

**Consultation with Football Supporters on
Problems of Sectarianism within Scottish
Football:
a Report to the Scottish Executive**

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1** As part of its action plan to tackle sectarianism in Scottish society, the Scottish Executive commissioned a consultation with office holders in the most important supporters associations, federations, or their equivalents, for 17 of the biggest clubs in Scotland. The sample of clubs chosen is an excellent one in terms of sporting importance and geographical spread. In addition, with home league crowds of 3,942,173, these 17 clubs represented over 90% of the total attendance at all Scottish Premier League and Scottish Football League clubs in season 2005-06.
- 1.2** The consultation was designed to discover:
- whether these supporters think there is a major problem of sectarianism in Scottish football;
 - what practical problems they believe any sectarianism causes for the average supporter;
 - what practical suggestions they could offer for measures to limit or eradicate any sectarian structures, sectarian behaviours, and sectarian attitudes around football in Scotland.
- 1.3** The information provided in the report is based on discussions with some of the most experienced, most travelled, and most dedicated football fans in Scotland. The Facilitator also met with various pressure groups and organisations formed around this issue, and with some senior officials of Celtic, Rangers and Airdrie United. The consultation was carried out between April and July 2006. It is a unique initiative in Scottish football, and has provided very valuable information.

General Views of Supporters on Sectarianism in Scottish Football

- 1.4** While the supporters of three or four clubs argued that the situation is better than it used to be, sectarianism **is** seen as a problem – usually a major problem – in Scottish football. A few other clubs were mentioned – mainly Hearts and Airdrie – but the supporters of fifteen of the seventeen clubs see the problem of sectarianism as located predominantly, usually exclusively, with the fans of the Old Firm. Supporters from non-Old Firm clubs deny that sectarianism plays any significant role in their relations with any other club. Either sectarianism is simply not an issue or, where it may once have been significant, it is in sharp decline. A generally expressed view was that, while the rest of Scotland has “*moved on*”, the Glasgow region is still locked into an outmoded, strange, and unpleasant, ‘tradition’.
- 1.5** The supporters of Celtic agree that sectarianism is a major problem but see it as much more widespread than most other supporters. They are keen to stress the historical context in which Celtic came to be formed as a club, and the history of discrimination against Irish Catholics in the past and, possibly, into the present. Celtic supporters believe they are the recipients of the sectarian sentiments and sectarian actions of fans from most of the other major clubs in Scotland.

- 1.6** The supporters of Rangers are the only group which feel that sectarianism **is not** a major problem in contemporary Scottish football. They argue that the situation:
- has been getting steadily better over the last few years;
 - is nowhere near as bad as it is painted.
- In any case, they argue that much of what gets labelled as ‘sectarianism’ is rather to do with football fans ‘winding up’ the opposition.
- 1.7** The fans of the other clubs doubt that the Old Firm clubs are really sincere about their current anti-sectarian policies and programmes. Usually, the Old Firm are seen as wedded to sectarianism because of the money they are believed to have made, and still do make, out of it.
- 1.8** Partly because many fans believe that there is an economic edge to continuing sectarianism, partly because there is doubt about the real intentions of the Old Firm, the vast majority of supporters adopt a general pessimism or cynicism that anything effective will be done to moderate or eliminate the display of sectarian sentiments in Scottish football. Their belief is that only an outside agency – like UEFA, occasionally Sky TV – would have the necessary drive and clout to press forward policies that would have a substantial effect on sectarianism in Scottish football.
- 1.9** Supporters tend to locate dealing effectively with sectarianism in Scottish football as having both a short term and a long term component. Short term, apart from Rangers fans, the feeling is widespread that a short, sharp, shock is required to move things along. Long term, the strong feeling is that this is a problem of Scottish society rather than Scottish football and, apart from Celtic fans, reference is then made to a necessity to modify Scotland’s divided educational system, if there actually is an intent to do away with the potent sources of sectarian division.

Six Major Policy Issues and Problems

- 1.10** Analysing the results of this consultation with these experienced football supporters from all over Scotland, six major policy issues and problems emerged:
- what precisely is the ‘sectarianism’ we want to eliminate from Scottish football?
 - can the Old Firm become more clearly united in the anti-sectarian initiative?
 - does the content of the pre-match/half time ‘entertainment’ at Rangers and Celtic add to the problem?
 - do the ways visiting supporters are positioned, policed, and stewarded in the Glasgow grounds add to the problem?
 - can ticket allocation procedures for the away games of the Old Firm be altered, so as to enable a more effective sanctioning of their supporters who misbehave in ways linked to sectarianism?
 - what are the responsibilities of the Scottish media in regard to the portrayal and amplification of the sectarian problem in Scottish football?

