

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: Safety at major sporting events, HC 596

Tuesday 25 October 2022

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Members present: Julian Knight (Chair); Steve Brine; Clive Efford; Julie Elliott; Damian Green; Dr Rupa Huq; Simon Jupp; John Nicolson; Jane Stevenson.

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Witnesses

[I](#): Tony Burnett, Chief Executive, Kick It Out; Owain Davies, Chief Executive, Level Playing Field; Kevin Miles, Chief Executive, Football Supporters' Association; and Dr Stacey Pope, Associate Professor, University of Durham.

[II](#): Professor Geoff Pearson, Professor of Law, University of Manchester; and Professor Clifford Stott MBE, Professor of Social Psychology, Keele University.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Add names of witnesses and hyperlink to submissions]

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Tony Burnett, Owain Davies, Kevin Miles and Dr Stacey Pope.

Q1 Chair: This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and this is our first hearing into safety at sporting stadia. Before I introduce our guests, I want to see if any Members have any interests they would like to declare. Clive Efford?

Clive Efford: No.

Chair: No? Okay. You just looked like you wanted to declare an interest.

Clive Efford: I have a Millwall season ticket. I declare that everywhere.

Chair: Well, you have my deepest and sincerest condolences. We are joined today by Tony Burnett, Chief Executive of Kick It Out, Dr Stacey Pope, Associate Professor at the University of Durham, Owain Davies, Chief Executive at Level Playing Field, and Kevin Miles, Chief Executive of the Football Supporters' Association. Stacey, Owain, Tony and Kevin, thank you very much for joining us today.

My first question is to you, Kevin. The reason we are holding this inquiry is because of all the scenes that we have seen in recent months, whether in Paris or at Wembley. I want to get your perspective on whether you think that there has been a deterioration in crowd management in this country, particularly in football. If you see it as such, what do you think the main causes are and what do you think the remedies could be?

Kevin Miles: I don't think that there has been a generalised deterioration in crowd management. I think we have seen some lapses. However, I have been in this area of work long enough to know that there is a serial repeating of lapses that start to add up to suggest that there are some systemic issues that need to be addressed. If you keep getting a repeating pattern of behaviour, it does not mean that there is a generalised problem, but some of the specific events that you are obviously addressing, like Wembley at the Euros final, the Champions League final in Paris and others—and there have been plenty of other events like that over the years—suggest that there are lessons to be learned and things that can be addressed there.

Generally speaking, when I go to a football match—which is something I do fairly regularly—I do not feel unsafe and vulnerable, but sometimes when you go to an event you can sense quite early, "There is something not quite right here."

Q2 Chair: Yes, it is quite interesting. Presumably, you have been a football fan for many years so you probably remember what we refer to as the bad old days of the 1980s, for instance, when there were serious issues over behaviour but also the management of crowds. What you are saying is that it is less about that now; it is more the on-the-day disorganisation. Is that the way you look at it?



Kevin Miles: Generally speaking, there has probably been an improvement in the management of big sporting events and football matches over the course of the years. It depends on your timeframe of reference. If you were to compare it with 30 years ago, I think that the terrain is vastly improved. There were milestones along the way. Twenty-odd years ago the introduction of banning orders at least marked a step of a beginning for the criminal justice system of not labelling all football supporters as the problem and starting to try to identify individuals. That might seem like an obvious thing to do but it was not a given 20 or 30 years ago. There was an assumption that everybody in a football crowd was problematic, and we have started to move away from that. Compared to then, I think that things have dramatically improved.

Compared to three or four years ago, pre-covid, I think that we have a few more challenges again. There are issues arising with antisocial behaviour that are perhaps on the up. The data suggest that it is a bigger problem. Again, I think that there is a need for a sense of proportion there. We are talking about an increase, for instance, in arrest figures compared to an all-time low. The last thing I would want to do is to give the impression that football is some sort of lawless, dangerous place to be.

Q3 Chair: No, that has not been my experience when I have gone to football matches. It is interesting that you just said “pre-covid”. That is often the shorthand we use in any description right now, but is there any particular reason why you said that? Is that because, as you say, you have seen an increase in antisocial behaviour since that time? Was that potentially a pent-up thing after covid?

Kevin Miles: I suspect that it might be. I am a little bit wary of drawing generalised conclusions without data to back it up. I think that too much of that goes on in football. It is difficult to say. However, I don’t think that these are issues limited to football. There are all sorts of reflections of trends like that across the night-time economy. I am not a scientist who can tell you exactly how pent-up energy works over a period like that, but I think that there is, even within football, an element of a younger generation who, because there has been a two or three-year hiatus in attending matches regularly, perhaps have missed out on an element of socialisation and learning how to behave at football, and that needs to be picked up again. I like to think that that has arisen out of the covid experience and, therefore, will be normalised and go back down again.

Q4 Chair: That is an interesting perspective. Dr Stacey Pope, thank you very much for joining us. You are the author of “The Feminization of Sports Fandom” and also a co-editor of “Female Football Players and Fans”. Could you give a perspective from your academic work on what you have seen in recent years of the experience of women at football—their participation as well—and whether you have seen a worsening or bettering of their experience?



Dr Pope: It is interesting when you talk about recent years. A key area we might draw attention to is the UEFA Euro 2022 women's championship and in some ways how that might offer lessons for men's football. If you look at the tournament that took place in England, it highlighted how football does not have to be a hotbed of sexism, misogyny and racism and a space with high levels of violence and antisocial behaviour. Crudely speaking, we can draw some contrasts between what happened at the Euro 2022 finals and the disturbances at the men's Euro 2020 final at Wembley stadium, with the fact that you did not get any arrests at Wembley stadium with the women's championship.

It is important to highlight that that is not to say by any means that anyone wants to take away from the magic that is football. Many of the women that I have interviewed in my research are passionate, committed fans of men's football and women's football. They talk about the match-day experience being like a drug—an addiction—and that match-day experience drives them to want to go back.

The flipside is that the match-day experience has to be a welcoming space for all and, frankly, my research shows that at this stage, at this current time, men's football is not a safe, welcoming and inclusive space for women. We find that some people stay away—they are voting with their feet in some ways. I have examples of women who have experiences of going to men's football and women's football and are now opting to go to women's football matches because they find that a safer space to go to.

On the discussion of antisocial behaviour more widely, one of the things that I would argue with my work is that we must find a way to provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive space for all. Without that, women and people with younger families will opt to stay away from certain high-profile events in men's football. Many people, men and women, will not feel safe to take their daughters and sons to matches in a way that clearly was not the case for those that either attended matches or watched the women's European Championship on television. You saw the high number of families in the audience. I feel that without this intervention we go around in circles to the point that the violence in men's football can be a national embarrassment.

That is one of the things that I want to draw attention to in the wider culture. I am happy to speak to women's experiences more generally from the research that I have done, as you mentioned, with my book on the feminisation of sports fandom and also the existing football stadia if that would be helpful. At this point, stadium design is a contributing factor to why this is not a space—

Q5 **Chair:** What specifically about stadium design?

Dr Pope: It is not set up for women. I can give you some examples if we are thinking about creating an inclusive space for women at a football stadium. For a starting point, if you look at the design of many men's



stadiums—not all but many—they bemoan the lack of toilets that are available. When those facilities are available, their condition is poor; for instance, there are no sanitary bins, no mirrors or hangers, no locks on the doors. All this feeds into thinking about it not being a welcoming and inclusive space. When these issues are raised—when women voice these concerns to the clubs—the clubs are not obligated to respond or do anything about them. This raises basic issues around equality, diversity and inclusion that are not being fulfilled to a satisfactory level now.

From my research, women have to accept this in a way that they don't in other public spaces. They are prepared to accept the poor stadium design, which would not be encountered elsewhere, and part of the reason for that is because it is extremely difficult to challenge that in this male-dominated space. If women were to try to challenge this alone, it would draw attention to their gender and raise questions about their authenticity as a fan, and they would be more likely to receive backlash from men supporters. This is not something that women can resolve on their own.

The gendered design of a football stadium is also where lower league clubs are effectively losing out. I know this is not the main driver, but it is a financial issue as well. One of the things that I found in my work is that men and women fans follow different fan careers across their lives, with women compelled to take what I call fan breaks after having children, when they become mothers. Many men's football clubs will discourage taking young children to matches. They even ban young children from attending those spaces and that makes it impossible for women to continue attending matches at that time. We know that in this country, as elsewhere, caring responsibilities remain highly gendered, so women are not in a position to take the children to matches. There are no match-day facilities—no crèches, for instance. I understand that higher league clubs will fill the stadium regardless, but for lower league clubs it means that during those years women drop away from attending matches. Once you do that, there is a real risk that many supporters will not come back. There are financial reasons here to do something about it.

The basic point is that football stadia and many sport stadiums have been designed by and for men, so clubs and governing bodies need to be thinking about doing more to create a more gender-inclusive space.

Q6 **Chair:** Dr Pope, is football uniquely bad in this respect? This whole inquiry is about stadia more generally. I am often struck when I go to cricket—to The Hundred competition, for instance, where I think female participation in the stadia is about 40%, which is higher than at test matches and one-day international matches and, I presume, much higher than in football matches generally. I don't know what the percentage is. What would the percentage normally be at a football match?

Dr Pope: It is hard to get definitive figures, but it is around a quarter. It may be slightly less, but it is approximately a quarter. Like you say, in other sports, and in other countries as well, it is much closer to a 50:50



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balance. In women's football the number of women present would presumably be much higher.

Q7 Chair: Other sports in the UK are getting it more right than football in that respect. As you say, it is partly the structure of the stadiums. It is a lack of fan participation and fan voice in football clubs. Are they the two main drivers of that compared to other sports?

Dr Pope: Yes, and just the fact that in this country as well football has a long history of being a traditional bastion of masculinity. There has been no obligation up until now to think about how we might widen this out to be more inclusive. You are right that other sports are doing this better and perhaps women also feel safer to go to some of those events in a way that they would not if it was a football match.

I can speak from personal experience as well. I went out to do the research around the women's World Cup in 2019, travelling on my own. Would I do that if it was a major men's tournament? Well, probably not, because there are real safety issues that are a concern. I don't say that because I am not a fan of the men's team; of course I am—I am a massive supporter. Italy 1990 was my first ever football memory, so I don't say that as someone who does not like it. I would love to do that, but the issues around safety could be putting some women off in a way that is not the case for other sports.

Q8 Dr Huq: I want to ask some questions on the stadium environment. We know that the police are officially responsible for maintaining order and there are safety advisory groups, but it is a bit inconsistent. In some places there are independent ones; in other places there are club supporters' trusts. This question is to all of you. Do you think that safety advisory groups include all the necessary perspectives? I think that they are meant to have the local authority, the whole building block of everyone. Do they have the necessary perspectives to improve the experience of spectators at major sporting events?

Owain Davies: From a disabled fan's perspective, I think that a real spotlight needs to be put on disability inclusion and the viewpoints considered at the planning stages. We have seen two major events that have significantly failed in the safety of disabled fans, and other fans as well. We have seen some procedures and measures where entrances for disabled fans were targeted by ticketless fans going into Wembley, and we have seen it at the Stade de France as well. We need insight from the disabled fans' perspective at the planning stage, the review stage, and we need to ensure that that is somebody from a specific area who understands the barriers. Disability is a broad spectrum and it needs to be considered—from physical disabilities to non-visible disabilities—and planned and mapped out.

Tony Burnett: I echo Owain's and Stacey's points. For us, safety and inclusion are intrinsically linked. You cannot feel safe in an environment where you do not feel included or a sense of belonging. Many times



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personally I have been in football environments and it is a minority but it only takes one or two fans to shout something abusive or discriminatory and you automatically, as a person of colour or somebody who has a disability and so on, feel excluded and, therefore, you feel unsafe. Those two things are intrinsically linked.

I am not sure about the mechanism that you referenced. Currently, the 92 football clubs all have different mechanisms for reporting discrimination and none of those mechanisms is visible. We haven't got a clue about, for example—your colleague is a Millwall fan—Millwall reports versus West Ham reports versus Bolton Wanderers reports. We have no idea what the nature of those discrimination reports was, the length of time it takes to resolve complaints and so on. As a fan going to a game, I have no information to tell me how inclusive the environment I am going into will be. That is a huge barrier to people feeling included and, therefore, feeling safe in the football environment.

Q9 **Dr Huq:** Should there be a standard measure—a Tripadvisor? I don't know—not quite that, but you know what I mean.

Tony Burnett: It is a really good point. There should be not only a standard measure, but a standard approach to reporting discrimination, a standard methodology for gathering the data and a responsibility to be transparent in that data so that we can make informed choices about the environments we are going into as football fans.

Owain Davies: I completely agree with what Tony says about the transparency of the evidence and the data, but discrimination so often is looked at as verbal abuse and the attitudes of people. For disabled fans, the discrimination starts if you cannot buy a ticket online or you cannot access a building. I think that it is important that we get that understanding so that the full picture of discrimination is transparent, that people understand and that we are all fully aware of the barriers that people face and what discriminatory behaviours look like and take place that prevent disabled people who want to enjoy live sporting events from coming to a game. Those events should unite the community. They should be part of its fabric. They should deliver and serve, as a servant, to communities and bring people together, and it is important that we reflect that.

Kevin Miles: On your specific point about the safety advisory groups at local authority level, I am firmly of the opinion that they would all benefit from supporter representation and participation in the same way as Owain has described about the unique viewpoint that a disabled representative can bring to those considerations. Supporter involvement and representation on those bodies would be welcomed. We have worked on that with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority and we both have a position that we encourage supporter representation on local authority safety advisory groups.



