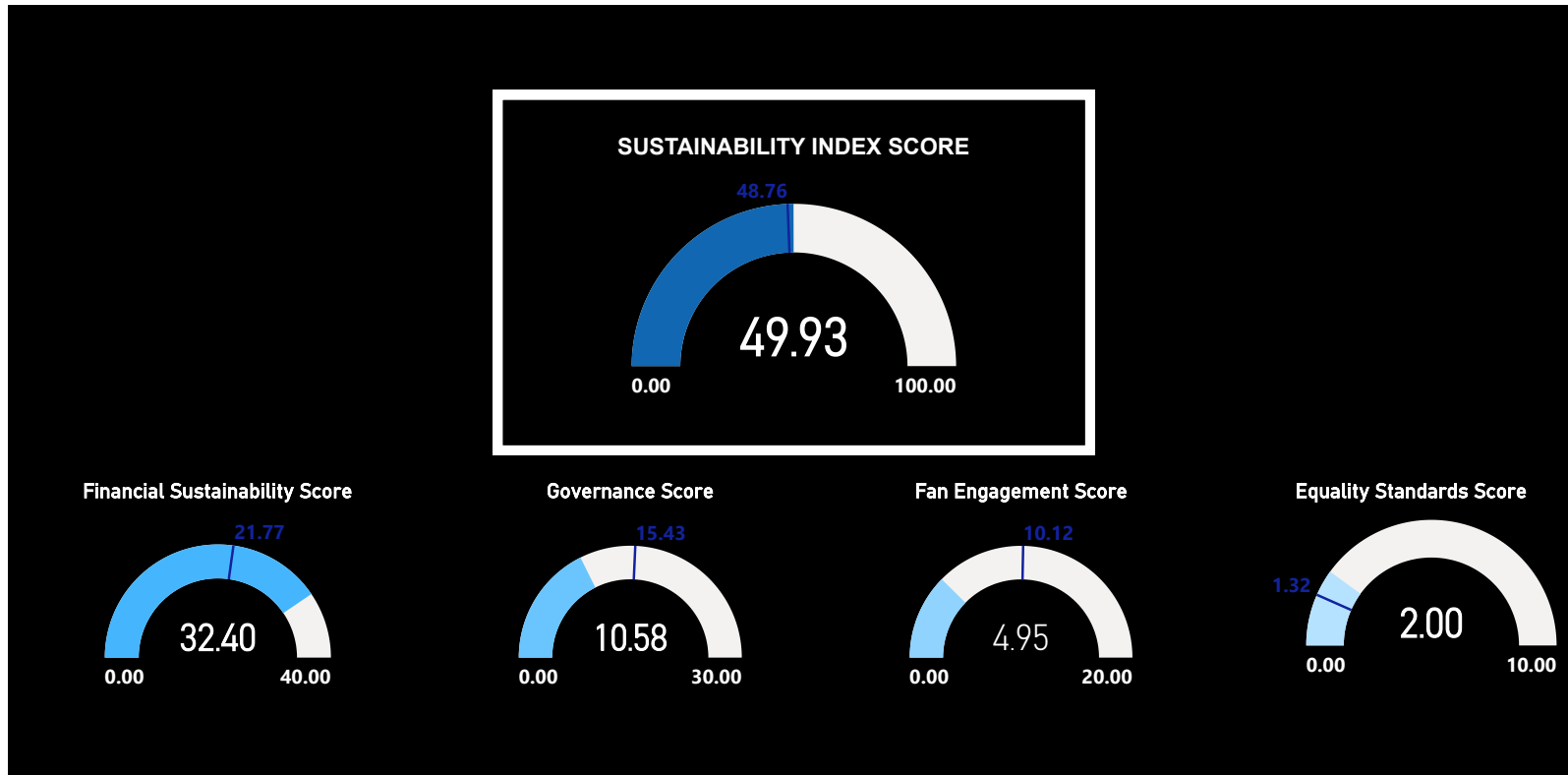


# WATFORD





# WEST BROMWICH ALBION





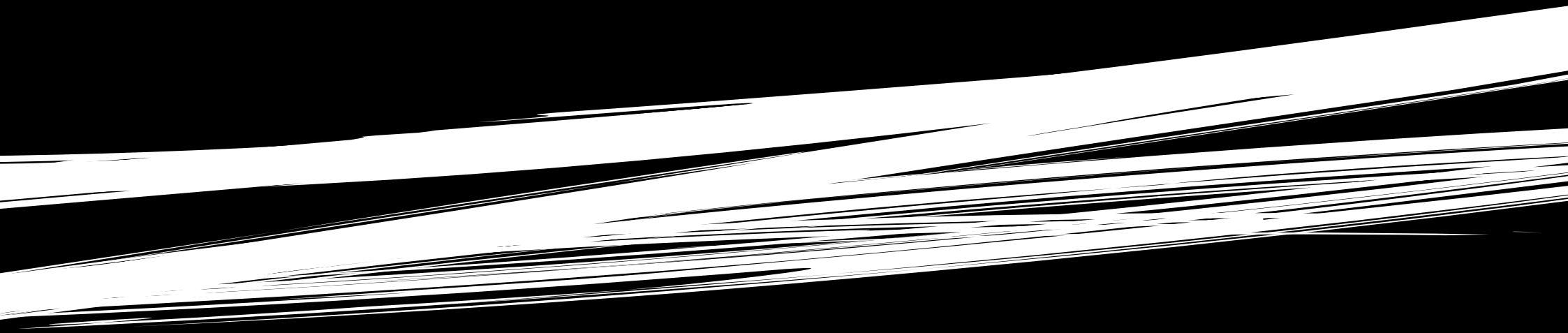
# WIGAN ATHLETIC







# APPENDIX





## Appendix A: FINANCIAL SOLVENCY

The data comes from Companies House. Companies must file their accounts nine months after their company's financial year ends. This means that the data included here is often 21 months out of date.

### Financial definitions

All clubs file their accounts with Companies House. However, with over 70 different ways for clubs to provide the information, it can be difficult to make comparisons. Fair Game's team of experts (academics from the universities of Portsmouth, Northumbria, Liverpool, Birkbeck and Sheffield Hallam) have assessed the following as the most reliable and informative data.

- Current Assets: Assets at the balance sheet date that are expected to be sold or used as part of the normal operation of a business within the next 12 months (per statutory accounts)
- Current Liabilities: Payments outstanding at the balance sheet date that are due to be paid in the next 12 months, including for player purchase, short term borrowing, HP lease repayments and normal operational requirements (per statutory accounts)
- Loans: Amount of money loaned to the club repayable within one year (per statutory accounts)
- Revenue: Revenue + Other operating income (both per statutory accounts)
- Net current debt: Total amounts borrowed and repayable within one year + HP lease repayments due within one year - Cash (all per statutory accounts)

Short-term loans measure is calculated using a series of tests. The tests are applied in the following order with clubs that don't satisfy the criteria being tested for the next stage:

1. Test for Exemplar = Cash > Loans
2. Test for Good = Current Assets > Loans
3. Test for Pass = Current Assets / Loans >= 0.75
4. Fail = Current Assets / Loans < 0.75

## Appendix B: GOOD GOVERNANCE

### I) Responsiball

For each bullet point, a club is awarded a score of 0 (no evidence), 1 (some evidence) or 2 (clear evidence). Giving a total maximum score of 48 for the Responsiball indicator.

#### 1. Organisational structure (8 pts)

- Information on the highest governance body is available
- Supporters are democratically represented within the club and have direct access to decision-making structures