Recommendations for Action

1.11 The report sets out a series of recommendations for policy action, designed to begin to deal, in a limited but practical way, with these problems. In summary these are:

1.12 Defining ‘Sectarianism’ and the Limits of the Initiative

It is recommended that:

- The Scottish Executive provides and publicises a clear statement of its specific objectives for the anti-sectarian initiative in Scottish football and sets out a timescale for change against which progress can be measured;
- The Scottish Football Association provides and publicises a clear statement about what UEFA’s current disciplinary regulations in regard to discriminatory behaviour mean, in practical terms, for all of Scottish football;
- The Scottish Executive and the Scottish Football Association distinguish between the two components of ‘The Old Firm’ and deal separately and distinctly with any issues of sectarianism in each case;
- The Scottish Executive and the Scottish Football Association alert all other professional clubs to the dangers of second hand sectarianism; advise clubs that this routine vocabulary of abuse is not in the best interests of Scottish football; and requires them to take the actions necessary to regularly inform their fans of the possible consequences of the continued use of this kind of language and imagery.

1.13 Making the Old Firm More Recognisably United in the Anti-Sectarian Initiative

It is recommended that:

- Celtic and Rangers merge their current anti-sectarian initiatives into one single and joint campaign, adopting a title and a style which clearly indicate their clear and collective determination to stamp out any associations they may be thought to have with pro-sectarian sentiments or actions;
- The Scottish Executive and the Scottish Football Association fund a sustained publicity campaign against sectarianism, and Rangers and Celtic help engage present and past players, coaches and celebrity supporters in the campaign, to portray sectarianism as out of date, as unfashionable, and as dangerous to the future of Scottish football;
- The Scottish Football Association, all the major clubs, and the Scottish Professional Footballers Association, ensure that all footballers playing for major clubs receive anti-sectarian training, and are regularly made aware of the dangers of making easy and unsubstantiated references to the supposed sectarian affiliations of other players, clubs, referees, journalists, etc;
- Celtic and Rangers, with the assistance of the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Football Association, encourage their organised supporters groups to engage in a regular series of meetings to discuss common problems, including, but not confined to, any issues of sectarianism;

- The Scottish Executive commissions a review of the effectiveness of policies used in recent campaigns, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, to exclude various kinds of inappropriate behaviour from football stadiums, so as to learn from innovative ideas and follow best practice;
- The Scottish Executive and sportscotland encourage the development of supporter-led initiatives to counter sectarian sentiments and actions, by providing a small fund which supporters groups could apply to, so as to cover the expenses of such initiatives.

1.14 The Pre-match and Half Time Entertainment at Ibrox and Parkhead

It is recommended that:

- Rangers and Celtic evaluate the form and content of their current pre-match, half-time, and post-match entertainment to assess whether their current patterns:
 - could give the impression of being conducive to the expression of sectarian sentiments;
 - could be modified so as to more clearly emphasize that both are Scottish clubs with deep connections to a non-sectarian, contemporary, forward-looking, Scottish society and to Scottish football.

1.15 The Positioning, Policing and Stewarding of Away Fans in Glasgow

It is recommended that:

- The Scottish Executive, the Strathclyde Police Force, Celtic, Rangers and the stewarding companies they employ, review existing policies for, and styles of, marshalling football fans in the major Glasgow grounds and establish whether these are appropriate for the likely threat posed by most fans from most clubs in Scotland;
- The Scottish Executive, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the stewarding companies employed review the current policy and style of policing and marshalling football fans at all the major grounds in Scotland, to eradicate any inconsistencies; to recommend styles and procedures which should be followed across the country; and to spread best practice;
- Rangers and Celtic review the current positioning of away fans in Ibrox and Parkhead to ensure they are provided with average levels of comfort and viewing, and that these positions are those best suited to limiting outbreaks of sectarian sentiments;
- Celtic and Rangers review the existing policies for, and styles of, stewarding football fans at their grounds and establish whether these are appropriate, and whether they are communicated clearly to all fans;
- Strathclyde Police and the stewarding companies employed at Parkhead and Ibrox adopt procedures so as to communicate clearly with away fans, particularly to ensure that the reasons for any special controls directed at them are perceived to be both sensible and appropriate for their safety;

- Rangers, Celtic, their stewarding companies and the Association of Chief Police Officers review the current anti-sectarian training received by police and stewards regularly deployed at Ibrox and Parkhead, to establish if this training is that best suited to spreading a clear and consistent anti-sectarian message;
- The Scottish Executive commissions a review of the use, so far, of the new law of ‘offences aggravated by religious prejudice’ at football grounds. This review should include:
 - an assessment of its use against home fans and away fans at all the major grounds in Scotland;
 - suggestions for a more pertinent classification of offences committed in football grounds to help reveal the true extent of the problem of sectarianism in Scottish football;
- The Scottish Football Association and the Association of Chief Police Officers enter into a sustained dialogue with organised supporters groups across Scotland, with the aim of discussing and explaining styles of policing and the routine application of laws designed to prevent sectarian sentiments and actions at football grounds;
- The Scottish Executive maintain a regular consultation with football supporters across Scotland to establish whether they note any changes or improvements in policing and stewarding policies through time, and whether they believe progress is being made through the initiative against sectarian displays in Scottish football.