It is not without its challenges. These are local authority committees and tend to be held in working hours. Most supporter organisations are run by volunteers who have working lives themselves. There is an issue about the training and expertise that is required to be an effective supporter representative on a local authority SAG, so that needs addressing.

There is also a huge variety and range in how they operate. Some of them are extremely effective; for others the decision-making process is shrouded in obscurity. There are a lot where I think the police have an excessive amount of sway. It is also the same professionals from local authorities in various different aspects. A lot of them, because they are safety committees, have a fair amount of clout in the decision-making but it is not always clear who is making the decisions. There is a bit of a chummy atmosphere around some of them, where people will say, "You'll look after us. We don't particularly want this match to go ahead at this time. We don't want to be seen as responsible for taking that decision, but if the safety advisory group takes the decision that the kick-off has to be moved, we can all hide behind that collective decision and nobody takes responsibility for it."

I think that there are some challenges around it, but supporter input into a safety advisory group would be, generally speaking, a positive contribution to those deliberations. It is a fresh viewpoint. We are the people being policed and we are the people whose safety is at stake here.

Dr Pope: I support the comments that Tony and Owain made. We need to look at all forms of abuse, but specifically on gender I highlight that at present many women fans do not feel confident in the stewards and the police. When these incidents occur, they are dealt with in a way that raises issues of sexism and misogyny. This could be anything from sexist or misogynistic comments to sexual harassment and sexual assault.

We know that football is not operating in a vacuum here. We know that public attitudes towards sexism and misogyny are changing, so in my view football needs to start to change, too. The #MeToo movement has raised public awareness of these issues and they are becoming increasingly central to public debate about future policy change, but so far we have not really seen this happening in football. My point is that when we are talking about the police and safety advisory groups we need to ensure that everyone's needs are being met and that we are providing a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for women as part of that.

At present, we do not have any mechanism in place to do anything about this. In my view, we need to move on to a situation where we have a mechanism in place to identify and respond to these issues and to remedy sexism and misogyny in men's football. It should not be optional. I can speak to this later, but the recommendations that I would put forward are that all clubs are required to sign up to a charter pledging their commitment to tackling sexism and misogyny and confirming that they will take forward mechanisms identified to address this.



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We could also have something like a national hotline to identify, report, respond to and remedy sexism and misogyny in football. We know that women do not feel confident that stewards and clubs will deal with these complaints when they are put forward. In my view, that national hotline would have the potential for the data collected to be transparent and it would mean that clubs had to take forward appropriate actions when identified. The issues with putting it at the club level are that women would not necessarily want to put their complaints forward directly to their clubs, and there might also be concerns about what the club would do with that information if they were to report something. Would it have a negative impact? There might be concerns that points could be docked off season tickets and things like that. It has to be done at a national level where they feel able to raise these issues.

Should we go down the path of having an independent regulator for English football as per the recommendations of the fan-led review, sexism and misogyny need to be part of that EDI action plan. This is something concrete that we can do to change the culture of the sport.

Q10 Dr Huq: That sort of anticipates my next question, and it is in common with what Tony was saying—that you need standardised procedures, guidelines and all that stuff to stamp it out.

What concrete changes would you need to the policing outside stadiums? We know that ticketless people turn up just to soak up the atmosphere. Should there be defined places for them? Another thing has come to my attention recently. I had a long chat with the chair of the APPG on ticket abuse. The other week in here we passed a measure for buffer zones around abortion clinics. I know that it might sound like a wonky parallel, but from now on women will be able to get in to have their medical procedure without people outside interfering with their choice. In the same way, could something be done? Ticket touts turn up, and it is a common problem that the touted tickets are at the wrong end of the ground. That is a cause of problems at football matches, that the knock-off ones are put at the wrong end of the ground and that causes violence. Are there concrete measures that could be taken on the policing of the perimeter of the match that would improve things?

Owain Davies: I want to draw attention to one of the cases studies that we have seen through Wembley. We spoke to a fan who had seen a wheelchair user hijacked on the approach to Wembley by a ticketless fan. He had a hi-vis jacket on and wanted to try to get into Wembley using that as a method to get past. We hope that a greater presence of police and stewards would divert that. Hopefully, it is an isolated incident, but we must learn from that.

There were some significant issues. Disabled fans have a lack of confidence in attending major large sporting events because their safety is in question. They are voting to preserve their safety by not going. An already disproportionately impacted community of people, who are socially isolated, are further isolated because they cannot gain access to



the stadium because they feel that the safety is not there. A greater presence of police ensuring safety would add a lot of confidence. We must build back disabled fans' confidence to go in there and have a presence by being proactive and supporting those measures. The day at Wembley started incredibly early, when fans were arriving and we need to understand the whole landscape.

It is important that we understand that and understand the buffer zone—how we can robustly support that and offer different methods for people. Disabled fans could potentially have access routes that have more support but are not mandatory, so we offer choice for fans who wish to go in via other routes. It is about having an understanding of the barriers that are challenging and preventing people from wanting to take part in the beautiful game that we all love.

Q11 Dr Huq: Does anyone else have ideas for immediate changes to policing outside the stadium?

Kevin Miles: There was a lot to unpick in your question and a few things that triggered trains of thought in my mind. The idea that there are large numbers of ticketless fans gathering outside football matches trying to get tickets is a very unusual circumstance. It would happen more at a high-profile match like the European final and demand would far outstrip the availability of tickets. There would be some people in a situation like that but it is not the general normality. Most football clubs do not sell all the tickets in the first place. The rest have fairly well-established mechanisms.

Ticket toutting is a problem. I think that we need to differentiate, though, between the organised crime, effectively, behind some of the large-scale ticket toutting that you see at the larger football events, and make sure that the measures we are considering to tackle those issues do not have a draconian effect on what is a fact of life for many football fans, which is the informal exchange of tickets with family members and friends. You can go over the top with personal identification and ID checks and so on that would have a negative and repressive impact on the match-going environment. We have to be clear what the proportions of the problems are and what the measures are.

On the policing outside of matches, for the vast majority of matches that I go to I walk up and approach the match without ever normally feeling—I am aware of my position as a fairly robust and substantially proportioned white man in this context—that there is a lack of policing or stewarding around matches. I feel generally safe, particularly at large-scale events. I think that the Casey report has clearly identified many of the shortcomings at the Euro final at Wembley, which were glaring, but I am wary of generalising for regular match-day practice from what was a fairly extreme example of a combination of things going wrong. It was a very unusual circumstance. England do not get to finals very often, for a start, but I think that it is generally recognised that there were mistakes



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made in the decision making about deployment of police and so on for that match.

Clearly, there are lessons to be learned from events like that but, as I say, I am wary of drawing generalised conclusions for the everyday match-day experience based on those glaring exceptions that absolutely do need addressing.

Tony Burnett: I spent a number of years working in policing and I think we have to acknowledge—I do not have any specific evidence to support this, so I will declare that—that the experience for people from certain backgrounds is different when it comes to policing. There are two issues here. I am sorry if this is going off-piste. One of the things that slightly bothers us is the move from policing football to steward involvement in football, for a number of reasons.

One of my observations is that football is nowhere near as serious about issues like dignity at work, as many of us will have experienced. Many times I see people put in vulnerable situations that are not safe within a football environment because of the lack of respect for dignity at work. Stewards are a great example. A lot of the stewards I see in football grounds are black or Asian. We know that steward turnover is high. I have been at football matches where the stewards are black or Asian and they are expected to stop people being racially abusive. They probably have very little training to do that and probably receive very little support for their emotional wellbeing after the event. I think that is an issue that we have to recognise.

As far as policing is concerned, it is not uncommon knowledge that from a legitimacy perspective certain groups in the UK have less confidence in police than other groups. Therefore, that is a problem that manifests in football as well.

Q12 **Dr Huq:** My son has just started as a steward at Brighton Albion, so we have some questions in the next session on that. That is interesting. On the ticket tout thing, I think resale should not be a summary offence but a criminal offence; then it would be taken more seriously.

Anyway, cracking on, would the European model of supporter liaison officers help alleviate mismanagement? I think that they have an actual professional post of supporter liaison officer.

Kevin Miles: It is interesting. Every top-flight club in this country is required to have a supporter liaison officer. As part of the UEFA licensing requirement for taking part in a European competition you have to have a supporter liaison officer. That was then adopted by the Premier League and the Football League. Every club is required to have a supporter liaison officer.

The question that develops out of that, though, is what the role is of those particular individuals. The role of supporter liaison officers in this



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country and the way that has evolved has been very different from the role as it is in the Scandinavian and German models, in particular. When the rule was introduced requiring every club to have a supporter liaison officer, a lot of clubs designated one of their existing staff and called them the supporter liaison officer without necessarily changing the role or giving any particular training and development for that role. We have some clubs where the safety officer is also the supporter liaison officer. Sometimes the ticket office manager or the media manager is also the SLO, or it can be somebody from marketing. Generally speaking, in this country the SLO role has more to do with customer service than with safety and security, and the safety and security officer occupies that space more.

The Scandinavian and German model is interesting but there is a very different tradition and culture there. The SLOs are much more part of the safety and security team. They do not deal, for instance, with issues about supporter engagement with the club, as an SLO here would do—a fan voice in the structures and decision-making of the club. They do not generally deal with customer care issues about ticket refunds or whatever else. They deal with the match-day experience and they work very closely with the police. It would take a reset of the role of an SLO to develop a completely different tradition. It is not one that applies across the whole of Europe. The SLO role, as you have described, has worked quite effectively in a lot of areas—in Scandinavia and Germany, as I say, and in Holland. It does not apply across most of eastern Europe or southern Europe and it has developed in a very different way here.

Is there scope for somebody involved in the safety and security arrangements around football matches who comes at it from the point of view of maximising the benefit for supporters and looking after the supporters' experience? Absolutely. I think that would very much be a worthwhile contribution. Our experience is that just giving somebody the label "SLO" does not make a significant difference in and of itself.

Chair: Thank you. We will have to move on, I am afraid, to John Nicolson.

Q13 John Nicolson: Thank you for joining us this morning. Mr Davies, you gave us a very disturbing bit of evidence just now. You told us that wheelchair users get hijacked by the cruel and unscrupulous for entry to football matches. Could you tell us exactly what happened?

Owain Davies: Yes. For clarity, this was an isolated incident.

John Nicolson: As far as you know.

Owain Davies: As far as I know. The account that we have—we have done some insight into this and have a podcast available for people to listen to—is that a father and son and their friends were going to watch the final.



Q14 **John Nicolson:** Where was this?

Owain Davies: At Wembley, at the Euro 2020 final. They were going to the stadium and, on approach, in the number of fans waiting to get in, all of a sudden they heard from behind them, "Disabled coming through." A person in a hi-vis jacket just took the wheelchair user and made towards the gate. The dad thought initially, "Great, someone taking charge; we are going to get into the game." Then, after a moment, they thought, "Hang on, this isn't a steward or a member of staff at Wembley," and this fan was trying to gain entry. The dad came in and pushed him aside and told him where to go, and they carried on with their match day, went in and had the experience that they had.

John Nicolson: Very disturbing. So somebody had come prepared with a hi-vis jacket intending to do this with a disabled person.

Owain Davies: Perhaps, yes.

Q15 **John Nicolson:** My office has talked to a number of disabled organisations in preparation for today's hearing. What we have heard a lot is that the poor quality of stewarding especially impacts disabled supporters. Stewards appear to be untrained and poorly disciplined, and that in itself worries and frightens a lot of disabled people because they do not feel safe. Do you agree with that?

Owain Davies: Training needs to include detailed support on how you can best engage with disabled fans on a match day, how you can support them and how you can ensure that the broad spectrum of disability is supported. So often, some might recognise the physical disability but not consider the non-visible disability and the implications around that.

John Nicolson: We see that in disabled lavatories quite a lot now, don't we—that not all disabilities are visible?

Owain Davies: Yes, exactly. We have seen instances where stewards have prevented entry for some disabled fans. They might be isolated instances, but that has happened.

Q16 **John Nicolson:** Because they do not believe the person is disabled?

Owain Davies: And the lack of awareness and understanding in society about non-visible disabilities. People are first looking for a physical disability—perhaps a wheelchair user or someone with a walking aid—and that is preventing their entry. That understanding of what a disability is and how that impacts is really important, because that will then unlock how we manage and support the situation and how we can protect and serve the people we are supporting for the match day.

Q17 **John Nicolson:** Is one of the answers for the stewards to be employed directly by the clubs so that they are answerable to the clubs, trained by the clubs and known to the clubs rather than just agency workers, which appears to be what happens at the moment?



Owain Davies: I think that having a greater level of control and a greater level of expectation about how you steward is really important. Perhaps that could be a key answer to it. The logistics of being able to deliver that—we all know the turnover of stewards, particularly post-covid, has been significant, and the revolving nature of new stewards coming on is a difficult one. We need a broader level of understanding about how to steward and an absolute minimum standard of delivery of disability inclusion etiquette training so that stewards can have a baseline level, but we also need to deploy specialised, qualified stewards—disability liaison officers—who can come round and support in specific areas and specific pinch points. That would benefit the match-day experience.

Q18 John Nicolson: Can I bring you in on this, Dr Pope? I imagine that some of the issues that affect disabled people are issues that also affect women—that they do not necessarily feel safe with the stewards, and they do not feel the stewards are properly trained or that the stewards can protect them if they feel threatened or intimidated.

