

# Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

## Oral evidence: Safety at major sporting events, HC 596

Thursday 19 January 2023

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Members present: Damian Green; Kevin Brennan; Dr Rupa Huq; Jane Stevenson; Giles Watling.

In the absence of the Chair, Damian Green took the Chair.

Questions 176 - 246

### Witnesses

I: David Armstrong, Chief Executive, Racecourse Association; Liam Boylan, Stadium Director, Wembley Stadium; Phil Davies, Head of Safety and Security, England and Wales Cricket Board; and Bob Eastwood, Head of Security and Safety Operations, English Football League.

## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: David Armstrong, Liam Boylan, Phil Davies and Bob Eastwood.

Q176 **Chair:** Order. This meeting of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee is part of our investigation into safety at major sporting events. Welcome to our guests. This morning we have David Armstrong, chief executive of the Racecourse Association; Liam Boylan, the stadium director of Wembley Stadium; Phil Davies, head of safety and security at the England and Wales Cricket Board; and Bob Eastwood, head of security and safety operations at the EFL. Welcome, gentlemen.

Let me start with something quite contemporary—I know it is not directly the responsibility of anyone here, but you may have views, Mr Eastwood. Like everyone else, I’m sure, I felt a shiver down my spine hearing reports that there was overcrowding at the Sheffield Wednesday v. Newcastle game, at the Leppings Lane end. The resonance of that could not be worse. Do we know more of what happened and why, and how it can be avoided?

**Bob Eastwood:** Yes, I have personal insight into this. The matter is still being investigated by the Sheffield City Council safety advisory group and the FA. I have been supporting the club, and I am also in contact with a number of fans who have made complaints. At this moment in time, I think it is a little premature to agree with many of the media and social media reports that there was, in fact, overcrowding. Nevertheless, the club has done a very quick debrief of its operation and has already instigated a number of measures in order to reduce some of the issues that caused some concerns for some fans, which did not amount to overcrowding.

Q177 **Chair:** Was it people trying to go to seats they did not have or moving around?

**Bob Eastwood:** More or less, I think. But like I said, Mr Green, it is very premature to be able to say that for certain, because there is an investigation still ongoing. There are two tiers in that particular stand, and I think it is possibly something to do with the way the fans moved around the lower tier. What I would like to impress on you, though, Chair, is that the football authorities are literally all over this, because we too want to get to the bottom of it. I am not sure to what extent there was any overcrowding from the early signs, but when I see the fans at the end of the season, I am sure I will be better informed.

Q178 **Chair:** Sure. It slightly feels to me that it is urgent, because we are coming towards the end of the season and there will be bigger and bigger games, and all the obvious reasons that I do not need to go into here. I think a long, leisurely review of what might have gone wrong is not quite what is needed. It needs some urgent thinking, particularly if there are lessons learned about stewarding or where you check tickets, and all those things. I suspect we are going to come on to Wembley later, and some of the things that happened there, but it would be genuinely terrifying if we thought that was going to become more common.



**Bob Eastwood:** I am a bit disappointed that I have given the impression that we are taking a long, leisurely review of this, because we are actually doing the opposite. I had contact with the club most days in the week following that fixture, and I am quite satisfied. More importantly, the safety advisory group at Sheffield City Council has full confidence in the club's safety operation. As I am sure you know, football is a highly regulated environment. I am sure you will be aware that, if there were any concerns that people's safety was compromised, especially at Sheffield Wednesday, in view of the history, Sheffield City Council would issue a prohibition notice, and it has not. In fact, the deputy chair of the safety advisory group was at that particular fixture. There are currently no concerns that safety was compromised in any way, but nevertheless the fans have legitimate complaints and we are taking them very seriously.

Q179 **Chair:** Okay. I will move on to a more general question now. Very often, the people at the sharp end—this will apply to all sports—are the stewards. As a lot of people have said, stewards are casually employed and not very well paid. Are we confident that the stewarding at sporting events is treated as seriously as it should be?

**Bob Eastwood:** Absolutely. Stewards have a hard job. Supervising—in effect, policing—crowds is very difficult. Across a whole stadium, you have a mix of different crowds and different crowd behaviours. The job of a steward is integral to the security operation. Alongside the Sports Grounds Safety Authority—as you know, Chair, a Government Department—and all our clubs, of which we have 72, we are currently reviewing the way we have oversight over the leadership and the deployment of stewards. While the job is very difficult, and some stewards do need greater development to raise them to the standards that we are looking at, the vast majority of stewards are worth their weight in gold: they add great value to keeping fans within our stadia behaving appropriately. But there are challenges, and it is those challenges that I am hoping to focus on as this meeting progresses.

Q180 **Chair:** As you contemplate the fact that cricket has now had to deal with drunken behaviour and take steps as well, are you pondering a future where you need to care about stewards at cricket?

**Phil Davies:** We always care about stewards within cricket, and stewards are really important to the matchday experience. As Bob says, key to that are stewards, but also the leadership of stewards—leadership within grounds around safety officers and the structures that sit above them. They are also important for us to maintain standards across all our grounds: we have effective safety management structures, and stewards are effectively on the frontline of that. The training and development of stewards and the retention of experienced stewards and steward supervisors is very important for us, as is having the right quality of stewards in the right places in the ground to give that matchday experience.

For us, it is very much a scalable operation that we have to deliver in cricket. We will move from county championship games, where we might



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have crowds of 1,500 or 2,000, through to 30,000 plus—a full house—at Lords on a test match day. To deliver across all those different ranges is always a challenge, but the training and quality of stewards and their leadership is very important to us. We look at supervising across the game and the standards for that within the grounds, and we have annual surveys of customer satisfaction and we measure stewarding within that. We can see what we have got changing year on year, around different grounds, different competitions and different formats.

Q181 **Chair:** What about racing? Is that the same?

**David Armstrong:** Yes. I would echo the comments made already by Bob and Phil. We take great pride in the stewards we have. We concentrate very much on retention of experienced stewards, and training for both experienced and new stewards is highly important. One of the things we have found, like many other sectors of the economy, is that there is pressure on numbers, as we look for our biggest events—that has always been the case, but probably a little more so now—which is resulting in a rising cost of stewarding, but that is fine. As I say, we have a detailed training programme in place, both for existing stewards we wish to retain and new stewards.

Q182 **Jane Stevenson:** I would like to turn to safe standing. I started out at Molineux, on the South Bank, standing up, and I have very fond memories of that. We are seeing trials at the moment; Bob Eastwood, what is your experience of safe standing? Do you think it has been a success?

**Bob Eastwood:** Safe standing is obviously the colloquial term we all use to demonstrate where it is going to be safer to stand within different parts of stadia. My colleague Liam is also trialling safe-standing areas in the national stadium. One of our clubs, Cardiff City, has successfully piloted safe standing. There were five clubs—the other four were Premier League clubs. We also have other clubs in the EFL that have had some form of safe standing over a number of years.

The emphasis that we put behind safe standing is not just about the atmosphere and actually treating football fans like human beings, because that is in actual fact what we always strive to do. There are many challenges that I hope to discuss while we are here that sometimes compromise our ability to do that. But safe standing is also about creating areas of the stand where, if there were no safe-standing mechanisms in place, there would be a risk of a crowd collapse, because when fans celebrate a goal or object to something—you're a football fan so you will know about this—they may surge forward. Having a safe-standing environment ensures that they can do that in safety, reducing and removing the risk of a crowd collapse.

Q183 **Jane Stevenson:** Have there been any concerns in the trials?

**Bob Eastwood:** No. There have been some concerns voiced elsewhere, but we can challenge those concerns. The Sports Grounds Safety Authority stewarded this through. It got the support of the Government. We are now



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in a position where safe standing can be licensed at clubs by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority. We are putting a lot of resources and effort into it to make sure that, where there are standing issues and risks of fans standing that need to be mitigated, we will be supporting clubs to put the right measures in place.