1.16 The Behaviour of the Away Fans of the Old Firm

It is recommended that:

- Celtic and Rangers review their current procedures for the allocation of tickets for their away matches with a view to making changes which will make it absolutely clear that individuals and/or supporters’ groups will be liable to punishment by the club in the event of any misbehaviour linked to sectarianism;
- Rangers and Celtic promote mechanisms and provide aid which will facilitate greater self-policing amongst their away support, for example by providing preferential ticket allocations to supporters’ groups with the best records of behaviour;
- The Scottish Executive, the Association of Chief Police Officers and stewarding companies employed review the current policy and style of policing and marshalling football fans at all the major grounds in Scotland, to eradicate any inconsistencies; to recommend styles and rules which should be followed across the country; and to spread best practice;
- The Scottish Executive and sportscotland encourage the development of supporter-led initiatives to improve relations between away fans of the Old Firm and home fans around Scotland, by providing a small fund which supporters groups could apply to, to cover the expenses of such initiatives.

1.17 Discussing the Responsibilities of the Scottish Media in Regard to the Portrayal and Amplification of Sectarianism in Scottish Football

It is recommended that:

- The Scottish Executive and the Scottish Football Association hold meetings with editors and sports editors of the major media companies in Scotland to discuss:
 - the importance of the media reporting accurately and clearly on any future displays of sectarianism within Scottish football;
 - the dangers of adding a ‘sectarian gloss’ to stories where such an emphasis is unjustified by the facts of the event;
 - the dangers inherent in routine expression of sectarianism in humour, attributions of allegiance, and the like;
- The Scottish Executive commissions a consultation with the editors and main contributors to the major football fanzines in Scotland, so as to establish their views on the routine expression of sectarian sentiments, epithets and humour in these significant sub-cultural outlets.

2. The Background to the Consultation

2.1 As part of its action plan on tackling sectarianism in Scottish society, The Scottish Executive decided to carry out a consultation with the office holders in football supporter groups across Scotland, to establish their views on any issues of sectarianism in Scottish football.

2.2 The objectives were to discover:

- whether these supporters think there is a major problem of sectarianism in Scottish football;
- what practical problems they believe any sectarianism causes for the average supporter;
- what practical suggestions they could offer to limit or eradicate any sectarian structures, sectarian behaviours, and sectarian attitudes around football in Scotland.

It should be clearly understood that the objective was to establish supporters' views and attitudes. Therefore, what is reported below are not, necessarily, statements of fact, but are statements of the deeply held perceptions of experienced supporters across Scotland about the issue of sectarianism, and how it reveals itself in Scottish football.

2.3 Such a study is of significance to the overall initiative against sectarianism because football plays a very important role in the display and perception of sectarianism in Scotland, and in its representation in the media. Bruce et al, in their book 'Sectarianism in Scotland' (2004:115) summarise an NOP poll conducted in 2003 as:

"in the Glasgow survey, most respondents who thought sectarianism a major problem had in mind football-related violence".

While the BBC Panorama programme of February 2005 on sectarianism and religious bigotry – 'Scotland's Secret Shame' - concentrated entirely on incidents around football. In this consultation, the pressure group Nil By Mouth argued:

"The image of sectarianism through football is very powerful in Scotland".

So investigating what experienced supporters think about sectarianism in the Scottish game has the potential to enable considerable advance on the wider issue.

2.4 In November 2005 the Scottish Executive appointed Bert Moorhouse, Director of the Research Unit in Football Studies, at the University of Glasgow, as the Independent Facilitator to carry out this consultation.

3. Methodology and Timescale

The consultation was designed to involve discussions with office holders in the most important supporters associations, federations, or their equivalents, for 17 of the biggest clubs in Scotland. The clubs whose supporters were invited to take part were:

Aberdeen FC
Airdrie United FC
Celtic FC
Dundee FC
Dundee United FC
Dunfermline Athletic FC
Falkirk FC
Heart of Midlothian FC
Hibernian FC
Inverness Caley Thistle FC
Kilmarnock FC
Livingston FC
Motherwell FC
Partick Thistle FC
Rangers FC
St.Johnstone FC
St. Mirren FC