Dr Pope: It is really interesting. I completely agree that we cannot generalise from what happened at the men's European Championship final, but the example you have just drawn was there. Obviously, misogyny, sexism and sexual harassment can affect women at any football match, home or away, but we have evidence to suggest that these issues may impact women more severely at, for example, men's international England matches, home and away, where you get a higher proportion of men fans in attendance.

John Nicolson: Tell us how.

Dr Pope: There is the link between mob mentality and the issues around misogyny. They go hand in hand. We know that we get high levels of disrespect towards home towns, for example, but there is also an underlying misogyny that pervades the fan culture. While I am not saying we should generalise—clearly, this does not happen at every club and we cannot make those generalisations—there is something going on there in the high-profile international matches. Then you probably have certain groups of people more likely to stay away, whether we are talking about disabled supporters or women, because their safety feels at risk, not just in the stadium but travelling to the stadium, on public transport, the walk to the ground, in pubs, the walk back. At present, there is no mechanism in place to support as and when these issues arise.

Q19 John Nicolson: What is the answer?

Dr Pope: We need to have a mechanism in place to report, respond to and remedy the sexism and misogyny in football that is occurring inside the stadium, whether it is on the way to the stadium, inside the stadium or leaving the stadium. There has to be something in place at the club level but also to protect our supporters at whatever matches they are



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going to. At this point we do not have a mechanism in place for anything to be done.

Women know that if they go to these matches they are at high risk of, for example, sexist and misogynistic comments. I have examples in my dataset of women experiencing that through to sexual harassment and sexual assault. They know that they are more likely to experience that at certain men's international events, for example, so they vote with their feet and they don't bother to go, because why would they? Their safety is at risk.

Without having a mechanism in place to do something about this, the situation does not change. That needs to come from the top because clubs are under no obligation to do anything about this now.

Q20 John Nicolson: Mr Miles, can I play devil's advocate for a second? Is there an argument that football supporters are treated more harshly and with less respect than fans at other sporting events so the expectation of football fans is lower?

Kevin Miles: There has historically been a sadly well-earned negative reputation of football fans. I am not here to pretend that all football fans are angels. There have been historical problems and it would be naïve to suggest that they have all gone away. However, I think that there is a problem—and we find this particularly when we travel abroad—of people who are prepared to police and treat football fans based on that reputation and a prejudice that has formed from that rather than on the behaviour.

Q21 John Nicolson: Is that because England football fans have such a bad reputation?

Kevin Miles: One of the maxims that we have used, together with the British police delegations, on all these things is to police people on their behaviour not their reputation.

Q22 John Nicolson: Behaviour is getting worse in some areas. Pitch invasions are much worse than they used to be, for example. There are more missiles being thrown than there used to be. Those are figures that come from the police and from sporting bodies.

Kevin Miles: Again, there has been a spike in the course of the last couple of years.

John Nicolson: Why?

Kevin Miles: But I think that we need, first of all, a sense of proportion: that is from an all-time low. The chances of being arrested at a football match are still less than the chances of being arrested at Glastonbury, but you don't get the fuss around Glastonbury and disorder that you get around football. It does not take very many incidents to create the amount of scrutiny of football. The interest that there is in football means



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that these take a huge amount of prominence. I do not think that the problems we have are unique to football. Football provides a vehicle and an expression for a lot of these things to come to the surface, but I think you will find a lot of these issues reflected anywhere else.

- Q23 John Nicolson:** Drugs use, for example, is increasing in football, isn't it? You mentioned music festivals and obviously there is drug use at music festivals. At a lot of music festivals they test drugs, don't they, to make sure that the drugs are safe? We have looked at that in this Committee. Why don't we do this at football matches? Why can't you take drugs at football matches and check that they are safe?

Kevin Miles: It is interesting that one of the measures that has been discussed recently is adding cocaine possession to the roster of things that you can get a banning order for. Personally, I thought that that was a bit of a strange move because the biggest deterrent to drug use at football matches is the fear of apprehension. Very rarely do you see anybody actually detained. I am aware of widespread cocaine use at football but nobody ever gets arrested for it, so I do not think necessarily that increasing the sanction on arrest is the right way to approach that particular problem.

- Q24 John Nicolson:** There is an active debate, isn't there? Some people will say that you should criminalise more folk and make penalties harsher, and other people will say the absolute opposite. They will say that what you need to do is, if not decriminalise, at least work with the police so that if you are tested for drugs you will not be arrested and you will know that the drugs that you are taking are safe, which has happened in some music festivals. On which side of that debate do you fall?

Kevin Miles: I am the last one to want to rush to unnecessary criminalisation. I think we also have to be realistic about the particular challenges around football. It is difficult enough getting a crowd into a football match in the half hour before kick-off without doing drugs testing on the way in.

- Q25 John Nicolson:** No, I am talking about voluntary drugs testing, like at music festivals. You can go into a tent and say, "This is what I am planning to take. Is it safe?" It will be tested. You will be told whether it is safe or not and you will not be arrested by the polis.

Kevin Miles: I bow to your greater experience of music festivals. I have never experienced that. I am wary on all occasions of football exceptionalism, where something is not generally done in society but, because there is a perception of an issue around football, measures are introduced to address a perceived problem in football. I am very reluctant to draw attention to anything in these hallowed chambers, but I understand that there have been reports recently that perhaps drug use is not unheard of even here.

John Nicolson: Really? I must report that to the Commons authorities because I have not heard that.



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Kevin Miles: I read something to that effect—that there had been some suggestion of traces of drug use on the parliamentary estate. The only point I am trying to make with that is that there are generalised issues and challenges in society and I am very wary always of reaching a football-specific solution to a general social problem. That does not mean that football does not have a responsibility for making sure that it has the safest, most welcoming environment that we can possibly create.

Q26 **Jane Stevenson:** I think with the thousands and thousands of people who work on the parliamentary estate as part of society it would be unusual if nobody in those thousands of people was a recreational drug user.

Kevin Miles: Absolutely.

Q27 **Jane Stevenson:** I am listening to what is being said this morning. I do not know if I am just very lucky to be from Wolverhampton—I am, of course—but my experience is of going to Wolverhampton Wanderers as a small child, then regularly in my teens with a group of female school friends, and I now go as much as I can as an adult. In my experience as a female fan, certainly in the late 1980s, I remember that the facilities at Molineux were completely different. You would go and get your cup of Bovril at half time and you could see a men's urinal. It was just very odd. I think that the experience as a female fan now is worlds apart from that. The facilities are good and the atmosphere is good. I have never felt that there are barriers to me as a single woman turning up at Molineux. Maybe that is a Premier League thing or a specific club thing, I don't know.

With the shift towards women's football and the women's game gaining in popularity, I turned up at Molineux to a Lionesses warm-up game for the Euros final and the first thing that struck me was the pitch. The musical pitch of the chants went up by about three octaves because there were young kids with their families. It was a very different stadium that night. I want to ask the panel about the challenges that brings to not only the stewards but the stadium design. Do you think that clubs will move and pivot now? Are you aware of whether any clubs are making a women's football plan? I do not know if anyone has any examples of clubs that are. Dr Pope, you are nodding.

Dr Pope: Your experience is interesting. I have interviewed many women in my sample who would reflect that and have experience of what you describe—going to matches in the 1980s, putting up with the urine streams or toilets that you could see into over the top and those kinds of things. They still went regardless. In some clubs the facilities are a lot better in comparison to that, but sadly we are still not there with every football club in the country.

There are certainly examples. I can think of a more extreme one—I will not mention the particular club—where it was voiced time and again that they were unsatisfied with the quality of the facilities available and



somehow it ended up with the women supporters fixing it themselves by taking a drill down to the stadium and installing mirrors and basic facilities in the toilets because they were fed up with having no hooks on the doors and so on.

Q28 Jane Stevenson: How far down the league was that?

Dr Pope: We are talking in the professional set-up, so this is not a grassroots team. There are numerous examples. Yes, new facilities and new stadiums are a game changer, but even where that has happened it has not always been the case that enough facilities were built in the first place. That is then highlighted with examples of men's stadiums hosting women's matches. You have far fewer toilets there in the first place and then there are not the facilities as soon as you get a slight increase in the number of women. That happened during the European Championship. There is still in some cases—I am not talking the top elite stadiums that have recently been built—clearly an issue at many clubs and complaints about poor facilities. I could draw on examples from plenty of women where they have not felt that their safety was a concern, but there are also many examples where that is an issue. That is one of the things that I wanted to bring attention to.

Are we ready for expansion? Probably not at this point. If you suddenly had an influx of spectators attending matches being played at men's stadia, appreciating that many of those stadiums are old and you are working within the restrictions of that, they are not set up with the facilities in place. Separate to that, as I mentioned earlier, you have different set-ups for whether you can bring children into the stadium. Some women voiced to me that they had to stop going to matches because, for example, they were breastfeeding and there is no space to be able to do that. The Premier League is probably going to fill up week on week anyway, but outside of that, those women stop attending matches in that period and then they are lost. There is an economic imperative there for clubs to do something about that.

If you then have more women going and being supporters of the women's game, are those spaces set up in a family-friendly way? Are those spaces set up for, for example, mothers or fathers to be able to take children? Not if they have the same regulations as apply in men's football about whether you can even take a young child to the match. I think that there needs to be a lot more work on expansion of the women's game.

Q29 Jane Stevenson: At the moment we have family areas that are evidently set up for parents to take kids along. Do you feel that that is a better model—to weed out families and put them in a specific part of a specific stand—or should we be looking at the whole stadium having everybody in together and being more welcoming?

Owain Davies: Importantly, we must deliver choice. We cannot tell people to support football in a particular way. We need to allow people to



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have the freedom to support their team in the best way possible within, obviously, some parameters of equality. If we look at it from a disability perspective, so often we see that disabled people are congregated all together, not integrated. It is important that we have integration, not segregation. But some people may wish to choose to use family stands. Whatever choices we offer, they should be completely available for the whole cross-section of fans to come in. We should preserve that opportunity. If they want to go as a family, they should be able to choose to do so, but if they want to sit in the general allocation stands, they should have the ability to do that—but also looking at the wider culture of football.

Q30 Jane Stevenson: We will come on to safe standing—this inquiry is about safety, potentially—but are children and families and women being addressed in discussions about safe standing and where we go with the future of watching matches?

Owain Davies: From a safe standing perspective, with disability in particular, there is obviously a line in that. It is important that when safe standing comes in we are not trying to strap the saddle on once the horse has bolted, but it is inclusive from the start. If a disabled fan wants to engage in it as a wheelchair user, they should have the opportunity to do so. The potential of the safe standing area is perhaps for that more raucous, different type of experience. People may choose to engage with that, and they should have that opportunity. If you are ambulant disabled, you should have the space and it should be considered in that.

It is important to see it through that lens. People want to choose how they watch live sport. They may not want to be involved with it; if so, they are not significantly impacted by that. But if they do choose and want to be involved in it, the opportunity should be there. If it is not, clubs and venues should be held to account for why they have not done it. They have had a significant amount of lead time. There are clear elements identifying their inclusion of disabled people in that, so we need to ensure that that is enforced as well. If it is not, then it is not being done right.

Q31 Jane Stevenson: One thought that comes back is stewarding, which has been mentioned over and over again, and I think it will continue to be mentioned. Do we need a minimum standard of training that you absolutely have to pass before you are put in a responsible position with kids? There is a lot of nodding. Does anyone want to comment on what it would look like?

Tony Burnett: The point comes back to standards of behaviour, ultimately, doesn't it? How do we create inclusive standards of behaviour so that people attending football matches know what is expected and, therefore, other people feel a sense of belonging? I think that stewards have a key role in that. The problem with stewarding currently is that it is a minimum wage job in lots of clubs. As colleagues have already mentioned, it is usually outsourced and the turnover of stewards is huge.



Therefore, you can spend a lot of time training stewards in the right behaviours and how to support people appropriately, whether it is with respect to disability, misogyny or other forms of discrimination, but you are going to lose them two weeks down the line and they might not be trained then for another period. If stewards are going to become increasingly important in defining behavioural standards but also being almost a mechanism for support for fans when they are experiencing discrimination, we have to look at the whole model of stewarding, how they are recruited, how they are trained, who employs them, longevity and so on.

Kevin Miles: The quality of stewarding has been a long-standing concern and I think that Tony has correctly identified some of the challenges around that. Just getting the turnout of stewards at all is challenging in the current climate. We have to be realistic about what the expectations of people are as well. I have looked at situations where stewards are being required to intervene and thinking, "I wouldn't do that on a minimum wage. That's more than my job's worth." I think that was the attitude of some of the stewards involved at Wembley, for instance, at the Euro 2020 final. With some of the challenges that were being put in front of them, they were thinking, "I'm not getting paid enough to put myself in that position."

On some of the issues about inclusion and safety that have been discussed here, I think that there needs to be increasing sensitivity. You would like to think that sensitivity and awareness and understanding would be generalised across the whole of the stewarding staff as much as it can be, but you have to be realistic about the expectation. If you cannot necessarily train everybody, certainly the steward supervisors and specialists should be on hand to come and assist in situations like that—maybe that sort of graduated response. I think that the idea of some diversity training or sensitivity and awareness training as part of a module at the basic level should be a given. We should perhaps put more of a premium on what the value of a steward is at a football match, because football matches would not happen without stewards. If you want better atmosphere and better stewarding, you probably have to invest in that, in training and also in remuneration, to keep your staff.