Q184 **Jane Stevenson:** Thank you. Liam Boylan, do you have any feedback on Wembley?

**Liam Boylan:** First, thank you for inviting me to give some input on this important meeting. We are just about to do our first event with safe standing, which will be the Carabao cup final. There was the first set of clubs that went through with the SGSA. We passed on all the information of things that we need to be aware of, such as how we monitor who goes into those areas to make sure that we do not have people moving out of other areas where they do not have a ticket for that side. We have all those measures in place. It is the excellent work from the SGSA, which has led on this side of it, that has ensured that we have the information we need. As I said, the Carabao cup final at the end of February will be the first time Wembley has a licensed standing area.

Q185 **Jane Stevenson:** Are your stewards having specific training to deal with that?

**Liam Boylan:** Absolutely. The actual rails were installed earlier. We were not able to sell it as a safe-standing area, but it allowed us to go through that training to look at and understand the area and what is required of them and what is different to a seated area.

Q186 **Jane Stevenson:** Fantastic. Mark Roberts from the UK Football Policing Unit says that safe standing increases the likelihood of hate chanting, racism, cocaine use and sneaking in alcohol. Have you heard any evidence to support that?

**Bob Eastwood:** I know he said that, and there is absolutely zero evidence that that would take place, that that has taken place, and that that would increase should there ever be a situation where we had wholesale standing sanctioned and licensed in our grounds. It's a very, very weak argument.

I was 30 years as a police officer. I was a divisional commander at a very busy division in Lancashire, and I've spent just over nine years as the head of security and safety for the English Football League. I can see things from all angles, but as for that sort of concern that you've expressed very carefully there, I don't think there is any evidence whatsoever to support that.

Q187 **Jane Stevenson:** Do you think football fans have just routinely been over demonised?

**Bob Eastwood:** It is a great concern to me that fans are demonised, and that actually has a negative impact on fan behaviour and the respect for law and order in some circumstances. Mark would be much wiser to be very careful with his choice of words. He's got a very important position,



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and he can hold court with the country's media, and making statements such as that really does affect the credibility of the police in some circumstances.

**Q188 Jane Stevenson:** Thank you. For the numbers and ratios of safe standing, it seems like a really popular way to watch football. Most football fans, I think, really relish the atmosphere of safe standing. As far as the economics go, clubs are going to want to get— At the moment it's one seat out, one standing place in, whereas I think in Europe it's slightly more. Do you think we will look at that? Are there stewarding implications? Are there access implications in safe standing for people with disabilities or different needs in the stadium? Where do you think safe standing will go in terms of ratio and ensuring access for everybody?

**Bob Eastwood:** You've put the context really well, because all those things do need to be considered before safe standing is actually sanctioned through the SGSA licence. The Premier League is in exactly the same position. We have regulations to make sure that access arrangements are adequate and to a good level, and we have partnerships with Level Playing Field to make sure that where improvements are needed, the EFL will work with the club to achieve that. In any application for licensed safe standing, they would have to be able to demonstrate that all those issues were catered for, and that all the risks were mitigated by the application of safe standing as an infrastructure in that particular part of the stand.

The debate about safe standing actually started in a room in this building some time ago, as the House of Commons had to debate the issue because of a very successful petition run by the Football Supporters' Association. Within that idea has always been an element of not just making the atmosphere better, but catering for people's needs and making sure they could stand in safety. Cardiff City and Shrewsbury Town had these measures in place way before we started debating the matter, and it has added great value to the experience, but also to people's safety.

**Q189 Jane Stevenson:** Is Wembley thinking about access for a family-safe standing area or access for those with disabilities?

**Liam Boylan:** From the disability side, Wembley has a very good infrastructure. Our disability platforms are all raised, so if somebody did stand on the row in front, that would not block their view. We are good on that side. The other aspects are part of what we need to learn—from listening to the SGSA to see how that develops.

**Q190 Jane Stevenson:** As for cricket and racing, I believe people stand at racecourses quite frequently, and I don't know whether any issues have come to light that might help our football colleagues. However, I imagine that cricket is fairly seated for most.

**Phil Davies:** It is pretty seated. I think the only place people stand is in hospitality areas, so it is less of an issue for us. I defer to football colleagues. on this.





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**David Armstrong:** The racing experience is a little different in that the typical layout of a racecourse will have very little pre-allocated seating. There are grandstands, which members of the public can use to watch a race, but they will move around the racecourse, perhaps using a seat for one race and standing for the next. A large majority of the people that watch racing stand, either on the slopes in front of a grandstand or next to the winning post or those areas. That's always been the case, so that's not something new for us, and therefore that environment is the environment we are comfortable with and work with every day.

Q191 **Jane Stevenson:** And no stewarding issues?

**David Armstrong:** No, not at all. We're able to manage numbers that go into certain areas. Most racecourses have very wide, open spaces, so there are very rarely occasions when people are congested or crowded into an area, so we're able to manage that.

Q192 **Kevin Brennan:** Going back to stewarding—I suppose anyone on the panel might have a go at this—do you think stewards are sufficiently well trained and paid?

**Bob Eastwood:** I think we need to make some improvements. I think that certainly the pay decision is a decision made by clubs. It's not something that the EFL gets dragged into. As for training, we've got some models of really good practice across the board, and certainly since covid it has been very difficult for clubs—in fact all sports—to get adequately trained people.

Q193 **Kevin Brennan:** You kindly highlighted Cardiff City—the Cardiff City Stadium is located in my constituency—without mentioning their on-field performance, and I thank you for that. What are the best practice examples?

**Bob Eastwood:** There's some very good practice at Cardiff City, but there is good practice all over. The challenge is not with where clubs have responsibility for their own stewards; it's where there is a new relationship with a stewarding company that provides stewards to the club. On many occasions, those stewards are adequately trained, but there have recently been Sports Grounds Safety Authority inspections that have raised questions in respect of how well stewards are trained across the board.

I can reassure you that the EFL and the Premier League have actually worked together in developing a brand new programme that we are about to pilot, which will take the training of stewards to another level. Cardiff City is one of my pilot clubs, and they go through a nine-module programme where they will be trained in a whole host of security and safety measures to obviously get some consistency. If I'm going to answer that question fairly, I think the training of stewards currently could do with being more consistent across the clubs.

Q194 **Kevin Brennan:** Should there be some kind of national stewarding qualification that has that consistency built into it?

**Bob Eastwood:** Absolutely. Yes, there should, and that—

**Kevin Brennan:** But there isn't one.

**Bob Eastwood:** No, not currently. Well, there is, but it's quite dated. We have decided to refresh it, working in partnership with the Premier League. As I've said, we are piloting that very soon, and we will roll that out across the 92 clubs.

Q195 **Kevin Brennan:** Should a steward get involved in an altercation between two players?

**Bob Eastwood:** Absolutely yes, if it is required because of the impact—

**Kevin Brennan:** You know what I'm referring to.

**Bob Eastwood:** I do. If it's required and there is an impact on the crowd dynamics, then it is necessary at times for stewards to get involved. Otherwise, the match official—the referee—is perfectly placed, using football terminology, to tackle that sort of thing.

Q196 **Kevin Brennan:** I know you here representing the EFL rather than the Premier League, but there was that incident last Sunday at Tottenham where a steward did take that action, and there was quite a lot of comment about whether it was the appropriate role for them to play. Obviously, it was followed up then later with the incident involving the fan lashing out at a player. Looking at that—I know you cannot comment on it directly—do you think that that whole incident was handled appropriately and well?

**Bob Eastwood:** I do, yes. I can only go off what I've seen on television myself. I don't know any of the background to it or anything like that. I do know that a person has since been arrested and charged, which is really good news, but this is no different from a policing environment where you're dealing with spontaneous unpredictable incidents, which is what they had. I think they dealt with it very well in the circumstances. Yes, the person did get a kick in the back and to say anything further on that would be sub judice, but they protected the player, and they've then dealt with the person. The Chair mentioned Sheffield Wednesday earlier, and with any operation across any sport—no matter what sport we're talking about or wherever it is—there will always be something to learn that they could have done better.