- 3.2** Obviously, it could be argued that other clubs should have been included on some basis or another, but the sample of clubs chosen is an excellent one in terms of sporting importance and geographical spread. In addition, with home league crowds of 3,942,173, these 17 clubs represented over 90% of the total attendance at all Scottish Premier League and Scottish Football League clubs in season 2005-06. It seems highly unlikely that the addition of any other club or clubs would have fundamentally altered the findings detailed in this report.
- 3.3** Sometimes meetings involved more than one supporters group for a club. Sometimes more supporters were involved than just office holders. Sometimes stadium managers and other club officials with special responsibility for fans took part. But essentially what follows is based on a consultation with the officials of the major supporters' group for each of the clubs selected (see Annex 1). This is not a sample of football fans, it covers a quite particular population of supporters. These are the women and men who organise the buses, handle complaints, liaise with clubs and police over incidents and problems, and struggle to raise funds for voluntary activities around their club. These are the women and men who create, administer, and develop the structures which enable football fans around Scotland to follow their team. While it could be argued that it would have been better to approach one or other different group of fans for their views on sectarianism, what

follows is based on discussions with some of the most experienced, most travelled, and most dedicated football fans in this country. Their views deserve to be heard in the debate about sectarianism in Scottish football.

- 3.4** Meetings with fans generally lasted up to two hours, sometimes much longer. The Facilitator then drew up a minute of each meeting that was agreed by those who had attended before being passed to the Sports Unit of the Scottish Executive. The research strategy was to hold a conversation with supporters rather than going through a set list of standard questions. There was a list of broad topics that the Facilitator wanted to cover, but the ebb and flow of discussion usually served to encompass these anyway. The meetings, which usually took place at the stadium of their club or at their group's social club or, very occasionally, in the Facilitator's office, were lively and informative, and most fans who gave up their time to discuss this issue seemed to find it interesting. It certainly was very useful for the Facilitator and for The Scottish Executive. We are extremely grateful to all those football supporters who gave up some of their valuable time, at evenings and at weekends, to establish their views about sectarianism. In addition, the Facilitator met with various pressure groups and organisations formed around the issue of sectarianism – Nil By Mouth, Sense Over Sectarianism - and with some senior officials of Celtic, Rangers and Airdrie United.
- 3.5** The consultation was carried out between April and July 2006. Quite by chance, this period spanned a time in which UEFA intervened in the issue, concerned about chants and songs that occurred at some European matches Rangers were involved in. This did have an effect on some of the views expressed.

4. General Views of Supporters on Sectarianism in Scottish Football

- 4.1 While the supporters of a few clubs argue that the situation is better than it used to be, sectarianism is seen as a problem – usually a major problem – in Scottish football. A few other clubs were mentioned – mainly Hearts and Airdrie – but the supporters of fifteen of the seventeen clubs see the problem of sectarianism as located predominantly, usually exclusively, with the fans of the Old Firm. Most supporters of non-Old Firm clubs note how they are routinely called ‘Orange bastards’ by fans of one of the Glasgow teams, ‘Fenian bastards’ by the other. Many argue that a lot of the ‘supporters’ of Rangers and Celtic do not really attend matches for the football, but are ‘glory hunters’ or there for the sectarianism. Most supporters agree with the view of the Partick Thistle supporters that the Old Firm:

“were built on sectarianism, now they celebrate it”.

Indeed, some supporters, especially those outside the central belt, were indignant that sectarianism has come to be labelled as ‘Scotland’s shame’ or ‘Scotland’s problem’. Aberdeen supporters, for example, argue:

*“The UEFA report says ‘people in Scotland accept it’. Well we **don’t** accept it! Its not ‘a Scottish problem’ but a parochial problem”.*

- 4.2 Supporters from non-Old Firm clubs deny that sectarianism plays any significant role in their relations with any other club. Either sectarianism is simply not an issue, or where, as in Edinburgh, it may once have been significant, it is in sharp decline. A generally expressed view was that, while the rest of Scotland has “moved on”, the Glasgow region is still locked into an outmoded, strange, and unpleasant, ‘tradition’.
- 4.3 The supporters of Celtic agree that sectarianism is a major problem but see it as much more widespread than most other supporters. They are keen to stress the historical context in which Celtic came to be formed as a club, and the history of discrimination against Irish Catholics in the past and, possibly, into the present. They believe this history continues to affect Celtic’s relations with many other clubs. Thus they feel that Celtic supporters have a particular rapport with those of Aberdeen, and their relations are untouched by religion. Their relationship with the fans of Hibernian is okay. But with the rest of the long established clubs in Scotland (ie. excluding clubs formed in recent years) there is a religious based rivalry stemming from the past, while, in addition, the supporters of many other clubs are apt to sing songs allied to those of Rangers, eg Airdrie and Falkirk. So Celtic supporters believe they are the recipients of the sectarian sentiments and sectarian actions of fans from most of the other major clubs in Scotland.