Q32 **Damian Green:** We have heard an hour's worth of evidence; I am interested how much of it is based on anecdote rather than data and hard evidence. Tony, you said something about evidence we don't collect. We are talking about safety, particularly at football. There is a public perception, partly because of what happened at the Euro final, which was terrible, and partly because of police figures showing that arrests were higher last season than they were pre-covid—those are the only two bits of hard data I know—that football is going back to being unsafe, to a large extent, in the way it was at times, in much more widescale ways, in the 1970s and 1980s. Is there any more evidence somewhere, or do we not have the evidence? Are we all relying on anecdote?



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Tony Burnett: There is definitely evidence in the space that we work in, which is around discrimination. The UK Football Policing Unit released a report two weeks ago talking about a 99% increase in hate crime discrimination over the last season. On the stats that we have for discrimination—bear in mind that we are only one source of reporting; as I mentioned, 92 clubs have their own sources that all need to come together—we see a significant increase. We saw a 41% increase this year to date for incidents of discrimination. That increase is across the board: it is racism, LGBTQ+ discrimination, misogyny. We are seeing an increase.

It is not just the professional game; we are seeing a double-digit increase in reports of discrimination in grassroots football. It is reflective of a broader dynamic in society, being absolutely honest.

Q33 **Damian Green:** We could attempt to target policy better if we had more data. I am trying to get to the point of what we do not know that we need to know to have effective policies to combat racism or misogyny or any of that. Is there stuff that you would all like to know or that we as a Committee should ask people to provide that we do not know?

Tony Burnett: I will quickly finish off, going back to the original point. For us, transparency is a disinfectant. We have to have transparency of discrimination reporting data so that we can see the full picture across the 92 football clubs. That would allow us to do a root-cause analysis so that we can see the trends but, more importantly, understand why the trends are occurring with UK football policing and other stakeholders to address the root causes and work locally to challenge the problems.

That works across all the protected characteristics. There will be pockets—I can think of clubs anecdotally where we know we have a problem but we do not have the data to back it up. If we had the data to back it up we could put in place interventions that would drive belonging in those areas.

Q34 **Damian Green:** That is an important point. We need that data club by club so that if necessary you can say, “You’ve got a problem” or, “You’ve got less of a problem” and the local police or the local club or stewarding policies or whatever could be changed.

Tony Burnett: Completely.

Owain Davies: To add to the point, it is opening the scope of the data that we are trying to do. As I mentioned, we are so focused on the attitudes of people and barriers and the safety, but it is also the physical infrastructure. There are five to 10 clubs where away fans still have to sit with home fans. The physical infrastructure does not accommodate or support a safe environment because the fans are placed in different areas, sometimes at the other end of the pitch. That opens disabled fans up to abuse from the home fans, and disabled fans have to be escorted by a steward or a police officer to go to the toilet, an attack on their human rights and dignity.



Going back to the stats that we mentioned, from the annual fans survey that we run—we had about 1,400 fans take part—15% of disabled fans stated that attitudes of others were a barrier to going to watch live sport, 24.5% stated that anxiety or lack of confidence were a barrier. Often these are derived from the attitudes of other people, perhaps the fear of abuse or maybe the lack of venue accessibility. Then 30% of fans indicated that they are unable to access some venues because of the lack of accessible facilities. That goes back to my point that away areas need to be provided so that away fans can sit with their own fans. That needs to be considered because it is a source of abuse that fans are facing.

Q35 Damian Green: Do you think that football is less safe to watch now than it was 10 years ago?

Kevin Miles: No.

Damian Green: Do you have any evidence to back that up?

Kevin Miles: Not as much as I would like. Your point about data—about making sure that we are operating on the basis of demonstrable fact rather than impression—is well made. I will be absolutely honest: as I said, I am aware of my privilege in this area as a white man who has done this for a long time, but I am basing my answer to your question on my personal experience. I do not feel more vulnerable at football than I did 10 years ago. I do not have a lot of the challenges of the colleagues I am sharing the panel with. I am aware of some of the challenges of trying to formulate policy on impressions rather than data. The data is very important.

The quality of the data is also important. I am a trustee at Kick It Out. I know from the discussions that we have had there that there is a reluctance to share data. There are some fairly old-fashioned ideas: “We don’t want to share the data about our problem because it reflects badly on us.” Having an awareness of the real problem is the first step towards putting it right. People are trying to protect their brand by not admitting that they have a problem with discrimination or abuse or whatever else. That is not helpful.

You also need to be quite clear about the quality of data. I know that there are discussions between, for instance, the UK Football Policing Unit and the Home Office, who have a different standard about the data that is released. The UKFPU has released, on occasion, or based itself on information about incident reporting and arrests, whereas the Home Office has a more filtered approach in that it is possible to have an arrest or an incident report where there has not been anything of substance that you can base that on. The Home Office relies much more on disposals of what happens subsequently. I do not want to get involved in that debate. I am just saying that I know that there is a discussion around it and we need a bit of clarity.

I do not know for a fact, for instance, that there is a direct correlation between the increase in drug use and offences of violence. I don’t know how many offences of violence are committed where there is proof that it



is linked to drug use. I just do not know. I have my suspicions, but I do not know.

Q36 **Damian Green:** Dr Pope, I will ask you almost the same question: is male football more welcoming to women and girls now than it was 10 years ago?

Dr Pope: It is interesting. In my research I have argued that we have seen—especially post-Hillsborough and the Taylor report and the move to all-seater stadia—that opportunities for women to become fans of football have increased. That has probably gone hand in hand with the fact that women now make up a substantial minority of the crowd. My research findings are based on an Arts and Humanities Research Council study of over 100 in-depth interviews with women. When I look at the responses across that dataset—it will not be all women—there are accounts from women who are routinely required to prove their status as real fans in ways that are not necessary for men.

There were accounts of them describing men who would tell them at the stadium that women in football in any capacity was a complete joke. There was hostility for them sitting in certain parts of the stadium because they were told that that was the space for the men and that they should not have their season ticket there because that is the men's area. Some refused to talk to them because they did not think that they belonged at football. There were routine comments like, "Shut up, you're a woman, what would you know? Women should be at home washing pots, doing the laundry."

Although we have seen positive changes and we have seen those increase—not just in football; there have been more women in the workplace, women have more spending for their leisure time, and opportunities have opened up for women to enter a range of leisure activities, football included—it is still a bastion of masculinity. There is still the perception with football that when women go into that space it is almost breaking down the last bastion of men's dominance. That is when you get, in the words of my respondents, the idea that, "We are encroaching on men's patch, taking over their sport." That is what is causing some men—not all men—to feel very threatened and intimidated. As a result, they are likely to be challenging towards women in a way that they would not be to other men supporters.

There are consequences for women who enter that space. They are continuously having to watch when they make certain comments or how far they are prepared to stick their neck out because they know that they will have questions raised about why they are even in that space. That has been supported in research. There was a survey done by the Football Supporters' Association focused on women's match-day experiences and that also found high levels of sexism. That is the qualitative side of it, as I say, with over 100 in-depth interviews.

I also did a study based on 1,950 men football fans. In short, the result of that was that nearly 70% of the supporters were in the misogynistic



attitudes group. Many men in that sample felt that women should not have any involvement in sports or, if they did, it certainly should not be a sport like football. There is evidence in the dataset. That is not saying that this is just a problem for football. These things go hand in hand with wider society as well. It is not pointing the finger at football fans. If we have sexism and misogyny in wider society, we have racism in wider society, we will see it in football, but the issues are there.

I completely agree with you about further research. If we are going to introduce these interventions, we have to do it working with the groups we intend to benefit from them. There has to be research, working with the Government and sports governing bodies, so that we can develop the interventions on the basis of the empirical research that is available and then work with those groups to check that the interventions are doing what we want them to do and that they are for their benefit.

Q37 **Damian Green:** Thank you very much. One last question if I may. Has Kick It Out worked? Is there less racism in football than there was 10 years ago?

Tony Burnett: That is a difficult question. If you look at our outcomes, I do not think that you can define whether we have been successful based on whether there is less racism in football. If you look at what we have achieved over the last 30 years, the discussion around racism in football has moved on. The fact that it is now a prominent discussion is important. Let's not forget that racism and its impacts are a reflection of society.

If you look at where we have come from over the last 30 years and where we are now, in the last six years the macro environment, certainly in England, has been more hostile than I can remember it being in my 55 years of being around. That is not a reflection of Kick It Out. That is a reflection that as a society the level of discussion, the level of polarisation, the level of hostility around some of these discussions—particularly around race—is at a level that it has not been for many, many years. It is really hard to judge our impact, because we are working in a macro environment that is, for me, more hostile, particularly around race, than it has been in all the time that I can remember.

If I look at some of things that we need to push more aggressively as an organisation, data is huge. I am in an organisation now where, in 2022, I still do not have a clue what representation looks like across football. Having worked in policing, financial services and lots of other sectors, I can say that we are light years behind. I cannot even tell you what the pipeline of talent looks like for black and Asian cultures coming through the system, which means that I cannot effectively target resources to address the issue.

If I look at representation, we have so few Asian Premier League footballers—professional footballers—that it is quite embarrassing. The representation of cultures is exactly the same. Probably the biggest anomaly—I raise this because this is, in theory, a meritocracy, I am



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told—is that the last black Premier League referee was Uriah Rennie in 2008. There is not a single black referee on the Premier League list. There is one black referee in the top four leagues of English football.

Have we done lots to make a difference? Absolutely, but in the context of the broader society there is still a huge amount to do and we have to put it in that context. We are fighting against a dynamic now that is outside of our control, which is the way that society is moving. This is not just in the UK, by the way. We all saw the recent election results in Italy and we see what is going on in places like Hungary and Poland. We have some real challenges.

Q38 Steve Brine: It is worth pointing out, Mr Burnett, that literally as we speak the first Prime Minister of Indian origin is with the King. He is a Southampton fan, which is his one vice in life—that may not endear me to some of my constituents. That will hopefully inspire many people. But thanks for all that you are doing, because I think that it has made a difference. It is harder for you to say, maybe, but I think that you have made a big differences.

Two things briefly for you, Mr Miles. Where are you on the reintroduction of standing at football matches?

Kevin Miles: Standing has never gone away at football matches. There has always been a lot of people who, even with the introduction of an all-seater stadium, have continued to prefer to watch football matches standing.

I am very much in favour of the change in the rules and the development of licensed standing areas back into top-tier football. It has been a campaign of ours to encourage that choice to be available in football. I am very pleased with the progress that has been made and the work that has been done by the Sports Ground Safety Authority in helping to facilitate that. I feel safer standing in an area that is designed specifically to enable that and to facilitate that so that it can be done safely. That is a big step forward; there is still some work to do.

One of the big advantages of standing areas, for me, is to allow choice. I have gone through many years of always sitting down at home matches because that is what everybody does in the area around me, and always standing at away matches because that is what everybody does all around me—that is what the majority want to do. Even on the days when I have not been very well or whatever else, I have not been able to sit and watch the match at an away game and that has been a problem. It works in both ways. The idea that you can have an area of the ground that is designated for those who want to stand and is designed for them to be able to do that safely is a good thing.

There is a bit of catching up to do. Clubs have a bit of catching up to do with the rules. I was at Tottenham on Sunday. It was the first time I have had a ticket with "Safe standing section" printed on it. What I was not offered by Newcastle United, who sold me the ticket as an away fan, was the choice, "Do you want to stand or do you want to sit?" The



creation of those areas should mean that I now have the choice. The clubs have to catch up and make sure that the potential for a choice is translated into customer choice so that you can choose whether you go to a standing area or a seated area. It is easier with home fans—you have regular people going to the same ground—but for away fans there is a bit of catching up to do.

If we are going to make football as inclusive as we can, it has to be inclusive regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity and cultural background, but also with choices about whether you want to stand or sit. It is a modernisation of football that we can facilitate safe standing.

Q39 Steve Brine: As a Tottenham fan, I am very glad you brought that up. I wish you had stayed in the north-east on Sunday.

Mr Burnett, do you want to comment on safer standing and the terraces? This is not a return to the terraces; it is a return to that element of choice, as Mr Miles rightly says. Do you want to comment on the cultural element of standing while watching? You must have thought about this deeply.

Tony Burnett: I am a Bolton Wanderers fan, for my sins—sorry about that—so I spent much of my youth standing on the terraces at Burnden Park. I will relate this back to that, and Kevin mentioned it. This is about the broader level of inclusion and belonging within football. What terracing means to me is closer proximity to other supporters. If I am stood next to someone who is shouting discriminatory abuse at a player, which I have been many times in my football supporting life, the fact that I am within arm's distance is a challenge for me because that is going to increase the level of safety or the lack of safety I feel. It is not about standing or sitting for me. This is about how football is creating an atmosphere of belonging and inclusion where we do not allow these things to happen. Standing has its challenges, but that is not the challenge for me. The challenge is how we create a game where everyone belongs. That is about stamping out the broader issues around discrimination.

Q40 Steve Brine: Finally—anybody else can come in on any of these questions—do football banning orders exist because football fans are worse behaved than other fans or because the sport is more high profile? What do you think, Tony? Are they being misused as a punishment, for instance, as opposed to what they were designed for, which was to ban you from football?

Tony Burnett: I am probably not as well qualified as others on the panel to talk about this issue and will refer to Kevin. There is a whole challenge of stigmatising football for broader issues in society. That is the big question for me, but I take counsel from more qualified colleagues.

Steve Brine: What do you think, Kevin?

Kevin Miles: My personal view is that when the banning orders were first introduced there was a positive aspect to it because I was aware there



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were people at football matches who I did not want there. There were some unpleasant people, some racist people, some violent people who I did not want to be sharing a football ground with. The big step forward for me at that time was that instead of treating us all like a problem, it identified the individuals who were a problem—or potentially identified them—and excluded them from the game to let the rest of us get on with it. It was the idea of dealing with individuals with a process of law where they have the right to defend themselves and to hear the evidence against them. It was not like a banning of all away fans, which you used to get back in those days, treating us as if we were all part of the same problem. It was targeting individuals, but they also had the right to defend themselves and I think that that was right.