Q197 **Kevin Brennan:** On that point, Mr Boylan, I was reading earlier the *Daily Mail* investigation last year into stewarding at Wembley, which suggested that the sort of qualification that had to be taken online before getting appointed as a steward was a bit of a joke, that it was routine that people were offered and accepted bribes to allow people into areas they shouldn't be allowed into—hospitality areas and so on—and that quite a large number of particularly inexperienced stewards were just there to watch the match rather than actually do the job. This can be very dangerous.

It is not just at sporting events, because we saw the terrible incident that happened recently at a music event at the Brixton Academy where two people died. There are press reports that there is routine bribery around





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letting too many people into areas they shouldn't be at that location.

In the response at the time, Wembley said, "We are taking these allegations extremely seriously," and then, "We have...begun an investigation...and we have suspended the relevant stewarding contractor pending the outcome of this investigation." What was the outcome of all the investigations into that report by the *Daily Mail*?

**Liam Boylan:** The outcome was that the stewarding contractor had basically cut corners for what they were doing with the training. It was post covid, and with covid there was obviously a lot of online training. The training that is required to work at Wembley Stadium is national level 2 in spectator safety, which has a foundation course of training before they're allowed to actually work at the stadium. This stewarding company had cut this corner, and they were dismissed and no longer work at the stadium. We ensured that all the stewarding companies were aware that that was not acceptable.

Q198 **Kevin Brennan:** Had they cut corners because, basically, they were doing it on the cheap for you?

**Liam Boylan:** No, all our stewarding companies are paid well. We benchmark across the industry. We always will do, so they're paid well. It was just the actions of that individual stewarding company. I don't know what was in their head for why they did that, but we will not tolerate that type of behaviour.

Q199 **Kevin Brennan:** With reference to my earlier question to Mr Eastwood, do you think stewards are adequately trained now and paid sufficiently?

**Liam Boylan:** As I've said, we will always benchmark on the pay side of things. We pay the London living wage as a minimum for the entry level stewards coming into the stadium. I agree with what Bob's saying in that the training needs to be assessed across the board. We have our own on-the-day training, which enhances the other training. We call it toolbox training, which is on top of the national level qualification. We push what we need for Wembley Stadium. We're very aware that we're the national stadium, and we're always under scrutiny, so any improvements in that training for stewards across the board will be most welcome.

Q200 **Kevin Brennan:** Mr Armstrong and Mr Davies, in relation to your sports, there has been concern—perhaps you could tell us what you think about that concern—that crowd behaviour at horse-racing and cricket events has been causing some difficulties in recent years. We see films on social media and so on of pretty large punch-ups sometimes among boozed-up at people at the races. We sometimes see some of that behaviour at the cricket, because it's an all-day event. Is there any concern in your sport about that issue getting worse? What are the implications for the stewarding of horse-racing and cricket events?

**David Armstrong:** I think that we have seen the incidents that have taken place, and they often are in the public domain, at racecourses over the years. What is quite interesting is that in the first three to six months immediately post covid, when stadiums opened up again, etc. we saw an

increase in issues. Since then it has actually dropped back off again to levels that we saw previously. The level of incidents that we actually have at racing is very limited—less than 0.03% of racegoers are involved in any sort of disturbance or incident. We're never complacent about that at all, and we're working constantly to try and find ways to help reduce those incidents, which we might come to later.

In terms of the implication for stewarding, like some of my colleagues we have a number of training courses in place for stewards on top of the basic training and qualification that they already have. As I mentioned earlier, one of the challenges we have is the turnover of staff. Finding sufficient, experienced, qualified stewards for important race days has become harder. As a consequence, we pay more, and that's fine with us because they're a vital part of our operation. Our larger events are well stewarded, and we work very hard to reduce the number of incidents that take place.

**Phil Davies:** Clearly, there have been concerns about crowd behaviour, particularly as we saw some deterioration in 2021, but we have done a great deal of work around stewarding, management and alcohol management to reduce those problems. Last year, we did a great deal of hard work and invested a great deal in our grounds—we put a big investment into CCTV—along with training and improving standards around venues.

That 0.03% certainly resonates with the data we have. We had about 510 ejections last year, out of 2.5 million people who attended cricket matches. We had only about 15 police arrests/disposals in cricket. We are certainly not complacent. As a result of the design and the crowd management of cricket venues, and also how we construct a welcoming environment for everybody in a ground, we feel that everyone has a place within the quite diverse groups that attend cricket, across different formats as well. Stewarding is key to that.

We have 18 different grounds, all of which have slightly different recruitment and stewarding models, whether they use contracted-in firms or in-house stewarding. The level 2 occupational standard is the baseline for stewards, and some stewards in grounds then need an SIA qualification, depending on precisely what role they are in. There is a further complication, in that, some grounds, depending on whether they have a general safety certificate, may be exempt from that SIA qualification, but only if they have in-house stewards. In terms of some of the best practice that we see, a good example is Cardiff, where we have stewards who work in different, larger—

**Kevin Brennan:** You're talking about Sophia Gardens, which is also in my constituency.

**Phil Davies:** Yes. Many of the stewards there will also work at the Principality Stadium or at Cardiff City. Actually, that mix of stewards who are in different environments provides more consistency. We should be able to work together on training and standards across different grounds to allow stewards to migrate between them. We have a better pool of



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stewards in certain cities. Nottingham is a great example of that—Trent Bridge operates a completely in-house model, which is very successful. It always has good customer feedback but, again, those stewards will work at Forest and County.

Q201 **Kevin Brennan:** That is an unusual case—where there are three major sporting grounds. In Cardiff, the Cardiff City Stadium, Sophia Gardens and the Principality Stadium are all within a mile of each other. I suppose you are at an advantage if you are in that situation.

Finally, I want to ask about fans travelling abroad—perhaps Mr Eastwood could deal with this. Obviously, what we are talking about affects all sports, but particularly football. To what extent are the football authorities involved in protecting fans travelling overseas to matches?

**Bob Eastwood:** That is a matter for the FA. I expected it to come up, but it is not something I get involved in. I have some views, but it is not something I get involved in. I can assure you that I will take that matter back to the FA, and they will send you a written response, if that is okay with yourselves.

Q202 **Kevin Brennan:** Yes, absolutely—I understand that you cannot speak outside of your remit. Mr Boylan, you are here representing the FA, aren't you?

**Liam Boylan:** I am here because of the stadium. That is my role. I do not sit on that side of the FA. I am aware of what FA practice is for England fans travelling abroad, but not club football.

Q203 **Kevin Brennan:** So you would not be able to shed any light on the John Yems situation either, I take it.

**Liam Boylan:** You have seen the statement out there from the independent commission, but it is not an area I work with.

Q204 **Kevin Brennan:** As I understand it, the FA's statement is that they disagree with their own independent commission's findings in the John Yems case and believe that the highly offensive, racist language he used wasn't all that bad.

**Liam Boylan:** Absolutely—they definitely disagree. I know that, at the moment, colleagues are seeking legal consultation on the next steps forward.

**Kevin Brennan:** All right. Thanks. I won't push you on that, because it is not your area.

Q205 **Chair:** Can I pick up one of your answers to Kevin Brennan? You said that the stewarding company at the Euro final cut corners. Can you expand on that a bit? What corners did they cut? What did they do wrong?

**Liam Boylan:** They sent a steward to us who had not gone through the correct training process, when they are signed up and contracted to ensure they have done that foundation course. That is the important thing



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that we do. Since then, we have enhanced all our methods of checking on those people. Like I said, that person was dismissed. We never want to see that happen again. There is now a new, enhanced software program to ensure that that cannot happen.

**Q206 Chair:** Given the level of problems, it felt like more than one steward must have been complicit in getting people in without tickets. Or are we saying that this one steward was responsible, obviously not for what happened outside the ground, but for what happened inside the ground?