4.4 The supporters of Rangers are the only group which feel that sectarianism **is not** a major problem in contemporary Scottish football. They argue that the situation:

- has been getting steadily better over the last few years;
- is, in any case, nowhere near as bad as it is painted.

In recent years, they have been welcomed at Derby, Ipswich, Newcastle, Fulham, etc for friendly matches with no trouble at all, as well as all round Europe, receiving praise from both the police and local media. So they wonder why, as they see it, they are always made the scapegoat in Scotland? They say that, at the 2005 Summit on Sectarianism, the Head of Safety and Facilities at Rangers argued that, in five years as the match commander, and eight years working for Rangers, he had never seen a major incident at Ibrox, so, they enquire, what is the pressing contemporary problem supposed to be? They are puzzled about why an initiative has been launched now. The Rangers supporters explain the UEFA intervention as either to do with the influence of Mr. McConnell or because UEFA's advisory group on racism contains an ex-Celtic player, who could have alerted UEFA to the content of some of Rangers traditional songs. They believe there are much more crucial questions to be asked about the current state of Scottish football. These are of a different order from sectarianism. In any case, they argue that much of what gets labelled as 'sectarianism' is really to do with football fans 'winding up' the opposition. Their overall assessment is:

"There are certain songs and certain chants that have no place in football, but it is not a major problem".

4.5 While some supporters think that the two halves of the Old Firm are "*just as bad as each other*", most see Rangers fans as currently the worst for displays of sectarianism. A good majority see Celtic as having 'cleaned up their act' in recent years, though sometimes this is put down to a clever PR campaign or a more skilful re-presentation of old activities, while most see Rangers as being quite unregenerate.

4.6 The fans of the other clubs doubt that either of the Old Firm clubs is really sincere about their current anti-sectarian policies and programmes. They put such initiatives as they perceive as having occurred as down to a reluctant compliance with the requirements of contemporary 'political correctness', or as club managements having moved while the bulk of the fans have not. The supporters of Dundee, for example, said:

"Its easy for clubs to say they are doing something but when you get down to the grass roots nothing is happening".

While those of Hearts argued about such programmes:

“we’d like to see an assessment, because they don’t seem to have achieved too much so far”.

And, according to the supporters of Motherwell:

“They are trying but not trying hard enough. They’ve not even convinced their own supporters they’re serious yet, let alone other supporters. They need to take a much harder line”.

Quite a few supporters argued that Rangers and, to some extent, Celtic have yet to admit that they really do have a problem, and that the situation will not begin to improve until they do. So the fans of St. Mirren argued, specifically about Rangers:

“If Rangers supporters are doing things which are simply not acceptable, then the culprits need to know that they will harm the club, but we are not yet at the stage where the bigots have been marginalised. Celtic are proud of winning prizes for having good fans, at Rangers its more ‘no one likes us we don’t care’. Rangers have not lost the sense of being part of the dominant group in Scottish society, there’s not the same edge at any other club”.

In broad agreement with most of the fans of other clubs, the supporters of Livingston regard the present efforts of the Old Firm to reduce sectarianism as “a waste of time”, “just for show”, “patter for the papers”, “PR just to say they are trying to change”, “to show UEFA that something is being done”.

4.7 This skepticism about Celtic and Rangers current anti-sectarianism programmes is, of course, only an opinion, though a very widespread one, but its an opinion that national and club policy makers need to take into account, because, on this evidence, few supporters of the other major clubs in Scotland have been convinced that there is any fundamental change of heart. They still have to be won over. Everyone appreciates that tokenism is certainly not enough, but neither is a semi-detached attitude to the issue of sectarianism. All football organisations need not only to declare they are against sectarianism but to demonstrate plainly, convincingly, consistently, constantly, and transparently that they are. Only in this way will other fans and, probably, most of the population of Scotland, be convinced that there is some real weight behind current broad expressions of good intentions.

4.8 Usually, the Old Firm are seen as wedded to sectarianism because of the money they are believed to have made, and still do make, out of it. Hearts fans argued:

“Bigotry is the biggest merchandising tool Rangers and Celtic have”.

Partick Thistle supporters believed that Rangers and Celtic accept that bigotry is good business:

“If they really wanted to stop it they would not let their teams walk out to tunes whose words can easily be adapted to sectarian ends. They would not run their stadia and their pre-match ‘entertainment’ so as to play to sectarian sentiments. Even their supposed attempts to be anti-sectarian are couched in sectarian terms”.

Or as the Aberdeen supporters put it:

“They pay lip service to the problem but ruthlessly exploit it commercially”.