A banning order is a pretty draconian measure, partly for the impact that it has on the individual's life if you are suddenly excluded from football but also for the idea that breach of a banning order could lead to a custodial sentence. It is a heavy-end sanction. They were introduced as a preventive measure to prevent violence and disorder at football matches. From the point of view of targeting those people and excluding them from the game, there was a lot to be welcomed with the banning order.

I am concerned about a bit of mission creep from the banning orders. I am always very wary of any legislation that is specifically introduced for issues around football and not others. We have some absurd situations where you can have a bus full of the old-age pensioner supporters club from a particular club on their way to an away game being pulled over by the police to check that they do not have any alcohol in the bus, while the rugby league fans from the same town are charging off to their away game saying "cheers" with their bottles of beer as they go past because their sport is not subject to the same legislation. It is not necessary to have a separate offence of attempting to enter a football ground while drunk when you already have the offences of being drunk and incapable or drunk and disorderly. I am wary of any legislation that specifically targets people because of the sport that they go to. If being drunk is a problem, it is a problem regardless of the fact that you are going to a football match. I am a bit worried about the mission creep.

The numbers of banning orders are considerably down on what they were previously. There were 3,000 or 3,500 at one stage. There are about 1,400 or 1,500 at the moment. I have worked with the England away support for the last 25 or 30 years and we always make a point of telling the foreign police forces that there are so many banning orders in place. The foreign police forces always say, "Great, you've stopped 1,500 hooligans travelling," despite the fact that we know very well that very few of those 1,500 would ever go to an England away game anyway. It is a bit of an imprecise measure of what the situation is in football.

- Q41 **Simon Jupp:** Good morning, panel. If I go to see Exeter City, my local football team, I cannot drink in the stands, but if I go and see the Exeter Chiefs, my local rugby team, I can. A quick question to all of you, starting with Tony: is that fair?



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Tony Burnett: As a committed football fan who is also a cricket fan and a fan of other sports, I do not think it is fair, no. I am not sure what the background of that is and what it is trying to achieve, but personally I do not think it is fair.

Simon Jupp: Clear and concise; thank you. Mr Davies?

Owain Davies: From speaking with individual fans, there is a fear that there is already a high level of toxicity in some elements of football. Would the alcohol element bring that out more? Perhaps the other side of the fence is that it would actually alleviate it. I do not have a point either for or against it, without the evidence. The evidence that we saw in the Euros and how it impacts disabled fans—the throwing of alcohol in the air, which is annoying for some people, is catastrophic for a disabled person who has an £8,000 power chair. Without the evidence or the protection that disabled people can have, we need a bit more information before making a decision either way.

Simon Jupp: Good points. Kevin?

Kevin Miles: No, it is not fair. It is discriminatory to football. That does not mean that I am necessarily in favour of constant drinking in sight of the pitch. There are customer care issues there, but it should not be a question of it being a criminal offence. I know the fan-led review and the subsequent report asked for pilots, because this is depriving clubs like Exeter of a potential revenue stream.

When it comes to the question of data, I am not convinced that the regulations about not allowing consumption of alcohol in sight of the pitch at a football match do anything to reduce the amount of alcohol consumed. I am very familiar with the idea of, "Let's get a couple more quick pints in before we head off to the ground because we can't get one while we're there."

Simon Jupp: Or indeed during half time. People decide to chug stuff. I do not speak from experience, just to be clear.

Kevin Miles: Some people even miss the last five minutes of the first half to get to the bar quicker, which is sacrilege.

Simon Jupp: It depends how badly or well the game is going, I guess.

Kevin Miles: Or how thirsty they are.

Dr Pope: I agree about needing the research on this. Going back to the comparisons between men's and women's football, it is difficult to disentangle the role of alcohol in that. We do not have the empirical data about the links, or otherwise, between the role of alcohol and fan-related disorder when we look at the women's game. When I went to the fan zones at the last women's World Cup as part of my research, there was no alcohol being served there, and when I went to the matches there was not alcohol at all. I am not saying whether that is right or wrong, but there was no alcohol being served in 2019 at the FIFA women's World Cup and some women fans were expressing a lot of annoyance about that.



I am not generalising that in any way to a suggestion that that is something that women want. The point is that there was no alcohol and there was no violence but it is difficult to disentangle whether alcohol was a contributing factor to the lack of violence. That is the only thing I highlight. That picture looks very different from the fan zones that we see around men's football and matches and the rules around that.

- Q42 **Simon Jupp:** Kevin made the point about the impact on revenue for smaller clubs in particular. If drinking was allowed back in the stands, smaller clubs like Exeter City would be on a fairer par with their nearby rugby club, the Chiefs. Could that mean that clubs could employ extra security to make sure that the stands were secure?

Kevin Miles: Potentially. In the fan-led review we heard evidence from Dulwich Hamlet Football Club, which said that it could not afford to get promoted from its league because that would take it to a league where there were restrictions on drinking alcohol in sight of the pitch. Seventy per cent. of its revenue came from the bar takings and it would have an impact on its ability to survive economically as a club if it gets promoted. That is an issue that is challenging clubs in League One and League Two. What they then spend the money on—it opens up all sorts of possibilities around that.

Alcohol is allowed at football matches. The incident that you referred to, Owain, of beer being thrown, probably happened on a concourse, where alcohol is already allowed. We need to address what the real problems are, and that requires research and data to make sure that we are basing that on fact and not just anecdotal data.

- Q43 **Clive Efford:** Thanks for coming to give evidence to us today. What is the difference in the experience of fans travelling abroad to attend football matches and what they experience here in our English football leagues?

Kevin Miles: It is difficult to know where to start, Clive, because there are so many different aspects to this. One challenge is that you are venturing into the unknown. When you are at home you have your domestic routine. Particularly going to a home game, you know exactly what to expect with policing and stewarding and the general experience. Even when you are going to an away ground you get into a pattern, but when you are going abroad you are not always sure of what you are going to get. The culture and the attitude towards football fans generally, but particularly towards English football fans travelling abroad because of the reputational things that go with it, means that there is a lot of uncertainty about what you will encounter. You do not know what you are about to get. The policing is challenging everywhere.

It is often complained that English football fans get a rough deal when they travel abroad because of the reputational issues and stuff. I know from my contact with supporters' organisations internationally—I sit on the board of Football Supporters Europe—that they defend their police forces against allegations of discrimination against English football fans



on the grounds of, "Don't worry, they treat us as badly as that every week as well." Policing of football is of a very low standard in a lot of countries where it is very confrontational and quite brutal.

There is a lot more that could be done about improving best practice but we do not have to reinvent the wheel on this. There is a lot of stuff in the Council of Europe report, to which we are a signatory, about dealing with the policing of matches with an international dimension. It is already there. If that was implemented and adhered to, you could have a much more positive experience of travelling abroad as a football fan.

- Q44 **Clive Efford:** Others may want to come in, but another thing they may want to consider as they are speaking is who has ultimate responsibility for safety of fans, whether they are travelling abroad or whether they are at a UK game. I was reading the briefings before this meeting. We have SAGs, the Sports Ground Safety Authority, the UK Football Policing Unit, the National Football Information Point and the Security Industry Authority. There is a whole load of others for travelling fans as well, which I have not read out. Where does responsibility for safety of UK fans ultimately sit?

Kevin Miles: While travelling abroad?

Clive Efford: While travelling abroad and here in the UK.

Kevin Miles: They are clearly two very different issues. There is an ecosystem of safety authorities here, with the Sports Ground Safety Authority at the head at national level and the local safety advisory groups responsible at local level. The safety advisory group brings together the interested parties—the police, the fire service, those involved in stadium security and safety. They have to license the event.

- Q45 **Clive Efford:** Do they have ultimate responsibility for oversight of everything?

Kevin Miles: I am not a lawyer about whether there is strict liability, but there is clear responsibility on the tournament organisers—the event organisers—for the wellbeing of the safety of everyone.

- Q46 **Clive Efford:** Let me put it another way. Should there be somebody with overall responsibility? Should it all be better co-ordinated and should there be a brain at the top of it that says, "This is where ultimate responsibility lies for a safety approach in the game"? There is a footprint around most professional games that the police are responsible for; then you have all the safety inside the ground and everything else. Should there be an ultimate responsibility for that that sits within one organisation or body? Ought it to be part of an independent regulator? Would it sit there? Should there be one body in charge where should it sit?

Kevin Miles: The way you pose the question answers itself. There should be at the very minimum absolute transparency about where responsibility for all the various different areas lies. It may require a central body to co-ordinate all the various different responsibilities within that, but there



should absolutely be transparency about where responsibility lies and where decision making lies.

Q47 **Clive Efford:** Would you say that that is lacking right now?

Kevin Miles: The situation is patchy. I referred earlier to there being obscurity about some of the decision-making processes. People hide behind each other. I mentioned the safety advisory groups. There are some that are very good and others where they are a bit cosy. You may get, for instance, the police saying, "We don't want this match to go ahead at this time but we don't want to get the blame for this match not going ahead at this time, so if we can make it a safety advisory group recommendation"—and nobody can argue with a local authority safety advisory group, can they? There is sometimes a lack of transparency. I like your phrase, Tony, about transparency being a disinfectant. I am going to steal that one.

Tony Burnett: One of the themes of this discussion has been that fan experiences are not homogenous. One of the interesting points about having a central body would be—for example, if I am looking at an international fixture, I cannot, as a fan, pick up any kind of equality impact assessment or risk assessment that tells me whether a country that I want to travel to is safe for me. My experience as a black man is different from many other people's experience. If I want to go to Hungary, for example, I have to do my own research on the political climate and what is happening there. We have all seen the recent elections in Italy. I would still have to do my own research on where I can go and where is safe for me. That should be a consideration. If we are asking fans from under-represented groups and with different protected characteristics, or creating the opportunity of belonging for fans to go and watch their country, we should provide them with the information that tells them whether they are going into a safe environment or not and how to be safe in the environments that they are going to.

There is another question—it is a big one—whether we should be allowing our national team to go and play in environments where players or supporters are not safe. That is a different consideration altogether. You mentioned earlier the dignity at work situation. Should we be allowing black players to go into environments where we know that they will be abused, have objects thrown at them and often be the subject of physical violence? It is a nonsense. It would not happen in any other walk of life or any other profession but we ask our sportspeople to go and do that.

Owain Davies: On fans travelling abroad and the impact on disabled fans when they are looking to travel, the transport infrastructure is not geared up to be able to support disabled fans effectively to have fully independent travel. There are so many barriers before getting there.

We have spoken already about the power of information, what we should be doing, the provision of services, but, equally about the safety element. How can somebody safely navigate to the stadium? We saw blind and



partially sighted fans separated from their personal assistants in the melee that went on at the Champions League final. I must pay credit to the Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association and to its chair, Ted Morris, for the way that he has represented their fans before, during and after that to get to the bottom of what happened and the impact it has had, so that it does not happen again and we can get the honest truth.

That information is important so that fans are not put in that situation again, safety measures are put in place and we can get to the bottom of what happened and the learnings from it, and share it directly with fans who are going to a game and asking, "What safety measures do I need? Is that pub a safe place for me or an accessible place for me to get into? Will I be supported?"

They are the alarm bells when you look at going abroad. In the Stade de France there were 550 wheelchair user spaces for the Champions League final. Liverpool had only 38. That is completely unacceptable. That was before that even happened, and that is where the pressure should be. Going back to Tony's point, why should we support those events if they are not going to deliver against a basic level of equality and human rights?

Q48 Clive Efford: Do you think that the sports governing bodies, whether at home or internationally, even want to hear from the fans their experience of going to matches and how matches are policed and seating is allocated? Do they even have the mechanisms in place to listen to what fans are saying?

Owain Davies: Fan engagement is an absolute priority for improving match-day experience and representing them in it. We have seen the shadow boards that have been implemented, and we have received feedback from some clubs that it is working and they have that level of power and insight, but it is something that is developing. From the super league and the impact that has come out of that, we are seeing some evidence that it happens, but we need to see that prioritised at board level. We would like to see access and inclusion discussed at board level as a mainstay point and delivered against.

Q49 Clive Efford: Yes, but is there the mechanism in place for fans to be listened to and to influence the decisions that are made by the sports governing bodies?

Kevin Miles: One of my learnings from dealing with sports governing bodies over the years—people like UEFA or even the FA here—is that they are not homogeneous monoliths. They are living organisations. I think that in every one of those sporting authorities you will find people who take this stuff very seriously. You will find dedicated people working very hard on issues around discrimination, accessibility and inclusion who are taking this very seriously and listen to what people say and do their best.

They are a voice in a huge organisation. You will find that there is more structured dialogue going on now that is starting to engage senior people at those organisations, but I have no doubt at all that there are other



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voices in the same organisations, who may have a commercial imperative or a security imperative, whose views can override those in the organisations who are concerned. We have a long way to go before you can be confident that the diverse voice of supporters and those who are going is heard at every level and weighed fully in balancing all of the evidence and factors.

Q50 Clive Efford: You are member of the European-wide fans organisation—sorry for forgetting its exact title. You were instrumental in setting that up and were there at the foundation of that. It covers all 55 European associations. Do its representations on behalf of fans get listened to? Is there a mechanism there for fans at that level to influence what goes on in the game?

