



Prime Minister. ②
A modestly encouraging program report
CCTA
MEA 29/8

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
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My ref:
Your ref:

29 August 1985

Dear Bruce - Minister:

FOOTBALL: PROGRESS REPORT

I should report briefly on developments. The new football season has opened, to lower attendances, the alcohol ban, a conspicuous Police presence (well reported by the media) and - so far - no real incidents. It is very early days, but I detect a more positive atmosphere, a willingness in Board Rooms to take action against the game's problems. However, it would be premature to be overly optimistic. Our partnership with the football authorities will remain one that requires hard work and vigilance.

On membership cards progress continues to be difficult. The Football League Working Party received a paper from our Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) which the Chairman, Graham Kelly (the League Secretary) described as "helpful". I should say that we had some disagreements with the paper. But, briefly, the CCTA recommended that a membership card scheme was practical and viable and suggested a range of options for compatible club schemes. They estimated that the cost per club might be of the order of £75,000; this expense could be covered by the sale of cards and through their potential commercial advantages. The Working Party is to circulate a report next week to the League Management Committee for consideration at its next meeting on 11 September. My Working Group will meet the following day to consider the League's proposals. In the meantime, we are exerting pressure, as you would expect, at official level. This includes reminding the League that the Home Secretary's proposals for exclusion orders - which are currently being worked up - depend upon an effective system of membership cards.

In contrast speedy and decisive action has been taken by the Football Trust on CCTV. I have written to Sir Norman Chester and Richard Faulkner (the Acting Chairman and Secretary) with my thanks. Through a revision of its budget, the Trust found the money to offer grants for CCTV to all clubs in the English First and Second Divisions and in the Scottish Premier Division. Grant offers may yet be made to some Third Division clubs. Installation looks likely to be quick; Liverpool and Everton, for example,

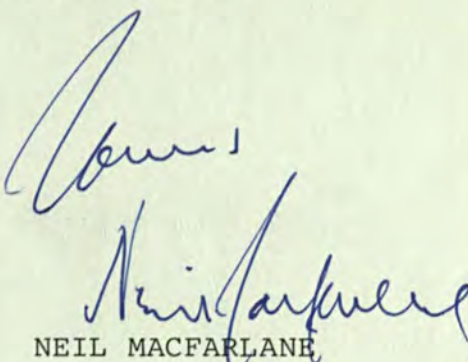
had theirs installed within 8 days so that it was in operation for the first match of the season. We are monitoring delivery and installation closely, in case any problems emerge. But it looks as if the relevant grounds should have equipment in place by the end of September.

There have also been developments on the European scene. The Council of Europe Convention was signed without reservation by our Ambassador in Strasbourg on 19 August. On the same day 5 other countries also signed the Convention, but only one of these (Denmark) was without reservation at this stage. One more signature without reservation is needed before the end of August in order to bring the Convention into force on 1 October. I hope that Belgium will provide that third signature. Most countries' difficulty is with ratification and they have not found it easy to achieve that quickly in August. Generally, the indications are that we will get a healthy number of signatures to the Convention over the next 2 or 3 months.

As we hoped, UEFA has followed the clear lead given by European Ministers for Sport and toughened up their rules and procedures. Their Executive Committee agreed a new set of rules governing order and security in stadia at a meeting in Paris last week. These are complementary to the Convention; there is a particular set of mandatory rules for what are called "high risk" matches, to be identified by UEFA using wide-ranging criteria specified in their general regulations; clubs and national associations will be required in future to sign an undertaking each season to comply with these new rules. David Teasdale attended this meeting as the representative of European Governments and reported to me that there was a clear acceptance by UEFA of the need to act responsibly in the wake of Brussels and in partnership with European Governments.

On safety and financing we continue to gather information. The next meeting of my Financing Working Group is scheduled for the third week of September.

In general, progress has been mostly good, but there remains much to be done. I will keep you informed of developments, particularly of course on membership cards.


NEIL MACFARLANE