- 4.9** The beliefs that sectarianism is a major problem in Scottish football and that the Old Firm are still mired in it, does not mean that games between the Old Firm are currently the worst in terms of ill-feeling or violence. The representatives of Celtic supporters (as do their management) highlight their matches at Tynecastle now, arguing that Hearts fans are the worst in Scotland, while Rangers supporters claim their matches with Aberdeen *“are actually the most volatile now”*.
- 4.10.** Partly because many fans believe there is an economic edge to continuing sectarianism, partly because there is doubt about the real intentions of the Old Firm, most supporters adopt a general pessimism or cynicism that anything effective will be done to moderate or eliminate the display of sectarian sentiments in Scottish football. Fans see the Scottish Football Association as too weak to take on the Old Firm. The Scottish Executive is basically seen as ‘jumping on the bandwagon’ for some easy, good press at football’s expense. Several groups of supporters argue that, up to now, there has been no real penalty that might serve to check sectarian songs, symbols or chants. Their experience, both as away fans and home fans, suggests that Old Firm fans *“get away with it”* on a regular basis. For these reasons, most supporters believed that only an outside agency – like UEFA, occasionally Sky TV – would have the necessary drive and clout to press forward policies that would have a significant effect on sectarianism in Scottish football. Obviously such widespread cynicism poses problems for the whole anti-sectarian initiative, and reveals that current efforts have not been that well received by football supporters in most parts of Scotland.
- 4.11.** Supporters tend to locate dealing effectively with sectarianism in Scottish football as having both a short term and a long term component. Short term, apart from Rangers fans, the feeling is widespread that a short, sharp, shock is necessary to move things along. It was felt that something like the punishments apparently threatened by UEFA – closing stands, docking points, large fines, – are the only way to change the expressions of sectarianism at, particularly, Ibrox, and by the fans of both clubs on many away grounds. Long term, and without the slightest prompting, these supporters are more or less united in a belief that this is a problem of the West Coast segment of Scottish society rather than Scottish football, that football is the vehicle of expression for sentiments already pre-formed rather than being the causal agent, and that those who really want change need to be prepared to deal with these deeper causes. Here, with the exception of the Celtic supporters,

there is a general reference to Scotland's divided school system as being the crucial contemporary site for the creation of sectarian division and rivalry.

5. Six Major Policy Issues and Problems

5.1 Six major issues arise out of the analysis of the consultation with these experienced football supporters from all over Scotland, which are particularly relevant, and particularly problematic, for policy making designed to limit or eradicate problems of sectarianism within Scottish football. These are:

- what precisely is the ‘sectarianism’ we want to eliminate from Scottish football?
- can the Old Firm become more clearly united in the anti-sectarian initiative?
- does the content of pre-match/half time ‘entertainment’ at Rangers and Celtic add to the problem?
- do the ways visiting supporters are positioned, policed, and stewarded in the Glasgow grounds add to the problem?
- can ticket allocation procedures for the away games of the Old Firm be altered so as to enable a more effective sanctioning of their supporters who misbehave in ways linked to sectarianism?
- what are the responsibilities of the Scottish media in regard to the portrayal and amplification of the sectarian problem in Scottish football?

This chapter sets out the complex of problems lying within each of these issues. The next chapter contains recommendations for policy initiatives which could help to begin to resolve these problems.

What Precisely is the ‘Sectarianism’ we want to Eliminate from Scottish Football?

5.2 Designating sectarianism as a problem in Scottish football entails being quite clear about what is meant by ‘sectarianism’, and outlining precisely what changes it is intended to bring about. It is easy to assume that most people agree what the ‘sectarianism’ is that should be eliminated from Scottish football. During the consultation (see Annex 2 paras 1-2) it became clear that a major problem here is that a lot, perhaps most, of what commentators, ordinary people, many football fans, the media, regard as ‘sectarian’ symbols, displays, songs, behaviour, are not sectarian in any objective sense. The Union Jack is not sectarian. The Tricolour is not sectarian. Some supporters argue that ‘The Sash’ is not a sectarian song and has been proclaimed not to be so in the Scottish courts, while other supporters castigate Rangers fans and those of other clubs for singing it. In particular, political stances on the Irish question and/or the Union tend, in Scotland, to get labelled as ‘sectarianism’. So, there is something of an ambiguity, even a muddle, around what ‘sectarianism’ is precisely, and so there is a danger that expectations of eliminating ‘it’ from Scottish football will include everyone’s pet dislike.