Kevin Miles: We have spent a lot of years shouting in vain about the need for supporters' voice to be heard in all these issues. We are starting to make some progress. Owain made a very interesting point. One of the reasons why it has improved recently was the threat of the breakaway super league. It was the voice of fans, effectively, that prevented that from happening. All of a sudden there were people in UEFA who required allies in this particular battle and there as been a gear change in supporter engagement at European level. There is a long way to go.

I will give one straw in the wind as an example. The status of Football Supporters Europe—that is the European body—at UEFA has changed: it was regarded as a CSR project; now it has stakeholder status. We were part of the corporate responsibility; supporters' organisations were treated like all the charities that they might deal with on various different good causes. We have now been upgraded to being a stakeholder with a position on committees in the process.

Q51 Clive Efford: So it is moving in the right direction but there is still further to go. I want to move on to what happened at the Champions League final very briefly. How much was what happened there a complete failure of governance at the highest level in UEFA?

Kevin Miles: To a large extent. It will come out through the inquiry but a lot of what happened there was entirely predictable. You could tell from the lack of involvement of the right people in advance. These are not the first problems that we have had at the Stade de France. Why there is continual rescheduling and allocation of matches to places with a history of problems is one of the things that we have to cover.

We have a relatively good record here, notwithstanding everything that happened at the Euros final. In England we have a relatively good record of safety of sporting events and we are able to manage them quite well. We are then accused sometimes at European level of English exceptionalism and it is all part of our arrogance because we invented the game. I think that we have a lot of be proud of. Sometimes people say, "You can't have everything happening in England and to English standards," but I do not see why we should accept lower standards for football fans anywhere just because we have set the bar relatively high



here.

I am optimistic that because of the people involved—and it is about the quality of the people they have on their panel of investigation—we will get some real revelations and some proper recommendations about the future. However, I think that it was predictable.

- Q52 Clive Efford:** We have had the high-profile removal of Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini for corruption in the past. Do you fear that there is a tendency to say, “Job done, we’ve moved on,” but we still have rotten cronyism at the top of the game? Aleksander Čeferin was best man at the wedding of the guy he appointed to be the head of safety and security. That was a controversial appointment that was seen as cronyism and only happened a year or so before what we saw at the Stade de France. Is this game still riddled with cronyism at the top?

Kevin Miles: I think that we have a long way to go. The fan-led review was able to identify challenges in our own Football Association, which they have moved to address through more independent directors on the board there. If you look at some of the other countries, we still compare extremely favourably to some of the practices elsewhere. Those principles of good governance should be spread throughout the game through its international bodies as well.

UEFA has 55 different countries. The English FA has one vote, the same number as the San Marino FA and the Lithuanian FA. Everybody has one vote and we are dealing with a varied landscape. How can I put this? You can look at some of the structures of governance in football and say that there is a long way to go with transparency and honesty and so on. You can look at the governments of a lot of countries in Europe and say, “Actually, you can see where they get it from.”

- Q53 Clive Efford:** Would you restructure it so that there is more accountability and more ability to ask questions? At the moment it seems that everyone is seeking largesse from people at the top and therefore is reluctant to be critical. You could even go as far as saying that the FA, although it has been supportive of Liverpool fans, has not been publicly vocal against UEFA over its misrepresentation of the position of Liverpool fans and what happened on that night but also in defending it since the Champions League final.

Kevin Miles: There are some inherent challenges in the way that things are structured. You are absolutely right that the FA has a consideration to make here. On the one hand there are plenty of people in the FA who would love to stick up for the rights of English football supporters when they travel abroad. There will be others who think that if we want to host a tournament, we have to get the approval and the votes of the other associations and we do not want to become troublemakers and rock the boat and demand things of it that it is reluctant to deliver. There is a tension between the role of a governing body as the governing body of a sport and at the same time a tournament organiser.

One of the fundamental contradictions with UEFA is the fact that it is an



association of associations. It is a 55-member association that has one vote each, yet some of the most powerful voices in UEFA come from the clubs, which are not directly represented but have a particular economic clout through Champions League participation and so on.

Owain Davies: Let me go back to the Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association and the pressure that it applied. It was invited to the French Senate to give its own account about what happened. It should not rely on individuals or fans going to do that to clear their name or to give voice to their experience of what happened and its impact. It needs to be ensured that they get the relevant support.

The individuals who have done all the work to gather the information and now feed back into the review need to be supported so that there are not disabled people fighting for their viewpoint of the implications of what happened and then looking for the learnings from that. We need to ensure that they have a body and a voice to enable them to do that and to support them along that journey. It has been terrible for the individual fans who faced that and who it had an impact on. We hope that match-day experience can change and that this does not happen again. We should not be talking about this in 2022.

Dr Pope: It would be naïve of us not to think that, internationally, everybody has seen those scenes at Wembley stadium. That is not generalising football fans but that could have cost us, as a nation, future bids, because people looking on—man, woman or child—will think, “If I go there, you can’t guarantee my safety.” We have a real opportunity now to try to change that image.

I agree with the point made earlier: the Kick It Out work has been fantastic in tackling racism over time, but now we have an opportunity to lead the way in identifying the issues for all forms of abuse, as I have spoken about from my research, and setting up a mechanism to tackle sexism and misogyny in football. The fact that you are asking whether we have the infrastructure in place means that, clearly, we do not, because we are identifying that when these issues occur there is not the infrastructure in place. If we get a mechanism in place where there is some way for these issues to be identified, reported and responded to appropriately and then we can remedy sexism and misogyny and all forms of abuse, it will be seen as a more welcoming space and we can help to change the culture more generally.

To be able to do that, you have to have accountability. It has to come from the top, and it is not there at the minute. That would have positive ramifications for how we are perceived internationally.

Q54 **Julie Elliott:** Kevin, you have an unusual perspective, being involved in Europe and in the UK with supporters. I was very concerned about what happened in Paris in May. Somebody very close to me went to that game as a Liverpool fan and came back traumatised. It was not just access to the ground; it was the lawlessness on the streets of Paris afterwards.

This is an opportunity. I know that it is going through the various



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investigations and what have you, but as someone who is experienced in safety in football and fans' experience, what do you think can be done to make that not a possibility again? You can never say it can never happen again, but simple things could be done to make sure that fans travelling with their clubs wherever can assume that they will be safe, barring an exceptional circumstance?

Kevin Miles: It perplexes me that it is not done because it is not something that requires me to think of things that could be done. It is already there. The Council of Europe has conducted a major piece of work and developed a protocol about the organisation of matches with an international dimension. It lays out a full process there of pre-visits, pre-meetings, the planning of the operations, the integration of the police in the planning, ensuring that the visiting clubs or visiting sides all have input into those processes. It is all laid out there and it is not implemented. All you would have to do is to make sure that those processes are properly implemented and that it does not happen.

Q55 **Julie Elliott:** How could you do that?

Kevin Miles: It requires the political will to do it and for that to trump other considerations about revenue or whatever else it might be. It has to be prioritised and it has to be made to happen. A lot of good work has gone on, because we have had so many of these tragic learning experiences. I go back a long way and I remember one significant one. In 2004 England played in Spain and it was notorious because all the news was dominated by the racist abuse that Ashley Cole took from the fans in the stadium in Madrid, which rightly dominated the headlines and was a big issue. What is slightly less well known is that the English fans were attacked by the Spanish police outside the ground.

The reason I mention that is that it was the first time in my experience where a British Home Secretary wrote to their counterpart and criticised the policing, defended English football fans and challenged what was going on. David Blunkett was the Home Secretary at the time. The reason that happened and it became different was that the British police delegation was also attacked by the Spanish police and was caught up outside. It was not only the fans but the police saying, "This cannot be allowed to continue."

We have had so much like that and all of that experience has been taken on by the various different experts who have worked with the Council of Europe and have worked out protocols of how to do it. The stuff is already there; it just needs to be implemented and prioritised. We should not have to have these constant reminders of how horrible it can be when it goes wrong. The Paris experiences were horrendous. They were life threatening and we were very lucky that there were not multiple fatalities, as there have been on other occasions, in that situation. The stuff is already there; it just needs implementing and prioritising.

Q56 **Chair:** Thank you very much. I know that we have run over but it has been interesting and stimulating, so thank you very much for your



evidence today.

Tony, you know that we have done an inquiry into racism in cricket and you will know the story of Azeem Rafiq, who came before us as a whistleblower and gave some very powerful testimony. Has cricket sought any help or perspective from your organisation?

Tony Burnett: The short answer is yes. We have been working with cricket for the last 10 months now. Essentially we have two people working with us: Michael Carberry, an ex-test player, who has been working with us to try to help us understand some of the barriers for the players within cricket and some of the talent pathway issues; and a chap called Tom Brown, who has done a huge amount of work on south Asian talent pathways in the game.

A huge amount of work has already been done. The ICEC inquiry is ongoing. We are not trying to reinvent the wheel in finding out information. We have been trying to work out with people who understand the game, "If those are the blockages, what effective interventions can we put in place to support the ECB and to support cricket to become more inclusive?"

I will be completely honest with you that the challenges that we are finding when it comes to inclusive behaviour are huge. There is a massive challenge among players, coaches and so on. There are huge challenges with talent pathways. The challenges in cricket are different from football because a lot of them are linked to social deprivation, access to cricket and the cost of playing it. I was astounded to find out that the average bat, if you are any good at the game, is between £300 and £500. That automatically excludes quite a lot of people.

Then you have the issue of how you develop talent. If you are a rich young person from a privileged background and your family can afford a coach, you are far more likely to develop skills as batsman and, therefore, you are far more likely to go on to be professional. That is before we even get into the governance infrastructure and the alleged challenges around nepotism and other issues.

The short answer to your question is that we are working on what we can do to help cricket to tackle some of those issues, but it is a big challenge. I will be honest with you that cricket will have to come up with some significant resources if it really wants to tackle this problem.

Q57 **Chair:** I remember saying at the time that cricket needed a Kick It Out. Not unusually for me, that is probably quite an overly simplistic thing to say. Is cricket's challenge slightly different from football's in that your organisation started as a response to racism primarily on the terraces towards the players and more generally in the ecosystem of football, whereas what we have found in this inquiry—we will be looking again at this in the not-too-distant future—is a problem in the dressing rooms and the coaching networks, and in the fact that the Bradford Park Avenue nets are 83% Asian but only 3% of people with south Asian backgrounds represent Yorkshire?



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Tony Burnett: That is not alien to our experience in football. For the last nine years we have done all of the training in all of the 92 clubs for equality, diversity and inclusion among players in academies. I am not saying that football is perfect by any stretch but we certainly do not have major issues in dressing room environments among professional players. A big part of that is that we educate players as they are coming through the academy system. Every single year every academy player has a conversation with us about appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour in that environment.

They also have a mechanism that is separate, necessarily, to the governance bodies of football. One of the dynamics that you recognise in sport is that if you are a young person coming through the system the power dynamic is skewed towards the coach and the manager. If you speak about a certain issue there is a fear of not getting played, not getting a contract and so on. It is the same dynamic in cricket.

In football we have successfully given players a separate voice and a separate arm to have those conversations. If they are feeling that they are being discriminated against or the behaviour is inappropriate, they will speak to us rather than speaking to the authorities. That is a mechanism that could help with cricket. One of the things that came out of not just the Azeem Rafiq incident but lots of incidents since is that the professional players do not necessarily feel that they have an independent voice—someone they can go to speak to about issues of discrimination—and that they will be listened to in an objective manner.

Q58 **Chair:** How on earth could you manage the discrimination at Yorkshire in 2018, looking at the people who were running the club at the time? It seems to be quite impossible that they would do that. We must also consider—Mr Burnett, you seem really well versed in this—the actions we have seen over the last 12 months: the continued harassment of Mr Rafiq by the cabal within the club and, I have to say, rather shamefacedly as a former journalist, the local media, *The Yorkshire Post* in particular, which has run a campaign of extraordinary magnitude of disdain for Mr Rafiq and his proven lived experience. It seems to me that cricket is still so far behind having the pathways that you talk about to discuss this and find safe spaces for people when they are facing racial discrimination.

Tony Burnett: I completely agree. What Azeem Rafiq has gone through over the last 12 months, and continues to go through, is horrific. Cricket, to be honest with you, is trying to send a message here that says, “If you disagree with the establishment, we will come after you and punish you.” That is common when it comes to changing these areas. I have seen it in other organisations and other environments that I have been in. That is why it is so important that we win the battle here, because we need whistleblowers to come forward and tell us about their experience in the game. If it means that we disrupt the establishment, that is what needs to happen. That is absolutely what needs to happen in cricket and that is what we will be fighting to achieve.

Chair: We will be returning to this and exposing some of the acute



harassment of our whistleblower and also, frankly, some of the activities with Lord Patel. I am staggered to believe that Yorkshire County Cricket Club, or some of those previously involved, believes the way to solve the racism problem in Yorkshire is to get rid of the only south Asian who has ever been on the board. It seems extraordinary.

I am grateful for all of your perspectives today and I want to thank you personally on behalf of the Committee. We will now take a short adjournment as we set up our second panel. Tony Burnett, Owain Davies, Kevin Miles and Dr Stacey Pope, thank you very much.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Geoff Pearson and Professor Clifford Stott MBE.

Chair: This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and this is our second panel today on safety in sports stadia. We are joined by Professor Clifford Stott MBE, Professor of Social Psychology at Keele University, and Professor Geoff Pearson, Professor of Law at the University of Manchester. Professor Clifford Stott and Professor Geoff Pearson, thank you very much for joining us today. I am sorry for the delay but I know that you were probably as stimulated as we were by the first panel and the discussion. The first question is from Julie Elliott.