**Liam Boylan:** No, there was an allegation on the side of bribery—nothing ever proven, nothing ever found on that side of things. It was one person's account.

**Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Rupa Huq.

**Q207 Dr Huq:** Liam Boylan, I would like to carry on with some of the Wembley issues—it is not in my constituency, but it is next door. You are saying that there was a rogue steward. I think Dame Louise Casey's review said there were untrained stewards. I did a lot of interviews at the Cressida Dick moment, when there were several scandals, and I listed that issue in there. Whose fault was it that things went so monumentally wrong? Was it really just the one steward or was it the police? There were ugly scenes—we all saw them.

**Liam Boylan:** Absolutely—11 July hurt. I have never seen anything of that nature, and I have worked in this industry since 1996. As Baroness Casey pointed out, it was unprecedented.

We were part of the events research programme. Part of that was introducing crowds back in—that side of it. We were responsible, and we identified early on in the test side of things that we were seeing approximately 30% new stewards, who we had not seen before. We had lost stewards from the sector.

It was important for us to address that. We addressed it all the way through the test programme and also through the tournament. When we got to the semi-final, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority inspector stated that there was a marked improvement in the stewarding on that side. It was about this new sector coming in; they were not untrained—they still had to be trained coming in—but they just did not have that muscle memory that we had had previously, before we lost people.

**Q208 Dr Huq:** What about the suggestion of having more fan zones—places where people can gather and drink, so that they do not have to barge in without tickets? What would you say to that?

**Liam Boylan:** I fully agree that that is the way forward. The problem on that day was that we were in covid, and we had a disapplication to allow people not to social distance in the licensed area of the stadium. We were asked if we could look at fan zones outside, but Government were not ready at that time to go to that point, because we were still in covid. So we just were not able to put in the fan zone. It is the best way forward: you have somewhere to disperse people and a licensed area to control.



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Unfortunately, that perfect storm of covid meant we could not have a fan zone outside.

**Q209 Dr Huq:** The last time I went was for the Brentford game, when they went up, and that was the end of covid—I think you had to bring proof of a test, but nobody checked. Anyway, it was pretty orderly that day.

To take another suggestion, the APPG on ticket abuse says that a lot of touted tickets are sold for the wrong end of the ground, so you get aggro from fans, and there is a lot of violence as a routine problem. You could clamp down more on the resale of tickets to stop this sort of aggression. What would you say to that?

**Liam Boylan:** It is illegal for football, so it is—

**Dr Huq:** It is only a summary offence. It is not a criminal offence, and nothing really happens.

**Liam Boylan:** My apologies. We don't want to tolerate it. We have a public space protection order outside the stadium, which does not allow touts to operate within approximately a square mile, so they can't sell tickets to people where the transport hubs come in. The online side is difficult, and we are trying to clamp down it.

If we find somebody in the wrong end, they're ejected from the stadium immediately—that is something we enforce. We don't allow them to stay in the wrong end.

**Q210 Dr Huq:** Do you think it should be tightened up to an actual criminal offence?

**Liam Boylan:** That would be most helpful.

**Q211 Dr Huq:** Okay. Do you think that that whole episode has harmed the home nation's chances of hosting major international football in the future?

**Liam Boylan:** I don't. As Baroness Casey stated, it was an unprecedented thing, which we had never witnessed before. Since that, we have staged over 36 events—major finals with huge clubs such as Chelsea and Liverpool and, in the EFL, Sunderland and Nottingham Forest. We staged Tyson Fury's heavyweight championship of the world, with 94,000 people. We have had a very successful year. We had a successful record before.

What happened was just unprecedented; we had never witnessed that. We don't want it to happen again. There are lessons to be learned from what happened outside the stadium. It is important that we collaborated and moved forward with the recommendations of the review to ensure that the same thing never happens again. It is something I never want to see again.

**Dr Huq:** Everything's at full capacity now. We are saying that that was a bit of a covid spasm—

**Liam Boylan:** We're back to full capacity.



**Q212 Dr Huq:** Right. The next question applies to all of you, although the quote I have in front of me is from Tony Burnett from Kick It Out. He says there needs to be “a standard approach to reporting discrimination, a standard methodology for gathering the data”. There are so many different systems. Would all of you like to see that?

**Phil Davies:** In terms of our experience this year, we have been very keen as a sport to ensure that we gather any information around this issue and that we look at where we do have problems. In practice, people need diverse means of reporting that they are comfortable with. What you see in cricket grounds is that there may be a report direct to the steward, but people are often uncomfortable to stand up and be seen to be the one that calls something out. We have promoted text-to-report systems in our grounds, and we require them all to have that so that people can just text into a control room to report information.

What you also see is that some people reflect on their experience on the day. They don’t want to ruin their own day—they have spent a lot of time, effort and money getting there—and they will often complain by email afterwards. That might be to the ground, or it might be to us, and we have a customer service team that picks those things up; we pick the analysis up.

What we find works for us is that we have a broad range of reporting mechanisms that people are comfortable with. Again, I saw in my background in policing that you have to make people comfortable with methods for reporting things. We are able to gather all that information, whether through the grounds, our own customer service team or the safety teams on the day. Then we can look at where we have issues, address them and move the game forward. Hopefully, we can generally continually learn and improve things in our grounds for everybody.

**Dr Huq:** Are things reported in a transparent way?

**Phil Davies:** Yes, I think so.

**David Armstrong:** We have a text-to-report-type system in place at a number of racecourses. Across our 59 racecourses, there is a wide variety of size and scale, and those systems are in place at the larger racecourses, not consistently across every racecourse, which would be a good thing if we can do it. We have that text-to-report-type environment, which does seem to work, and stewards will deal with issues that are reported. Having a standard approach across sport would only be a good thing, I think.

**Dr Huq:** For measurement, data collection and reporting all that stuff?

**Liam Boylan:** We have engaged with Kick It Out on this. They have been into the stadium many times to look at what the solution is going forward. They have looked at how we are collating the information—it is the same as for my colleagues, with the tech service and with everything that is coming into guest services. If something can be found that can connect everybody, we are very happy to be part of a pilot.





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**Q213 Dr Huq:** You described the rogue steward in 2020. Do you think that your event staff more broadly—not even just the trained stewards—are adequately trained to deal with antisocial behaviour, discrimination and all those things? My son is not a trained steward, but he does stuff at Brighton & Hove Albion—directing people, pulling pints or whatever. It is often BME people who find themselves in these jobs, so they are at the receiving end of these things. It is quite a scary situation.

**Liam Boylan:** Our stewards are trained well, especially as they move up through the rank structure and the responsibilities in those areas. They are very aware of the needs of that role. As Bob said earlier, they know there is antisocial behaviour on that side. They are excellent at stepping in, but reporting it is the issue. We have to ensure that these things are quickly reported.

We engage with the Crown Prosecution Service on the best way of reporting, so that if we do find anybody, we can get a successful prosecution. It is very high on the agenda. Having zero tolerance in our stadium is at the top of all our briefings for all our staff. They are aware of what they need to do to report this behaviour and to cut it out.

**Q214 Dr Huq:** And you encourage them to? Just delivering a training course might not be enough. If you check in with them, do they feel able to deal with these things?

**Liam Boylan:** Exactly. We have quality assurance teams moving around and talking to the stewards to ensure they understand their role and that they are comfortable in it, and basically to mentor them. There are excellent stewards and supervisors in the industry, who have been in it for many years. We use that knowledge base. They understand where we're at and what our values are. We want to stamp these things out.

**Q215 Dr Huq:** Racing and cricket?

**David Armstrong:** We work hard to try to address all forms of antisocial behaviour. On the racecourse, we operate almost a yellow card system. If an individual is identified as potentially causing antisocial behaviour, they will first get a warning saying, "If you continue in that fashion, you will be excluded." If they continue, they are then excluded. We also operate spotters, who are not dressed as stewards—they are in plain clothes. They will work around the racecourse to identify problem areas so that the stewards can then look at those areas themselves. It is impossible to cut absolutely everything out. We work hard to improve year on year, but I think we do a pretty good job.