- There is at least one female representative on the highest decision-making body (board) of the club
- The club has an organised women's football programme and girls and women are given a chance to play league football

#### 2. Constitution, statutes of charter (2 pts)

- The club's constitution, statutes and/or charter are available on the website

#### 3. Code of conduct (2 pts)

- The club's code of conduct is available

#### 4. Sustainability Reporting (6 pts)

- The club reports on its CSR/Sustainability activities
- A CSR/Sustainability report is available on the website
- The contact information for a CSR/Sustainability contact is available

#### 5. Financial Sustainability (4 pts)

- The club publishes player remuneration information
- A financial report is available

#### 6. Sponsorship (4 pts)

- The club engages with the club sponsors on CSR/Sustainability initiatives
- The club's sponsors act environmentally and ethically sustainable

#### 7. Procurement / Sourcing (4 pts)

- The club has a sustainable purchasing procedure in place for their merchandising products
- The club has a local purchasing/sourcing policy

### 8. Non-discrimination (4 pts)

- An equal opportunities policy is in place
- The club has a clear statement against any forms of discrimination (including racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia) and a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion

### 9. Safeguarding (8 pts)

- The club has a policy in place to protect the welfare of children playing for the club's youth programmes
- Rules and regulations are available for all stadium visitors
- The club has established a point of contact to report on misuse/abuse
- The club conducts training and development programmes for employees

### II) Sports Positive League

*The Sports Positive League data is in the public domain and was taken from their website. The data is produced by Sports Positive Summit. The Organisation has not worked directly with Fair Game and the League data will be updated in March. However, the Sports Positive Summit is keen to help clubs improve their scores and can signpost clubs to suitable consultants and they can be reached through this [link](#).*

Scores all clubs on 11 criteria with a maximum of 24 points.