Q59 **Julie Elliott:** Good afternoon. Professor Stott, based on your knowledge of policing and crowd psychology, how close do you think we came to having fatalities in the situation in Paris?

Professor Stott: I need to be cautious in my response to that question. As you may be aware, I am on the inquiry panel, so it would be inappropriate for me to draw too many conclusions about the Champions League final. At a personal level I think we were in the territory of what many in the industry call a near miss and we were lucky to emerge from that situation without seeing deaths. In part, the reason that we did not was linked to the self-regulatory capacity of the group of fans, who had a salient awareness of the risks and dangers as a function of their history. It is extremely fortunate when we reflect on the Champions League final that we are not reflecting on a situation of an even greater tragedy than it was already.

Q60 **Julie Elliott:** If there had been fatalities—I am aware that you must be careful of what you say—who would have been responsible for that?

Professor Stott: Again, you recognise my need for caution here. I cannot conclude on responsibilities, but one thing I will assert is that part of the issue that we have with our analysis is that we tend to try to locate blame within single agencies or single stakeholders, where invariably the failures are about the interoperability between those stakeholders and patterns of interaction and dynamics between the different agencies, and how that manifests itself in the dynamics of the event. Above all else we should, wherever possible, try to move beyond attributing blame in that way and recognise that if we are going to move beyond those kinds of



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failures, we need to understand that their cause resides in failures of interoperability.

- Q61 **Julie Elliott:** Moving forward, how do you think proactively we can ensure fans' safety as they travel abroad in the future? How could the Government or football authorities here act to protect UK fans travelling abroad?

Professor Stott: I would refer everybody back to the response that Kevin Miles gave just now. We need to avoid reinventing the wheel.

- Q62 **Julie Elliott:** Do you think that the document from the Council of Europe would solve the problem if it was implemented properly?

Professor Stott: I don't see it as a document; I see it as a historical evolution of a set of agreements, scientific understanding and policy arrangements that have evolved in the wake of Heysel. The solutions to policing at international level of football matches with an international dimension is a very complex problem. The complexity has begun to be understood, and the policy around which good practice can be implemented is already there. The problem is the implementation. This is implementation at an international level that requires a sophisticated, high-level political response as much as anything else.

- Q63 **Julie Elliott:** Professor Pearson, would you like to comment on any of that?

Professor Pearson: The frameworks are already in place, and the documentation, for example, about how the stadium in Paris should have responded and been prepared—UEFA have reams of regulations and unfortunately those simply are not followed. It was not just something that happened in Paris. In the stadium we have an issue about the safety regulations not being applied by UEFA. Outside the stadium—I am not involved in the inquiry so I can speak more openly—ultimately the French police have a long history of struggling to manage high-risk football events, particularly when large numbers of English fans travel. We saw it in Marseille in 1998 at the World Cup and in Marseille again in 2016 at the European Championship. Whenever the authorities reach the conclusion that public order is at risk, they tend to have only have one response: coercive policing, which typically makes things worse and causes safety issues.

- Q64 **Julie Elliott:** My understanding is that as people left the ground and tried to travel back into Paris or wherever they were staying, the police were absent. It was lawlessness, with gangs and criminals running riot. How do we stop that happening? That is general policing of a large group of people from another country.

Professor Pearson: Yes. Policing responses for that type of gang-related activity are very different from managing a football crowd riot. You need riot police in full protective gear if you have an ongoing riot, and there was not an ongoing riot, whereas if you have local gang



members coming to attack innocent members of the public your response needs to be completely different. Just on the basics, you cannot chase a 19-year-old kid down the street if you are dressed in full riot gear. Unfortunately, the policing was not set up for where the risk was. That is my understanding, anyway; I have not seen all the evidence.

- Q65 Clive Efford:** Professor Stott, you said that the responsibility does not lie with just one body and that there was a breakdown in various organisations. Should there be someone who has the responsibility and oversight? For instance, we have heard about the way the police were operating outside the Stade de France. I know that we have not had the independent inquiry yet, but they seem to have been operating to a different set of rules from everybody else. In theory UEFA has a perfect set of safety regulations and a plan in place, but if the police are not working hand in glove with that plan things start to fall apart. Should there be somebody who has complete oversight to make sure that everything is working together?

Professor Stott: The challenge there is to understand what that means for authority. Who would exercise this at an international level? There is no superordinate political structure that would enable that to be possible. Clearly, UEFA has a role to play in its ability to hold countries to account for the extent to which they implement models of good practice that are scientifically validated. There is an issue there about accountability where that is not achieved, but the extent to which we could have an overarching body that would be able to exercise some kind of sanctionable authority over a foreign police force or a foreign Government is quite clearly a major step that is beyond the realms of possibility, quite frankly. We must live with the realities of the way in which power is exercised in this context.

- Q66 Clive Efford:** I would not expect France to hand over the policing of its streets to another authority, but if UEFA is taking a major cup final or a tournament to a nation or to a stadium, as part of the process of agreeing that that stadium will be used, should there not be some sort of structure that must be put in place where all of the issues that affect safety are brought under one umbrella?

Professor Stott: I certainly think that there is a role for UEFA to play in creating some form of accountability for failures and some responsibility in ensuring proactively that such failures should be avoidable. The extent to which that can then flow back into meaningful change at the level of delivery and policing on the streets also requires actions by Governments. It requires oversight by governmental authority in the national context within which those fixtures take place. That is possible under the convention. As I say, the convention is not just a document; it is a treaty, and that treaty has been signed and ratified by European Governments. It is quite achievable for those Governments to provide the kind of oversight that you are referring to and for those high-level agreements to flow back into practices within the national context that



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drive change down to the level of police commanders and police delivery and decision making on the streets as it relates to specific events.

Q67 **Clive Efford:** Is that lacking right now, and does it need to be introduced?

Professor Stott: Yes.

Professor Pearson: UEFA or FIFA, when it decides who is hosting these tournaments, could say, "We want a piece of legislation introduced on a national level before we will allow you to host it." They do that about intellectual property rights—for example, there are changes to the Olympic Games Act. But ultimately, as Professor Stott says, the chances of that in the short term making changes in long policing practices are highly unlikely, so I am not sure that there would be much point in doing that.

Q68 **Dr Huq:** I want to ask about stewarding. We know that there is a national shortage and people have resorted to security officers, agency staff—and if you add in Brexit and covid, there is a big attrition rate. Is a lack of experience among stewards negatively affecting the match-day experience?

Professor Pearson: I think it almost certainly is. We know from what fans tell us that there are stadiums, particularly Wembley, where stewarding is not consistent in personnel and customer satisfaction is very poor. We know from the Baroness Casey review into what happened at Euro Sunday that poor stewarding was identified as one of the factors for what happened on that day. It is one of the problems that we need to think long and hard about a solution to. I do not think that there is an obvious solution there, because ultimately we appear to have a labour shortage in the service industry generally and that is affecting the security industry as much as other areas.

Professor Stott: I agree with that and also refer us back to some of the comments made earlier this morning. When we are thinking about the national context, again it is important that we do not see the problem in terms of single stakeholders. Absolutely there is a staffing crisis in stewarding—there is a post-pandemic staffing crisis in multiple sectors—so why we would assume that the football industry is somehow immune from that staffing crisis is questionable.

That staffing crisis is also leading to a skills deficit. That skills deficit has been amplified by the pandemic. A lot of people who are coming into stewarding roles lack familiarity because we did not host football matches for a couple of years. We have that problem, and that problem also correlates with a major uplift in policing. Some police forces in this country are looking at around 70% of their staff having been in post for less than two years, so again the experience of police on the ground in policing football crowd events is limited because of that reality.



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The factors then interact with a lot of young people who have been through the pandemic, who are now getting back into the context of crowd events where dynamics enable a form of what we call antisocial behaviour to emerge, and you have this complex interplay between factors that then manifest in the problems that we have. I would argue that stewarding and the skills and staffing crisis in stewarding is a key component of that.

Q69 Dr Huq: Casey has also done a review—it is the same Casey: she has been busy—into the Metropolitan police, which ties up with that. What are the structural barriers to improving UK stewarding?

Professor Pearson: Back in the day it always used to be that stewards were employed by clubs, and it would be essentially that somebody would get a cup of tea and get to see their match and do stewarding duties. If you go back to the 1970s and 1980s that is broadly how it worked. When we saw disasters at, for example, Bradford and Hillsborough, we realised that stewarding needed to be treated more seriously and upskilled. We started to demand minimum qualifications for stewards, and ultimately they are not being paid enough to set aside the time to gain whatever qualifications are the minimum required and then to be paid minimum wage quite often to deal with what can be quite challenging situations.

The number of people who are willing to do that is not enough, so there has been a greater reliance upon security firms, and ultimately those security firms must deal with a lot of different events. When the stadium gates closed due to the covid lockdown, the pubs, the nightclubs, the festivals, everything else shut down, and ultimately a lot of these people went off and got other jobs. I think it is a real challenge and this reflects what Kevin Miles said in the previous session. Until we start to pay to encourage people to come into this industry who may not have been in this industry before, I think we will have ongoing problems.

Professor Stott: I agree with all of that and many of the points made earlier this morning. On a structural issue, I think a particularly important one, as Professor Pearson has alluded to, is the model through which stewards are brought into the grounds. On the one hand you have this approach where the stewards belong to the club—they are employed by the club; they are club employees. Often that enables the club to locate stewards in the same area so that they get to know the people who populate that area and build up relationships where problem solving and dialogue can be part of the emergence of a culture of self-regulation in that part of the stadium. That is contrasted with agency staff, where clubs go to agencies who provide stewards from anywhere, who do not have any capacity to build up localised relationships. That is a structural factor that can sometimes amplify problems and lead to deficits in the ability of the club stewards to problem solve and de-escalate.

Q70 Dr Huq: I think it is sometimes student labour if it is a ground near a university. Lastly, what features would you like to see in the Premier



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League's incoming new platform for the standardisation and collection of fan safety and incident data? What should it contain?

Professor Stott: So many things. We have discussed already this morning the data deficit. The known knowns in football crowd management are very limited. The known unknowns are massive and the unknown unknowns are genuinely that.

One of the most fundamentally important things that we can do is to start to drive better data into the problem. The limited data that we have revolves primarily around ejections and arrests, and that data is, at best, interpretable in multiple ways. Our ability to determine the factual nature of the problem that we are dealing with and test solutions for those problems is extremely limited and one of the most fundamental problems that we have in this context.

Professor Pearson: A lot of academic work has been carried out since the 1970s, of varying quality. A lot of it is qualitative, but we have a good understanding of how football crowds behave and respond. I did not agree with some of the comments in the previous session that we do not have this evidence, because I think we do. A lot of academic time and money has gone into understanding football crowds and how best we can manage them. Some way moving forward, making sure that the knowledge that we have is not lost while building on it, is an important feature for me.

Q71 **John Nicolson:** Thank you both for joining us. I want to return to the question of stewarding, because we hear time and again that the quality of stewarding is poor. That is what disability groups and a lot of women's groups say. Do you think it would be better if the clubs hired the stewards and were responsible for better trained, better paid stewards?

Professor Pearson: I think so. The counterargument to that is that once the stewards are employed by the clubs, to what extent will they be critical of their employers when they see, for example, safety problems arising?

Q72 **John Nicolson:** Does that not depend on the quality of the training?

Professor Pearson: Yes, probably. Certainly if you travel abroad you see some incredibly bad practice with club-employed stewards. I think on balance it would be beneficial to have more stewards that worked, as Professor Stott said, in particular areas so that they understand the particular fan communities around them and understand the particular peculiarities of the sections that they are managing.

I do not think it is any coincidence that some of the worst problems we have tend to be at stadiums that do not regularly host club games, such as Wembley, where you do not have relationships with the same fan groups week on week and, for the stewards who may be managing a significant match—an FA Cup final or whatever—it may be the first time they have been inside that stadium.



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Yes, if we can encourage more club-employed stewarding that potentially is a way forward, if it is properly trained, but if we are doing that we also need to have a conversation about how we manage games at Wembley.

- Q73 John Nicolson:** Professor Stott, I have had a crash course in English licensing laws in preparation for this. I was surprised by some of the detail. Alcohol can only be consumed on English grounds in areas with no views of the pitch. Does that not quite obviously cause ramifications at half time, where people try to drink as many pints as possible?

Professor Stott: Professor Pearson is more expert in this area than I am, but from my perspective, as we laid out in our paper, there are some very serious problems with the alcohol legislation that create problems, one of which you have alluded to there.

- Q74 John Nicolson:** Professor Pearson, alcohol cannot legally be consumed on supporter buses. I imagine that persuades supporters to go on to trains to drink, which is likely to cause problems and inconvenience for the wider travelling public. In Scotland, of course, you are not allowed to drink on trains, so we do not have that issue.

Professor Pearson: Absolutely. The Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act, which brought in both of these restrictions, in my view has not worked. Its ultimate aim was to try to reduce alcohol consumption at and around football stadiums and I have not seen any evidence that it has had that effect, but it has caused problems.

On the football specials, yes, in my view it drives fans who want to drink on to scheduled services. That means that there is greater potential conflict with other members of the public, or fan groups supporting other teams, but also it takes away an opportunity. We know that the best forms of policing football and other crowd events are dialogue-based policing approaches. Ultimately the specialist football officers often do not know where these fans are and do not have the opportunity to build up relationships and set down tolerance limits.

If you had chartered trains, for example, taking fans to matches where fans could have a few drinks, you could have operational or dedicated football officers on those trains, and they could feed back intelligence and information to the host force. Everyone would know when the fans were likely to arrive, where they were likely to arrive, and en route they are not upsetting somebody trying to work on their laptop or with a family.