**Q216 Dr Huq:** Bob Eastwood, you've not said a lot on my questions. Do you have anything further to add on the ticket tout point?

**Bob Eastwood:** In some of our higher-profile games—the play-offs—we do have a problem with ticket touts. We also have a problem with our finals. We have five finals at Wembley national stadium: the Carabao, the Trophy cup and also the three play-offs. We work very closely with Wembley and the Metropolitan Police Service in tackling these problems. As Liam said, there is an area where ticket touts are banned from



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congregating, obviously to deter this from happening. I have been approached at games by ticket touts, so I see them—they do not know who I am—and obviously I have made sure that there has been some intervention.

I would also like to touch on some of the issues you mentioned about how we specifically target criminal activity. The model that we think works best is that our football clubs work very closely with their local police forces. Pre covid, there was an environment whereby I think everybody thought, “Well, this behaviour’s just what happens at football,” so they would let things go. My belief was that that empowers people to behave badly.

The EFL has brought two consultants in to support me, and we have started to review all criminal activity, whether that is throwing items or going on to the pitch and so on. We now measure that—we take a report after every fixture from all our 72 clubs, so we are measuring this data. We have only been doing so since the beginning of the season, but that allows us to put interventions in place, and we will work with the club to make sure that the local police investigate a matter where that is required. If there is not enough evidence to take action against that person, the EFL has developed sanctioning guidance. We actually brought in an academic from Northumbria University and Amanda Jacks from the Football Supporters’ Association—you may have come across her; she is very active on social media. Amanda and Dr Ashley Lowerson are the two people who produced that work.

Clubs will take their own action, and built within that is a restorative justice approach, because there is an imperative upon us all to make sure that these people who behave badly are treated proportionately and as human beings, and that we do not issue bans like confetti. There has to be a process to go through, because we want people to behave better. We want more people to come into the stadia, as the Premier League do, to watch our fixtures. There is a business imperative for the local clubs operating within local communities to do that.

There is a number of very complicated processes, and what we try to do as a league is pull them all together, to make sure that the end product is that everybody is working together to eradicate many of these problems that we do not want to exist in the first place. The emphasis is not on targeting the football fan: it is actually on targeting the bad behaviour. The overwhelming majority of football fans behave appropriately, like reasonable human beings; it is a small proportion of people who behave badly at our events, and it is those people we target, and we either put interventions in or put measures in place to keep them out of our stadia or to enable them to behave better because we have put them on a restorative justice programme.

**Q217 Dr Huq:** Would you say antisocial behaviour is going up or down? Is antisocial behaviour on the rise?

**Bob Eastwood:** We should bear in mind the fact that we have really only just started measuring this. I will probably be able to answer that question



in two years, when we have enough data. I can go off my instincts, which are telling me that the antisocial behaviour this season compared to last season is a lot lower—quite significantly lower. We are now getting reports, and clubs are supplying this data that we can all look at, and that tells us that there are a small number of incidents—the use of pyrotechnics, people going on the pitch—whereas last season, I think with the end of lockdown and bringing people back into the stadia, people expressed themselves in ways we all wished they did not. With football fans mirroring society and society's problems, we ended up having those behaviours that we have now started working really hard alongside clubs and partners to tackle.

**Q218 Dr Huq:** What about drug taking? In his evidence to the Committee, Peter Houghton from the Football Safety Officers Association said that after a Cambridge United game “it looked like a laundrette—there was that much powder everywhere.”

**Bob Eastwood:** Well, Peter knows me; I did not know about that, and I want to pick up a conversation with him about that. I did not see his presentation of evidence actually, so I was not aware of that before today's meeting. I have lost count of the number of games that I have been to, and I can categorically say that I have never seen any misuse of drugs. In my policing career, I used to work in quite a high-profile environment that targeted international drugs traffickers, and we do have problems with drugs. By the way, what I have just said is not to be taken, please, as any indication from myself that we do not have a problem. I have picked things up in the media. You mentioned Mark Roberts, the police lead; he has been very vocal about the misuse of drugs.

We should bear in mind that I think the two academics that you had here, Geoff and Clifford, also say that there is no evidence available in respect of the problem of drug taking within football spectators, and I am of the same opinion. What we have done in the EFL is surveyed all our clubs to look at the issues that clubs are able to share in relation to what they know about the use of drugs. Now, there are people who do take drugs within clubs—we have had our clubs stopping people with significant quantities of drugs that they were clearly taking into the stadia to sell, so we have examples of that—but to actually—

**Q219 Dr Huq:** What type of drug? Is that cocaine?

**Bob Eastwood:** Mainly cocaine, yes, but cannabis too. We have had indications that the clubs know that a certain toilet cubicle is used by people to take drugs, so, quite obviously, the clubs have put interventions in place. We are still working through the results of the survey, but it also tells us that some police forces have never shared any intelligence with their local club in respect of the misuse of drugs. That is quite telling, given you have the police lead making all these announcements. We have decided to go and seek out the evidence, because there is not any, and it is quite telling. The early signs are that yes, we do have some problems, but it is not as extensive as we believe and there are also some gaps between the way in which the club and their local police force work

together to tackle the drugs problem within our stadia. That will become a piece of work that I will lead on when I get to that point.

**Q220 Dr Huq:** Sniffer dogs and that kind of thing?

**Bob Eastwood:** Yes, sniffer dogs for targeting drugs are useful when there is good intelligence or good information that there is a drugs problem. If we were to look at—I know this has been mentioned—having sniffer dogs outside every single one of our fixtures, it would be disproportionate to the risk and disproportionate to the problem, and it would actually, to put this in an appropriate way, cheese off decent people who go to watch football, and quite rightly so; it would cheese me off. I also know that the majority of police forces would think that that was unnecessary. The way that police forces—generally speaking, not all—work alongside our football clubs is absolutely commendable. They do some really good work together. We should not forget that, through our EFL Trust, we do some tremendous work within communities, some of which is geared towards tackling people's drug problems, and also tackling people who are vulnerable in many different ways.

**Q221 Dr Huq:** Phil Davies, do you think antisocial behaviour is on the rise in cricket? In June *The Times* said that it is being fuelled by cocaine usage, again.

**Phil Davies:** There are two elements of that question. If we take antisocial behaviour, we similarly introduced a more comprehensive reporting system this year, so I think we will be able to see in a year or two's time where that trend is. My own sense is that there were issues around covid and the return of crowds that were very unique. We will probably see in a year or so where we are in terms of a long-term trend around antisocial behaviour. That is aligned to the fact that we are doing a great deal of work and are now very proactive about the management of antisocial behaviour within grounds, trying to reduce issues around that so that we have a healthier environment within the stadium. I would probably say that in a year or so's time we can say more comprehensively.

My judgment on 2022 is that, actually, towards the end of the season, the Hundred went off very well. We had very few issues across the grounds. Clearly, you do get some issues wherever you have crowded spaces, but generally it was much better.

On the drugs element, we have some anecdotal evidence, but we do not feel that we actually have hard evidence that there are significant problems. That is probably more consistent with the wider use of cocaine in particular across society, which will obviously be reflected everywhere people are, but we do not currently get that feeling. Nevertheless, we are not complacent about that, and we are certainly monitoring that area to see whether it becomes more of a risk and we need to put in more interventions.

**Q222 Dr Huq:** Lastly, David Armstrong, we have heard reports that the National Hunt at Cheltenham racecourse last April saw: "Urinating in gardens, defecating in public parks and verbally abusing local residents".



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Do you think antisocial behaviour is on the rise in racing?

**David Armstrong:** I am not familiar with those individual incidents at Cheltenham, but obviously Cheltenham is a major event in its own right, with more than 280,000 spectators over four days, so it is a very complex environment.