5.3 The supporters who took part in the consultation had two basic responses to this issue:

- some fans want the Scottish Executive to provide clear definitions of what sectarianism is, with lists of precisely what chants, songs and symbols are now deemed to be unacceptable in football grounds;
- but when presented with the ambiguities in the use of ‘sectarianism’ outlined above, most supporters from other clubs responded that, actually, in relation to both Celtic and Rangers, everyone “*knows what they mean*” by their songs and symbols, and that, in the particular context of the West of Scotland, things which are not objectively sectarian could be so, because they carry a definite meaning in the particular, local, culture which makes them subjectively sectarian. This is not an argument that can just be dismissed. But, even if there is truth in it, people’s perceptions are not a sturdy basis for drawing up a set of rules/laws that can be applied easily by clubs or police. It is noticeable that the recent UEFA intervention concentrated on a song – ‘The Billy Boys’ - which almost all would agree contains sectarian sentiments. The BBC TV Panorama programme on ‘Scotland’s Secret Shame’ also dwelt on ‘The Billy Boys’, but exhibited the prevalent tendency to widen the boundaries of shameful ‘sectarianism’ in saying:

“But the provocation isn’t confined to religious abuse. Celtic fans have a striking line in political songs, a particular favourite is ‘the Boys of the Old Brigade’”.

and playing recordings of the singing of that song while the Chairman of Celtic was talking about the relative absence of religious bigotry and intolerance at Parkhead. The difficult truth is that, apart from ‘The Billy Boys’ most of the other symbols, chants, and songs traditional to both clubs, or recently incorporated by both clubs, which many, including many of the supporters in this consultation, regard as ‘sectarian’ are not sectarian in any objective sense, and so are difficult to ban on that basis.

Such ambiguities in definition are one of the key problems for pursuing effective policy initiatives, because many supporters’ expectations for change may outstrip what the law can, or even should, bring about. Of course, it is quite reasonable to argue that football stadiums are not appropriate places for stating political positions. But it’s quite another thing, in a free society, to attempt to ban the display of most political positions. This preliminary survey of the opinions of football supporters in Scotland affords policy makers the opportunity to explain precisely what the current anti-sectarianism initiative in the area of professional football is intended to achieve and what it is not.

- 5.4** An added difficulty is that the idea of ‘The Old Firm’ has an extremely powerful grip on the understanding and discussion of the issue of sectarianism in Scottish football. It is intellectually easier and politically more convenient to see both Celtic and Rangers as equally involved, equally to blame in the historical construction of

sectarianism and in its maintenance today, as *“both as bad as each other”*. Given the ambiguities in the definition of sectarianism just discussed, then the possibility should at least be allowed that, depending on just what it is that policy makers want to limit or eradicate, it may be more effective in policy terms to drop notions of needing to be even-handed and treating the two clubs as just the same, and, instead, to approach each club separately and, in conjunction with their senior management, establish what needs to be done differently in each particular case.

- 5.5** One other issue here is that, though the supporters of a big majority of clubs locate sectarianism as a problem of the Old Firm, sectarianism has become the basic vernacular, the vocabulary, the patois, for **all** Scottish football. Most supporters distinguish sectarianism, which they believe to be objectionable, from ‘winding-up’ or ‘noising-up’ opposing fans, which they see as an inherent part of football support and football rivalry. The trouble is that these two have become closely intertwined in Scottish football. So, to take an example, ‘The Billy Boys’, becomes ‘The Killy Boys’, ‘The Caley Boys’, ‘The Airdrie Boys’, ‘The Livvy Boys’, and so on and so on. Similarly, football supporters of other clubs borrow the chants, songs and symbols of one of the Old Firm to ‘wind-up’ the support of the other half, or to spice up their confrontations with other clubs. In short, while there is a tendency to divide ‘hard’ from ‘soft’ sectarianism around Scottish football, there is also a great deal of second hand sectarianism in Scotland. There is a widespread borrowing of the dominant argot, where, as many supporters put it, smaller clubs *“bounce off the Old Firm”* and conduct their rivalries in what can easily be perceived to be sectarian epithets, even though the participants believe they are only being cheeky and playful. So, an additional policy issue here is whether anything can be done to check the kind of sectarian borrowing which is widespread throughout Scottish football. Fans deny this borrowing is sectarian in any ‘real’ sense, but it does lead to misunderstandings between supporters and it does lend support to the notion that sectarianism is rife throughout the whole of Scottish football. Meanwhile, the Rangers supporters can argue:

“Rangers supporters are supposed to sing about ‘being up to our knees in Fenian blood’. Well, Dundee sing about Arab blood, Kilmarnock about Ayr blood. So why aren’t they castigated?”

The issue for policy here is that such second hand sectarianism is a problem for many clubs, not simply for the Old Firm. Can what has become the basic vocabulary for structuring routine fan rivalry in Scottish football be easily changed?

- 5.6** One last policy problem is relevant here, which is how can non-bigoted supporters, who, most people agree, are in the majority, be empowered so as to take more of an active role in combating sectarianism? Where attempts have been made in other countries to eradicate inappropriate behaviour from football grounds, encouragement and financial assistance have been given to fan groups to take their own, positive, initiatives, and this kind of strategy might be useful in Scotland. It

would be sensible to make more effort to try to enlist ‘ordinary fans’ in an active role against sectarian displays in Scottish football.

Can the Old Firm Become More Clearly United in the Anti-Sectarian Initiative?

