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You will see from the attached letter that the FGIT have now reported, following their recently completed survey, and that they estimate that some £12 million will be required to bring football grounds up to standard, £9 million of this for the 37 grounds not yet designated: about £0.25 million per ground. The Neil Macfarlane Working Group considering the costs of safety improvements, meets tomorrow. There is clearly some prospect of the football authorities going public and trying to press the Government into making any early commitment into financial support.

POE will be regarding to me after the game meeting (Stubs et 4pm) next 15/6

You have always made it clear that before the Government could decide on the scale of its' contribution, if any, the following two steps need to be taken:

- (i) the cost of the required improvements needed to be identified;
- (ii) the extent to which the game itself could meet those costs from its own resources had to be assessed.

We are in fact still some way off completing the first step. Popplewell has not yet reported, and nor have the Chief Fire Officers (though the overall figure may be pushed up once these assessments are in). Furthermore, we should not be assuming every ground and stand needs to come up to a particular standard. Some rationalisation of the use of existing football authorities may need to be considered. It is also still far from clear what the game can afford to pay.

The important point for now is that limits will need to be placed on attendance, the location of some matches will need to be changed etc. to ensure the required safety standards are met at the beginning of the season. And that even in the longer term not every stand and terrace is necessarily sacrosanct if the game is to be effectively, safely and economically managed.

Julie Bowers

pp MARK ADDISON

18 June 1985



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HOME OFFICE  
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE  
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18th June 1985

Dear Phil,

why? } Mr. Macfarlane yesterday met with Mr. Shaw and officials to discuss the line to take on the recently-completed FGIT survey report, both at the Working Group meeting on Wednesday and over the coming weeks. He referred to the FGIT report findings that some £12m would be required to bring grounds up to standard. £9m of this (less than had been anticipated) related to the 37 grounds not yet designated; the remainder related to grounds already designated and Scottish grounds. He said that the football authorities might use this to show that designation under the 1975 Act was in itself insufficient. They might also argue that with the CFO reports and the Popplewell inquiry recommendations still to come, the total money eventually required for ground improvements could well be substantially higher than the £12m FGIT forecast. He was therefore concerned that the football authorities would, in the context of falling attendance figures, seek to publicise the FGIT report to support their argument for Government financial backing for ground improvements, especially where these were to be made before the beginning of next season. Mr. Macfarlane stressed that he fully agreed with the Home Office's timetable for designation. He was anxious that the Working Group meeting on Wednesday should not get involved in detailed discussion on where the finance was to be found or whether the Government should make money available to clubs prior to designation.

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Finance } Mr. Shaw suggested that the step-by-step nature of the Government's approach should be emphasized. The Working Group's findings, the results of the CFO inspections and the Popplewell inquiry would all have to be taken into account before any final conclusions were reached. He would not wish the Government to be pressurised into financial assistance for clubs in a piecemeal fashion. Mr. Shaw pointed out that it had never been the aim of designation to enforce a range of structural improvements to grounds by the beginning of next season. The CFO reports would be looking primarily to ensure greater crowd safety within existing structures at individual grounds; this could be achieved by restrictions on crowd numbers, steward systems etc.

As far as the handling of the Wednesday meeting was concerned, he thought it would be sufficient merely to seek the football authorities' views on how, and to what timescale, they saw the FGIT findings being implemented. They could be assured that they would not be pushed into immediate action on the scale envisaged in the report. Our public posture should be that grounds will be made safer, but that this could be achieved without immediate large-scale structural improvements. Mr. Macfarlane pointed out that the football authorities themselves could take mitigating steps and the Government should do nothing which absolved them from the requirement to do so.

/It was agreed that,

P. Dykins Esq.  
PS to the Minister for Sport

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It was agreed that, in order to lessen the impact of the line that the football authorities might take publicly on this, the Home Office should stand ready to make a positive press statement if necessary on Wednesday on their intentions on the timing of designation; this should emphasise that guidance would be made available to local authorities, at the same time as the designation orders were made, outlining the possible options open to them.

I am copying this letter to Mark Addison (Prime Minister's Office), Rachel Lomax (HM Treasury), John Graham (Scottish Office), Colin Williams, (Welsh Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever*

*Stephen Pike*

S. J. PIKE

Private Secretary

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