We feel that the number of antisocial behaviour incidents overall in racing has declined a little this year—in 2022 versus 2021—which is encouraging. But I would pick up your point about drug use, in that we are concerned about the levels of drug use, typically cocaine, on racecourses. Most of all, where drugs and alcohol are mixed, we feel there is a direct correlation to the level of antisocial behaviour.

We take quite a different approach with regard to drugs at the entrance to major events: we have extensive use of sniffer dogs, which then work around the site during the day as well, going into known problem areas. We spent over £1 million in 2022 on sniffer dogs alone, and we believe they work. We combine them with honesty bins, which surprisingly do end up quite full, with people depositing drugs in them before they come into the event. Of course, we have a zero-tolerance approach to anyone found with drugs and that is immediately reported to the police. So in those areas we are trying to tackle what we believe is a risk factor, which is particularly the combination of alcohol and drugs.

**Dr Huq:** Okay, thank you. We will rendezvous in two years' time when all these action plans come into effect.

Q223 **Chair:** You are clearly all collecting data in a way that you perhaps did not in the past; are you going to publish that data?

**Bob Eastwood:** That is a very good question, Chair. We have not made a decision on that yet, because it is in its early infancy. My personal view in relation to that is that, as part of our normal business approach, we should be demonstrating to the public, the people who attend our fixtures and the parents who let their youngsters attend our fixtures what we have done to address some of the issues and what proof we have that things are becoming safer. Last year we did a survey of fans, and roughly 75% of the fans surveyed indicated that they felt safe at our football fixtures. There was also a high percentage—it was in the 80s—who believe that there should be a robust security and safety operation involving the police and the club stewards. So it is very high on people's agenda, and quite rightly.

**Phil Davies:** It is for internal use. We are looking at trying to identify problems across the game and improve performance across the counties. It is particularly for us as a governing body to use as a tool to identify where problems are and where we can invest. It is certainly something we can consider in the long term. It may well help people to understand that they are safe inside cricket grounds, which are generally pretty safe environments. We occasionally get a headline in the press—in *The Times*—but when you put that into context, cricket grounds are generally pretty safe places to be and to enjoy days at the cricket.



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**Chair:** I urge you to strongly consider publishing the data you have, not least because otherwise the only time people who are not regulars—who are not fans of football, cricket, racing or whatever—hear about is when there are problems. If you can actually demonstrate that yes, okay, there are these problems and we are dealing with them, that would seem to me to be much better. But that is clearly a decision for you.

Q224 **Giles Watling:** Before I move on to the main subject I want to talk about, I just want to touch briefly again on stewarding. We have covered the topic hugely, and I think we are in danger of giving the impression that it is a confrontational occupation and that we are always having to deal with the bad guys. On the whole, I would imagine stewarding is pretty collegiate—people get on and you have a wonderful afternoon. You see your cricket match or your football match, and you are helping and reaching out. We want to get that message across.

What interests me across the various sports is the recruitment of stewards. The ideal steward, I would imagine, would be a fan of football, cricket or horse-racing—somebody who is involved and has local knowledge. Do you have any guidelines for the companies who recruit the stewards? I will start with you, Bob.

**Bob Eastwood:** There are minimum standards that are overseen by the licence issued by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority and the certificate issued by the safety advisory groups attached to local councils. We have taken it upon ourselves, working with the Premier League, to issue a training programme, and we will expect all our clubs to deliver the training programme to ensure that all stewards are trained to a standard.

You mentioned the type of person; I think it is all types. We get people—especially where clubs employ their own stewards—who have worked at a club for many years, including some people who are now in their 70s. There are people from all walks of life who thoroughly enjoy engaging with their fellow football fans, and they go down an absolute dream; they do a cracking job. Then, at the other end, we get people who say, “It’s a job.” Some people don’t follow football, but they work in security. They might work for a security company—they will be SIA registered—and they will provide that service within the terms of the contract that exists between the security company and the club. It is there that clubs need to work a lot more closely with security, and that happens in many cases.

**Giles Watling:** And therefore they are more like police officers, with that impartiality.

**Bob Eastwood:** Absolutely. Let’s not forget that the incidents stewards deal with are often customer service issues. But as we’ve all seen, the risks increase dependent on the team mix that is playing within the stadia; you all know about local rivalries and so on. There are also some fans of some clubs who, regrettably, behave badly. That is of great regret not just to the EFL or the club, but to their fellow fans. These people present a very challenging problem.

Q225 **Giles Watling:** Forgive me, but that is largely my point: if you recruit





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from the fans, you have people who are on side in the first place. Is that not beneficial?

**Bob Eastwood:** Absolutely, it is. That is why we encourage clubs to send stewards with the away team, so that the away fans see a friendly face or somebody they know. There is also something very subtle about that: people are less likely to behave badly if they are in front of somebody they know.

You are touching on the subject, so I think it is right for me to mention that we are conscious that we do have a problem with some fans when they are, as I put it, on the road—when they are going to watch their teams away. That is the subject of a separate project all together. A number of departments within the EFL are looking at that, because we need to do better in relation to the way those people behave. That doesn't mean we need to do better in the way that they are treated; it is about doing better in stopping some people—it is not all of them—behaving badly.

**Giles Watling:** It is a mission.

**Bob Eastwood:** Well, it is. We want to be able to intervene before some of these younger people get a criminal record, which is why we have a restorative justice recommendation to the sanctioning of fans.

Q226 **Giles Watling:** Let us go back to stewarding. Is it the same in cricket, Phil?

**Phil Davies:** It is very much the same in cricket. It's a very scalable operation in cricket. Ideally, you want a small core of stewards who are very familiar with the ground and also understand the dynamics of the game on the day. That really helps that customer service environment. We survey all the grounds—all spectators and ticket holders—about their experience on matchday. Stewarding is recorded in that, so you can see the quality of the stewarding. Again, we do feedback to the counties and the grounds, so they can see the quality of the stewarding.

Q227 **Giles Watling:** Are the stewards, as Bob iterated just now, recruited from the fans and the local club? Are they part of the game?

**Phil Davies:** You will have a mix where there are small groups that are recruited from part of the game and are familiar with it. Their main driver is that they want to be part of the matchday event, and they want to be there. It is a great place to work in cricket. You have to understand that cricket is very scalable; in a lot of our grounds, we will only move up to full capacity a couple of times a year. For that, you then have to bring in large numbers of stewards, and we simply could not sustain a large number.

We have one or two places that have many more. I mentioned Trent Bridge earlier, which has a completely in-house model, but others need to recruit and use stewarding companies that will bring in stewards on a major matchday. In terms of having that supplemented by a baseline of people who really understand the game, you would still expect those



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companies to deliver people who are familiar with the stadium, familiar with the cricket environment, and therefore can provide a better stewarding service on the day.

**Giles Watling:** Again, I would imagine it is pretty much the same with horse-racing.

**David Armstrong:** It is pretty much the same. We would like to have a mix of stewards, where you have those who work or live locally and know that know the layout of the racecourse. Typically they are racing fans who want to get involved more, if they can. At the same time, particularly for a larger event, you need a certain number of SIA-registered stewards, and quite often we will use stewarding companies for those.

Q228 **Giles Watling:** Yes, absolutely. Liam, you have no particular club affiliation in your position, so who is your ideal steward—ex-police, Army or RAF police?

**Liam Boylan:** The mix is exactly the same as my colleagues have mentioned. Wembley is a grand stadium, and people want to work there because of the type of events that are there. We have a lot of stewards who have worked at new Wembley since it opened and who worked at the old Wembley—they stayed loyal. They feel loyal to the Wembley brand, so while you have club loyalty, there is sort of an attraction to what the Wembley name is, and they want to be involved in that. We are very fortunate in that we have that mix.

Q229 **Giles Watling:** Do you have to reach out, though, or are people lining up to apply?