- Q75 John Nicolson:** That seems to make perfect sense. Some commentators have said that there has been an increase in antisocial behaviour in football grounds among young people who lived with lockdown. They are just coming of age now and travelling on their own, and they have not been taught or realised or socialised to understand acceptable behaviour. Is that a particular issue?

Professor Stott: Again, I refer you to the previous answers on the lack of data. This is what I am referring to. We simply do not know.



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Anecdotally there may have been. There does seem to be some evidence of movement in that direction. Its underlying nature and underlying cause is open to question, simply because that ongoing objective data gathering about the nature of behaviour across multiple events is not in place. Bear in mind that in excess of 32 million people a year go to these football stadiums.

Q76 John Nicolson: What is the relationship like between the police and the stewards? I have been told by lots of people that the police tend to roll their eyes at the behaviour of the stewards, which they think would never be allowed in properly policed operations. For example, the way in which some stewards will push themselves into the crowd to try to take action against some perceived infringement, which just exacerbates the problem rather than helping.

Professor Stott: I strongly encourage avoiding generalisations. It is important to look at the problem at a local level. In some local context the quality of the stewarding and the relationship between the police and clubs is fantastic. In others, it is more problematic. We need to look at the situation in a locally embedded way and avoid that kind of generalisation.

Under certain circumstances there are questionable issues around the control of crowds and the management of crowds by stewards in a stadium context, but there has been a 20-year-long drive in the UK to clearly delineate and separate the responsibilities for crowd management, such that the operational footprint of the stadium remains within the remit of the club safety officer that has flowed into a standardisation of qualifications and training. The massive uplift that we have seen in the safety and security and the quality of that safety and security in the football industry is precisely because of those kinds of delineations.

Q77 John Nicolson: Professor Pearson, we heard earlier of the way disabled people had been hijacked—we heard about one particular incident of a disabled person being hijacked at Wembley for some scoundrel to come in free of charge. I have also heard that women and children can sometimes be used to bring in flares and smoke bombs and other banned items, because they are less likely to be searched. That is anecdotal. What evidence is there of this happening?

Professor Pearson: From the research that we have carried out we have seen no evidence of that. It is not something that comes up in supporter surveys. Undoubtedly we have a problem with people taking smoke bombs into stadiums somehow, but stewards will search women in the same way that they will search men. They have women stewards on the turnstiles specifically.

Q78 John Nicolson: You do not have evidence of it. Is the lack of evidence one of the problems? I am guessing that you think it is, Professor Stott. Items that have been banned will be removed from supporters when they arrive if they are caught with these items and they will not be allowed in,



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but I understand that no details are taken because of time pressure and staff pressure. People could be doing the same thing over and over again. Is that a problem?

Professor Stott: No, again, I do not think that there is a general problem with that kind of issue.

Q79 **John Nicolson:** It is not the same troublemakers over and over again?

Professor Stott: I question the terminology “troublemakers”.

John Nicolson: Well, people bringing in items that cause trouble.

Professor Stott: Prohibited items. There is a very strict regime of control around the use of pyrotechnics. With a specific incidence of the use of a pyrotechnic, that person could be identified and action could be taken, but sometimes there are issues there for sure.

Q80 **John Nicolson:** We know that the use of those is increasing, don’t we?

Professor Stott: We do, but the extent to which this can be solved is not straightforward. There is a broader complexity to that underlying problem. It is not just about the ability to identify and sanction specific individuals. In any case, the vast bulk of that pyrotechnic use is detected and followed up, and where the evidence is available, prosecutions and bans are put in place.

Q81 **Chair:** Professor Pearson, if you were redesigning prohibition rules at football matches, what would you do differently now?

Professor Pearson: In terms of alcohol?

Chair: Well, alcohol, obviously, but I think we missed the point to a degree, because it seems that many of the issues relate to recreational drug use and so-called legal highs, as they were. We will start with alcohol but what else would you do?

Professor Pearson: I think that there would be safety benefits from allowing consumption of alcohol in sight of the pitch—basically decriminalising that and putting it in the hands of the safety advisory group, who would make a decision, working with fans, on if, where and when bars would be open in stadiums and if, where and when people would be allowed to drink alcohol in sight of the pitch. Where that happened and it was safe, it would alleviate some of the crushes at turnstiles, on radial stairways at the start of matches and on concourses. In the last session we heard about some of the disorderly concourses, concourse parties and throwing of beer. I think it would alleviate some of those problems and make going to the football safer for people.

Q82 **Chair:** It would spread out the time of consumption, therefore you would not have those pinch points?

Professor Pearson: Yes. Even if only 10% of the people who have gone to the bar in the concourse take their beer to the stand at half time or



before the match, that still creates quite a bit of space. In the longer term it may change fan cultures and encourage fans to enter the stadium sooner. Ultimately stadiums are incredibly highly surveyed, highly regulated, highly segregated spaces and I think we need to look for ways of using the law to try to encourage fans to get into those spaces earlier and in a more orderly fashion and ideally even maybe stay behind after the match. That would take away a lot of the pressure on the police outside the stadium.

Q83 **Chair:** What about drugs?

Professor Pearson: We need to know what is happening with drugs. There is an assumption that an increase in cocaine use in particular has led to an increase in violence and disorder. There is no evidence to support that—no causal evidence. The best evidence we have is purely relational. Recreational cocaine use in this country has quadrupled from the 1990s, while at the same time, by all the measures that we have, football violence and disorder has gone down by about the same amount. I am not saying people taking cocaine makes football disorder go away, but we need to be very careful about suggesting that one causes the other.

We know that cocaine use at football has gone up, but what we need to know is how this has changed football fan behaviour. Are fans arriving later; are they leaving earlier; are they spending more time in the toilets; are they spending more time in the concourse? We need to identify how behaviour has changed and what harms, if any, this has caused. Then we need to think about how we will try to mitigate those harms. It needs to be evidence-led. Ultimately, for example, if you put a drugs dog on a toilet in a concourse it is possible that will mean that there will be more people taking drugs openly in front of children on the concourse rather than in the toilets. We simply do not know how fan behaviour has changed, so we must have data before we act on recreational drug use.

Q84 **Chair:** Professor Stott, do you have anything to add to that?

Professor Stott: I agree with all of that, but will add that there is a lack of evidence about any causal relationship between either alcohol or drug consumption and disorder, and the complexities of disorder. The extensive research that we have done around the factors that escalate and undermine the potentiality for disorder does not show that drugs or alcohol play any significant role in that. Other areas of concentration are far more important.

Q85 **Chair:** Okay, so what areas of concentration?

Professor Stott: The policing model, the policing approach. We have talked a lot about stewarding, but policing is a key area in which development can and should be taking place, particularly in what are called the phase 1 and phase 3 moments of these football events. Focusing internally to the stadium is essentially what people call phase 2, but phase 1, phase 2 and phase 3 are interrelated. The fan journey into



the stadium and the fan journey after the event are very important in the dynamics through which disorder plays itself out and then cascades into our concerns at a social and political level about football more generally. Those kinds of dynamics, as I say, have very little to do with alcohol or drug consumption.

Q86 Chair: It is often suggested that if alcohol and drug use is moved out of the grounds you get more disorder not just in the surrounding streets but at major train station points where people are, for example, coming into London or major hub train stations. Is that fair?

Professor Stott: No. Again, there is no evidence of any causal relationship between alcohol and drug consumption. The impact that we do know has occurred as a function of the existing legislation is that it changes the dynamics of how people move around the event. Those interactional dynamics do play a role in how disorder comes about. The understanding that we need to put in place about the solutions to disorder in the context of football are not about the control of alcohol and drugs.

Q87 Chair: It is not so much about the alcohol; it is more about someone bumping into someone and spilling a pint or something like that.

Professor Stott: The dynamics of behaviour, yes.

Professor Pearson: It is also that if you cannot get a nice drink in a nice environment in a stadium and you travel to an away match and you have to travel on the scheduled services because you cannot get a drink on the official buses, you will arrive in the city centre—a big group of you—wanting to find somewhere to have a drink. Quite often the pubs will then say, “No away fans” and you may be funnelled into one particular pub. You may not be able to fit in that pub. We are creating a situation that must be policed, and the legislation is, unfortunately, playing a role in creating that situation.

Q88 Chair: Do you think the Casey review was overly hasty in recommending reform to the legal structures governing football matches?

Professor Pearson: Yes. I think the Casey review was a forensic and thorough account of what went wrong on Euro Sunday. I submitted evidence to it and I thought it was an excellent report in that respect, but the report criticises the legislative framework around football for being piecemeal before introducing or suggesting some piecemeal additions to the existing structure. That has been the problem with how the law has been developed. It has largely been panicked law, rushed law, and we know that those kinds of laws are not particularly effective.

The Football (Offences) Act, which was recommended by Lord Justice Taylor, is one of the few pieces of legislation we have in football that was horizon scanning. It was to try to sit down and think what this will look like in the future. It is no coincidence that that piece of legislation has



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performed a lot better than things such as, for example, the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act.

Professor Stott: What we also see in the research that we have done about models of good practice is it is not the denial of access to alcohol that creates the solution; it is facilitating that access. As Professor Pearson points out, it changes the way that fans flow through the event and encourages certain forms of positive behaviour, rather than simply focusing on the control of negative behaviour.

Perhaps still the best existing case study of a model of good practice for the reduction of disorder around a group of fans is Cardiff City football club. That model took well over five years to build and implement. It was a multi-stakeholder partnership between the club, the local authority, the police and the fans. Through the implementation of that model we now see a transformation among that fan base in the level of disorder and arrest. Going back 15 years, Cardiff was one of the most notorious fan groups in the country with major riots at various football stadia; now the average arrest rate of Cardiff fans is around 26 fans per year. We see a year-on-year decline over a period and that is a fantastic example of how to solve the problem.

We need to take and benchmark the lessons from that model of good practice and roll it out nationally. If that were to happen, we would start to see massive reductions in the levels of confrontation, the levels of disorder and, as importantly, the cost of policing, which we know is massive year on year—not just seen costs but hidden costs. Every time you place a police officer into the context of football, they are not doing their day job somewhere else.

Q89 **Chair:** Can you give us a couple of examples of the long-term solutions Cardiff has put in place?

Professor Stott: It was partly a partnership between the local authorities, the clubs, the police and the fans, where certain sets of agreements were made built around a model of facilitation. This was very much about moving to an agenda where the legitimate intentions and behaviours of fans were facilitated by the stakeholders working together. Those stakeholders were not just in the context of Ninian Park, as it was then, in the context of Cardiff, where we saw a rapid decline. We also see a legacy effect where disorder still continued to occur in the context of away games, so that was very much about how the host police force mirrored the model of facilitation that had been implemented by South Wales police and Cardiff City football club. That mirroring of the facilitation where it occurred then led to significant declines in disorder.

Again thinking through the alcohol issue, this was not about banning fans from having alcohol; it was about facilitating their access to pubs, so they would gravitate to those pubs in areas that were under the control of the police and therefore there was less of a need to police those fans. That cascaded into a culture of self-regulation because the fans began to see



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their relationship to the authority as legitimate and they would start to self-regulate and control their behaviour. That self-regulation, legitimacy, facilitation approach is a benchmark model of good practice that works not just in the domestic context but is also part of the framework of the developments that have gone on internationally that we talked about earlier this morning in the European convention.

That model was implemented at the European Championship in 2004 in Portugal and we saw massive success there. There was no major disorder involving England fans, and there were very few arrests. Where that model has been implemented we see major reductions in the level of disorder and confrontation. Where we see failures in the implementation of that kind of model is where we get problems.

Q90 **Chair:** What role do fan zones play?

Professor Pearson: It depends what type of fan zones. Ultimately you tend to see two types of fan zones. There is the one around the stadium, the purpose of which is to encourage fans, mainly for commercial purposes, to get there early, have a drink where the money goes to the club, and enter a competition or whatever. That can play a helpful role in alleviating pressure on public transport systems around the ground, because it staggers when people go up to the match. Then you have the fan zones for major events which are essentially for tourists and ticketless fans. In my view, had there been a bigger fan zone on Euro Sunday we would not have seen the level of disorder that we witnessed around the stadium, because more of those ticketless fans would have been at the fan zones.

Ultimately, it goes back to what Professor Stott said about facilitation. What do ticketless fans want when they come to matches? For every ticketless fan who has a bib and steals a wheelchair, there are tens of thousands of ticketless fans who are just there to be part of the party. They do not necessarily want to get into the stadium. If a touter ticket comes up, they might buy one, but from the research that we have done, particularly with England fans abroad, they are just there to gather together, to express their identity, and fan zones are a perfect space to do that.

When we went to Frankfurt during our research for the World Cup in 2006 there were around 75,000 England fans there, only roughly 10,000 of whom had official tickets. We are not aware of any attempts to get into the stadium without tickets, certainly not on a large scale. The fans went to these fan zones.

Q91 **Chair:** When we hear about the ticketless fans, it is a bit of a trope. The excuse comes in from certain authorities—

Professor Stott: They are tourists. Why do we not call them tourists?

Chair: Yes.



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Professor Stott: That is essentially what they are. They are travelling to a major international competition to enjoy the facilities and environment of that event. If we were to facilitate their tourism that is a strategically effective way of dealing with the dynamics that reduces the overall confrontational situation, the dynamics that lead to confrontation.

Chair: Thank you. That concludes our session today. Professor Geoff Pearson and Professor Clifford Stott, thank you very much for your evidence.