1. Policy and Commitment (Max 3pts)
2. Clean energy (Max 2pts)
3. Energy efficiency (Max 2pts)
4. Sustainable transport (Max 3pts)
5. Single use plastic reduction (Max 2pts)
6. Waste management (Max 2pts)
7. Water efficiency (Max 2pts)
8. Plant based / low carbon food (Max 2pts)
9. Biodiversity (Max 2pts)
10. Education (Max 2pts)
11. Comms & engagement on sustainability (Max 2pts)

## Appendix C: FAN ENGAGEMENT

### Fan Engagement Index

The Fan Engagement Index scores clubs on three criteria:

1. Dialogue
2. Governance
3. Transparency

A maximum of 80 points are available for each criteria.

#### **1. Dialogue (80 pts)**

*(The meetings and processes in place to practice two-way communication with their fan base and its representatives)*

- Structured Dialogue with supporters' trust/independent supporters group
- Structured Dialogue with wider group of representatives
- Fans Forums
- Social Media (does the club have a Twitter Help Channel or a Twitter SLO Channel)
- Any other Dialogue initiatives/innovations

#### **2. Governance (80 pts)**

*(What underpins or reinforces these relationships)*

- Are there supporter directors on the board of the club?
- Customer/Club/Supporter Charter: rating based on whether it's easy to find, and contains information about the SLO, fan consultation, and supporter/customer services
- Whether or not the SLO is clearly a 'stand alone' role at the club
- Is there a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other legal agreement with supporters' trust or other independent group governing their relationship?

#### **3. Transparency (80 pts)**

*(What they publish in relation to this dialogue)*

- Are reports or minutes published of structured dialogue meetings with supporters' trust/independent group and/or its structured dialogue with a wider group of representatives?
- Are agendas published in advance of any of these meetings?
- Are reports or minutes published of fans forums? Are agendas published in advance of fans forums?
- Does the club report on its board meetings? Does the club publish an agenda in advance of its board meetings?

## Appendix D: EQUALITY STANDARDS

### I) Football Leadership Diversity Code

The code has five criteria:

1. Senior Leadership
2. Team Operations
3. Coaching: Men's clubs
4. Coaching: Women's clubs
5. Short lists

Each of the criteria has a number of bullet points.

#### **1. Senior Leadership**

- 15% new hires BAME
- 30% new hires female

#### **2. Team Operations**

- 15% new hires BAME
- 30% new hires female

#### **3. Coaching: Men's clubs**

- 25% new hires BAME
- 10% senior coaches BAME

#### **4. Coaching: Women's clubs**

- 50% new hires BAME
- 15% senior coaches BAME

#### **5. Short lists**

- One male BAME
- One female BAME

The Code awards clubs a red, yellow or green status for each of the bullet points. There are some points that are not rated as there has been no activity in that area at that club.

For every rated bullet point, the Sustainability Index awards 0 pts for red, 1pt for yellow, and 2 pts for green.

The club's total score is the sum of the number points divided by the number of rated bullet points.







**Bart Huby**  
*Head of Football Analytics, LCP*

“We are delighted to support Fair Game by helping to make the Sustainability Index’s information clear and accessible. We believe that change can only be driven on the basis of accurate, comprehensive information, clearly communicated. Our work visualising the Sustainability Index will help stakeholders, from fans and governing bodies to clubs themselves, understand what is happening across the sport.”



**Kevin Rye**  
*Owner, Think Fan Engagement*

“I’m delighted, as the owner of Think Fan Engagement, to endorse the Sustainability Index. As I’ve proved with the Fan Engagement Index, transparency of information is the first big step to a real and meaningful change in practice. Fair Game’s plan is ambitious, and we need that ambition and drive to make that change a reality.”



**Nico Decurtins**  
*Committee Member, Responsiball*

“We are happy to support efforts aimed at anchoring ESG issues in the world of football. That’s why we did not hesitate when Fair Game asked us to partner up. We see great potential for football to take more responsibility for socially relevant issues. Fair Game’s Sustainability Index will make an important contribution to this and we’re excited to be a part of its further development.”