**Liam Boylan:** No, we have our in-house zero-hours contract staff. That is all supervisory and that is always full, so we have always got that. All our supervisors and managers are all our contract staff. Wembley's calendar is very difficult to maintain—huge numbers. Our last event was the NFL on 30 October and our next event is the Carabao cup at the end of February—four months dormant. Because of that, you cannot keep that larger workforce regular. What we have kept is the supervisor side of things, and they are the people who understand the culture and what they are delivering. We work on the three S's: safety, security and service. They understand that and that is what they need to get across, and they are very passionate about it.

Q230 **Giles Watling:** Good to hear. Sorry, I went off-piste a bit there, but I would like to move on to the issue of alcohol. Kevin Miles of the Football Supporters' Association said he believes that the banning of alcohol inside a stadium has done nothing to reduce the amount of alcohol consumed, and Professor Geoff Pearson, who we mentioned earlier, has said that alcohol restrictions are ineffective. Is there evidence that these restrictions lead to preloading or problems in Zone Ex, out and around the stadia? Bob?

**Bob Eastwood:** Well, these laws are over 40 years old. It would be fantastic if they were looked at with a view to overhauling them. I think



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there is evidence that fans not only preload. Geoff Pearson has done a fascinating survey and an academic paper on this, which you may well have seen. He can show that there is evidence of preloading before people go into the ground, but they are also turning up late for the fixture, which causes everybody a problem, because you are then managing people who are rushing to get in because they do not want to miss the start of the game. That is a real problem.

Information on the impact of alcohol on fan behaviour across the board is completely missing; there is none. Tracey Crouch's research, which you will no doubt be aware of, recommended that we should pilot the use of alcohol to demonstrate how well it can be managed. I have been to fixtures in Sweden and Switzerland, where they supply alcohol within the stadia.

**Q231 Giles Watling:** Are EFL clubs ready to pilot alcohol?

**Bob Eastwood:** Bearing in mind we have had 40 years where it has been outlawed, there is a period of learning to go through, which is why a pilot would be invaluable. We could then have a conversation about what the evidence is telling us: whether it has worked, what went right, what went wrong and how we can do better. I know for a fact that if there is poor behaviour or the risks are such, the club will mitigate those risks by stopping the supply of alcohol half-time, and they will do that across the board. I have seen that myself and I have lots of experience of that.

**Q232 Giles Watling:** Evidence going back many years shows us that if you prohibit something, you drive it underground. Therefore, you lose control and lose sight of the issues. That might be a point worth making.

**Bob Eastwood:** I think it is, but I also think that there is a business imperative. Clubs suffered greatly during lockdown, so there is a business imperative. It is a legitimate part of the business, as it is for any other business. Why should football not be able to facilitate the safe supply of alcohol within the stadia? It would be managed. This is why a pilot would be so beneficial. We could manage this very carefully, and then issue guidance on how the sale and consumption of alcohol could take place.

My own firm belief is it will mitigate many of the risks and many of the issues we are experiencing, because we would be treating football fans like human beings, and they should be allowed to have a drink. If, in certain parts of the stadia, they behaved badly—throwing their drink, for example—it would be stopped. You could sell it in other parts and manage it very carefully there.

The matchday operation across football is a very dynamic affair. I was going to save this until later, but I would like to offer—through you, Chair—that if any of you want to come and see a matchday operation from start to conclusion, you're more than welcome. These are things you can actually see.

**Q233 Giles Watling:** I think that would be really useful. The point you make that is really interesting is that it is dynamic, and therefore flexible.



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I will move on to you, Phil. Personally, there is nothing finer than going to my local Frinton cricket club, and sitting there watching a match with a pint of lager on a hot summer's afternoon. What a great thing to do! What is your experience of selling alcohol without restriction at your events?

**Phil Davies:** It is a major part of the matchday experience for many people, but equally there are some people who do not want to be involved in that. Probably the benefit we have is that most of the alcohol consumption that takes place actually takes place at the ground. You do not get any preloading, or very little of it, with cricket because it is such a long day. We therefore have the opportunity to manage it within the ground.

It is about how the stadium is configured for different groups of spectators. There are alcohol-free areas, which we now require, and family areas, which we now require—and we're talking about family areas of alcohol consumption consistent with a family environment. For example, if you are at a family picnic, you might have a glass of wine. You certainly don't expect people to be coming back from the bar with trays and trays of beers in those areas. There will be other areas that are more lively and vibrant, perhaps with fancy dress involved.

We have an alcohol management policy centrally, and we then require all the grounds to produce an alcohol management plan. It is an area that we are moving forward with. We are looking particularly at the strengths of offerings in certain sections of the stadium, so that we have appropriate strengths of beer, as well as bar management policies and stewarding of bars.

**Giles Watling:** As Bob said, there's a business case there.

**Phil Davies:** There is a very strong business case, and it is an important part of the matchday finance and economics—a huge part of the game—but it about managing it sensibly so we still have a good crowd environment in which people still feel welcome and are not deterred.

Q234 **Giles Watling:** What I am trying to drive at is that if we ease some alcohol restrictions that are in place now, are we endangering something—making life difficult for the stewards and so forth—or is it something we can manage peacefully and calmly, so that we can go back to having that lovely, cool pint of lager while watching the match?

**Phil Davies:** The experience in cricket is that we can manage that within the grounds and that we as a governing body can apply some standards that can be managed in-house.

Q235 **Giles Watling:** What about the experience at the racecourse?

**David Armstrong:** The enjoyment of alcohol at racing has been part of the sport for a very long time.

**Giles Watling:** Absolutely; I've been to Cheltenham and done it myself.



**David Armstrong:** I hope you had a great day there and a couple of winners. The safe consumption of alcohol—responsible drinking—is very important to us. We are the first major sport to partner with Drinkaware, the national charity, which you will be familiar with. On most racecourses, you will have water stations, where you can pick up a bottle of water or get tap water at any point during the day, and we actively encourage people to mix in a soft drink or a glass of water between alcoholic beverages. We also have certain parts of the racecourse which are alcohol-free, a little bit like in the cricket environment. Of course, we have family enclosures as well, where there is no alcohol. It has been a part of our sport for a long time. I think we manage it responsibly, and the current rules and legislation work for us quite well.

Q236 **Giles Watling:** Finally, Professor Pearson said that the ultimate aim of alcohol restrictions was to try to reduce alcohol consumption around football stadiums, and he has not seen any evidence that they have had that effect, but rather the reverse: they have caused problems. Do you agree?

**Bob Eastwood:** Absolutely. As I said earlier, the relationships between clubs and police forces is fantastic in most cases, but not in every case. I will obviously not name where, but there are some police forces in the country that encourage the pubs in the area of the football club not to allow away fans in and not to supply alcohol. In some cases, it is right that they do that. If the risks are such because it is a local derby, they get my full blessing, but not as a matter of course.

It means that there are some football fans from some clubs going to that ground—some distance away—and they cannot get a drink anywhere. Having a drink is part of fan culture in some respects. Not all fans drink, obviously, but it is part of fan culture. In that situation, they have to go elsewhere. It is a ridiculous decision from the outset. All you are doing is pushing the problem elsewhere, when you could manage it more carefully, because the vast majority of football fans are decent people who work hard and want to enjoy the game that their team are involved in.

**Giles Watling:** That is a really good note to end on.

Q237 **Chair:** Let me challenge that slightly. It is an observable fact that, for all the issues that surrounded the World cup in Qatar, the fact that it was somewhere between difficult, expensive and impossible to get alcohol there meant that, as far as I know, not a single England fan was arrested throughout the entire tournament. That does slightly suggest that if you do minimise the use of alcohol, you minimise some of the problems around the game.

**Bob Eastwood:** This will be a personal view, because I do not work for the FA.

You had a unique situation there, with all the negative media publicity surrounding the country and its application of its laws. I am sure that some fans travelling there were absolutely scared to death of crossing the line. We do not have those sorts of legal processes hanging over people



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like some spectre. Nevertheless—and this is my own personal view—when England are playing internationals, you find that there are more issues when they are playing in Europe, as opposed to faraway places such as Brazil, America and, in this case, Qatar. I have read the same myself, and I would not rely on any commentary that tries to draw analogies with what happened in Qatar and what happens everywhere else, because the circumstances there were so unique that it would be folly to rely on that situation as an analogy for elsewhere.

