



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

24 JUN 1985

Dear Prime Minister

CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS WITH FOOTBALL AUTHORITIES

You may like to have a progress report following meetings on my 2 Working Groups this week and other informal discussions.

On football ground safety, the Working Group discussed on Wednesday the report prepared by the Football Grounds Improvements Trust's (FGIT's) surveyors giving provisional estimates of the likely scale and cost of safety improvements to be made, both at designated and non-designated grounds. The range of costs suggested was £9m-£14m, for both England and Scotland. About £9m of this would be for the 37 clubs in Divisions 3 and 4 of the Football League to be newly designated. The Working Group quickly agreed that the figures could only be regarded as provisional, whilst we await the assessments made by the Chief Fire Officers and also the recommendations of the Popplewell Inquiry. The Group also received a report from the Home Office on the proposed timetable for designation; it was also made clear that, given the short time available for structural improvements before the start of the next season, an important responsibility will rest with the local authorities to decide what urgent changes or restrictions are needed to provide for public safety in the early season matches. Restrictions on attendances was one obvious option mentioned.

Whilst we await the further assessments and information we need, the football authorities and the Trusts agreed to examine and report on the financial resources they have available to fund the safety improvements needed. We will consider these various reports at our next meeting, in 15-20 days time.

On Tuesday evening, I had the first meeting of the Working Group taking forward your April 1st discussions on measures to combat hooliganism. We considered progress and action on all the measures the football authorities agreed to consider at your 2 meetings, using your letters as an agenda. I was reassured on most counts - there is indeed a very broad measure of agreement - but the possible sticking point remains membership cards, on which officials have since had a very lengthy exchange of views. The Football League have agreed to produce a paper which looks carefully at a practical scheme and its costs and benefits. This will be discussed

in confidence by the Football League's Management Committee before being tabled for discussion at the next meeting of that Working Group in the week beginning 1 July. We will continue to press our view, but it looks as if the authorities and clubs lack the will to take decisive action of this kind - and the majority of club chairmen appear to be against membership cards. You may like to know that one difference between us which has emerged is that the Football League in particular do not share our view that there is an issue of public confidence in the game! They appear to believe that all will be well when the new season opens and the current media attention has moved on to other issues.

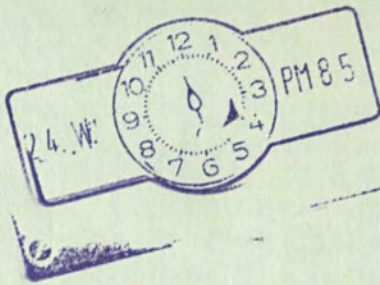
I will give you a full report after the next meeting of the Working Group, with my advice on our policy and the next steps.

I am copying this to Patrick Jenkin, Leon Brittan, Giles Shaw, David Mitchell, Allan Stewart, John Stradling-Thomas and Nicholas Scott.

John

Neil Macfarlane

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