**Q238 Kevin Brennan:** I am right in saying, am I not, that it is not that the consumption of alcohol is banned at football grounds, but that it is banned within sight of the pitch and during certain periods around the event? You seem to be advocating that that restriction could be dropped so that people could drink alcohol in their seat or, I suppose, in their safe standing area. I attend sporting events fairly frequently—football, rugby, cricket and horse-racing. There has been considerable public debate about the problem that that causes at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff—even in a sport that does not have the tribalism that has caused some of the issues that have been seen with football in the past, and therefore does not have segregated fans—because of people consuming alcohol through the game and going back and forth to their seats carrying four or eight pints of lager and tipping them over everybody accidentally on the way, with the sort of conflict that that starts to create. It is a very live debate. Do you seriously think that, if that were permitted in football, you would not start to get real problems? For example, I cannot imagine what goal celebrations would be like if everyone had a plastic glass of lager in their hand.

**Bob Eastwood:** Actually, I would not say that. I would not risk my own reputation by saying something—

**Q239 Kevin Brennan:** So what are you saying?

**Bob Eastwood:** I am saying, “Let’s get some evidence, let’s pilot it, and let’s see if we in football can manage things as carefully as those in horse-racing and cricket.”

**Q240 Kevin Brennan:** But horse-racing and cricket are very different events. With horse-racing at Cheltenham, you are in a vast area where there is lots of room—with a huge amount of alcohol consumed. To be quite frank, it is more than a complex event, or whatever you called it earlier. The Cheltenham Festival, if you have ever been to it, is an absolutely rampaging sort of event, but football is completely different. You are confined within a stadium for a limited period of time, and all that is actually going on is that people are not allowed to consume drinks at their seat during the game.

**Bob Eastwood:** I think it would mitigate many of the risks that, in actual fact, we currently wrestle with, but that is not to ignore your points about the completely different environment.

**Q241 Kevin Brennan:** Are you saying that away fans cannot actually get a drink out of the ground?





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**Bob Eastwood:** In some places, no, they can't, but you make a point about the dynamics of fans and this "tribalism"—whatever that is, by the way. I view tribalism as an area where fans are very vehement in their support of their club. Not all of them behave badly, but some do. On the supply of alcohol, when you next go to Cardiff City and look across the ground, I am sure that you will see parts where it would be perfectly safe and adequate for people to be consuming alcohol sat in their seat or stood up, but there will be other parts of the ground—this is where it would need the area that Phil mentioned, with people wearing fancy dress, although they don't necessarily wear fancy dress in football—where it would need to be managed differently. The advantage of a pilot is that we would be able to see how dynamic the operation needs to be in respect of managing the use of alcohol in different parts of the stadium. You cannot forget the power of the fan in policing the fan. We rarely talk about self-policing among fans, but that is a very powerful concept. There are many occasions when problems have been dealt with fan on fan in support of the stewards.

**Kevin Brennan:** Just to be clear, tribalism is a wonderful part of sport, in my opinion—

**Bob Eastwood:** It can be.

**Kevin Brennan:** —because that is where the passion comes from.

Q242 **Chair:** One area we have not really covered is policing and its cost. Mr Eastwood, you have been fairly robust in your views about one of the comments made by Mark Roberts, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for football policing. Another thing he said was that in the 2019-20 season, the total cost of policing football was more than £47 million, with only £7 million recovered by the police. He further noted that football agents were paid £300 million in the same year. I suppose the in-principle question is: should non-football fans be subsidising the policing of football?

**Bob Eastwood:** Obviously that is an issue that has been under discussion in my nine and a half years working for the EFL. I would question the data that Mark Roberts relies on there. There are some arguments from academics—not my comments—that question how he has managed to put a figure on policing.

Bear in mind that I used to be the chief superintendent of an area that contained two football teams—Blackburn Rovers and Accrington Stanley—and I would occasionally get involved in Burnley Football Club and also Preston North End. I have always had the view, since I was in the police—working in football has made me even more certain in my views as something I stand by—that on many occasions the police put far too many resources into a fixture. This is why we have asked for a review of football policing. There are many good examples of policing—I need to emphasise that—and football needs police as much as police need football, because football supports policing in many ways away from matchday in supporting vulnerable people in the community.



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In relation to the cost of policing, there are many occasions when they have put too many police officers on a game. If I was to bring in the 72 chief execs of our football clubs, quite a number of them would agree with that, and so would the safety officers. We need to look at policing apportioning police resources to risk, and not because—this does happen—a particular set of football fans has a reputation going back 30 or 40 years. We need to be a lot more sophisticated in some of these decisions.

I do think that the police could do with sharing some good practice among themselves. In certain areas, the police are very engaged with the football fans, but in some parts of the country they are quite autocratic and confrontational, which has an impact on group dynamics. I am sure that Clifford Stott and Geoff Pearson raised these issues. I understand how difficult Mark Roberts' job is. He is trying to represent the best interests of police forces policing football, but I do not think he has covered all the relevant features of what amounts to paying for football that supports policing.

Just to complete my answer, there is also the question of issues away from the ground. Well, these are citizens of this country. If they engage in criminal conduct away from the ground, when they have attended a game legitimately—we all have freedom of movement—we support the police in any action that they take. Even if it is away from the ground, if it is serious enough, the club will work with the police to deal with that particular person, but that cannot be seen as football's problem, because these are human beings moving through different communities, as they have the freedom to do. I would be very interested to know how Mark has managed to put that level of cost on policing football, because I believe it is a very exaggerated amount.

**Q243 Chair:** It is an interesting and clearly radical idea that a lot of football matches are over-policed. I think it reinforces the case for more public data so that we can all look at that. I take the point that clubs have reputations, and perhaps they ought to wax and wane in terms of how fans behave, particularly away fans, but we would need hard data, and presumably the police would need hard data, because they are taking a public safety decision and inevitably will err on the side of caution. I think, as I said, that that is an argument for more transparency.

**Bob Eastwood:** And I would never criticise erring on the side of caution, but equally I am saying that we want to support police locally, and clubs put in excessive numbers of stewards—more than are required under the safety certificate—to support policing, at greater cost to the club. That is the sort of partnership working we want to see at a local level.

**Q244 Chair:** Clearly, this will be on a smaller scale, as there will be fewer events, but do you have the same sort of regular contact with the police for cricket events?

**Phil Davies:** Yes, we do. We use police at a number of events—87 of our matches had police last year—but it is a very, very different scale.

**Q245 Chair:** And does cricket pay for that?



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**Phil Davies:** We do pay for that. It is exactly the same arrangements through the Police Act that football has. To be clear, we would have between four and 12 officers supporting the stewarding operation, with the management of antisocial behaviour within that. But also outside the ground, particularly at larger events, we are looking for support around the public spaces and crowded places, counter-terrorism policing and so forth. At the Oval, for example, there is Harleyford Road and two tube stations, so there is crowd safety, and reassurance and presence around that.

We have a national police lead. We sit alongside all the events under Deputy Assistant Commissioner Laurence Taylor from the Met. We have a nominated lead at West Midlands police—a chief inspector—who we work with. We encourage all our grounds to have meaningful relationships with the police and blue-light services, so there are local operational contacts continually discussing areas where they can support, both when policing operationally on matchdays, and also when we need to pick up issues where the police are not present.

Q246 **Chair:** Presumably racing is much the same.

**David Armstrong:** Very similar. We have almost 1,500 racing fixtures a year, 90% of which are not policed at all. The premier fixtures are the 10% that are policed, and there is a similar experience, really. We do pay for that police service, in line with others, and it typically works well for us. As the RCA, we work with the national police co-ordination centre to help us to anticipate problems ahead of time and try to have a more strategic relationship with them.

**Chair:** Thank you very much for joining us for that very interesting, useful and informative session.