- 5.7** As already noted, most of the supporters of other clubs are quite unimpressed by the efforts Rangers and Celtic are currently making in their anti-sectarian programmes (see Annex 2 paras 3-5). Usually they are seen to be paying ‘lip service’ to what now has to be said, rather than being wholeheartedly committed to real change. Partly this is because most supporters do not see that much alteration in what goes on in the Glasgow grounds when they visit them, as will be discussed below. However, it is also because the Old Firm are seen to be mainly acting separately in these programmes. If the key objective is to show that sectarianism should not be a divisive force, why is there not more joint action? With more joint publicity and more joint programmes? The general feeling is that, often, the supposed message is belied in the ways it is currently being implemented. Of course, any such joint initiatives need to be thought through and well planned. The Two Flags against Sectarianism initiative that took place at an Old Firm match in April 2006 may have proved to be counter-productive rather than helpful. There always is the possibility of unintended consequences from worthy initiatives. But, at the moment, Celtic and Rangers are perceived to be rather divided in their anti-sectarian efforts.
- 5.8** What quite a lot of supporters want to see is a far more public, visible, and united presentation of the Old Firm’s commitment to anti-sectarianism, with, say, the messages at Ibrox, which currently point inwards at the home crowd, being placed on the perimeter advertising boards, so that, via TV, the whole country repeatedly gets the message that Rangers are, indeed, ‘Bigger than Bigotry’ and are pursuing ‘Pride over Prejudice’. They want more joint activities, like coaching, or via the involvement of players, high profile supporters and club managements in an anti-sectarian advertising campaign, similar to what has been done in some anti-racism material. Such united initiatives, displaying a warmer, closer, working relationship, are seen as much more likely to convince people that real change is actually underway, than distinct, separate, action by each club.
- 5.9** One further problem here is that the officials of the main supporters groups of Rangers and Celtic simply do not meet regularly in any forum. There are reasons for this and some attempts to end this separation have already been made, but, again, the Old Firm can easily be seen to condone the sharp division it apparently wants to end. The anti-sectarian initiative needs to get the officials of the supporters clubs of Scotland’s two biggest clubs into a room on a regular basis to discuss matters of mutual interest to football fans in the twenty first century, and to explore each other’s position around any issues of sectarianism in Scottish football.

Does the Pre-match/Half Time Entertainment at Ibrox and Parkhead Add to the Problem?

5.10 In paragraphs 5.2 – 5.4 above it was argued that much of what the supporters of most clubs in Scotland consider to be sectarian is not so in any objective sense. But it will also be argued below that the general atmosphere at both grounds, but especially Ibrox, is conducive to making many supporters across Scotland believe that sectarianism is all around them (see Annex 2 paras 6-12). The words most often used about going to the Glasgow grounds is that the trip is “*intimidating*”, “*frightening*” and “*daunting*”. As the Motherwell supporters said:

“There is an ‘atmosphere’ at both grounds which is not all to do with sectarianism, but that’s a big part of it. There’s a tension, a whole hostile atmosphere.”

5.11 The supporters of a majority of other clubs believe that what makes the atmosphere odd at both Glasgow grounds is:

- the two clubs do not present themselves as being Scottish institutions;
- their pre-match build-up and ‘entertainment’ tends to be rather ‘old fashioned’ and geared around displays which emphasise ethnic attachment and differentiation;
- Rangers in particular exudes a triumphalist tone which can easily spill over into a casual denigration of any other supporters.

5.12 One of the things the fans of other clubs find disturbing is that, and arguably increasingly, Celtic’s entertainment seems to centre on Ireland and Rangers’ on England. What seems to be missing, to these supporters, is much sign that they are, in fact, major Scottish organizations. When it was put it to them that the Old Firm claim to be honouring their roots and their heritage they were none too impressed. They respond that it seems unnecessary to go all the way back to when clubs were formed and celebrate only that part of ‘heritage’; that the various displays have more to do with the political situation in Northern Ireland than any ‘heritage’; and that both clubs now seem to be making rather more of their non-Scottish links (as a marketing ploy) than they had in the recent past, so deployment of ‘heritage’ arguments appears somewhat opportunistic. Given the general suspicion about heritage arguments, it is not surprising that most non-Old Firm supporters tend to see a subtle sectarianism as the real focus of the pre-match and half time entertainment, especially at Ibrox. This type of entertainment, in turn, ‘winds up’ a lot of the away support who then respond in a similar way, often in sectarian forms. The result is that, while both clubs say they will not tolerate sectarianism, they can appear ready to facilitate it within their own grounds. This perceived inconsistency is one of the main reasons that most supporters remain unconvinced by the level of Rangers’ and Celtic’s commitment to eradicate or limit sectarianism.

5.13 Of course, the supporters of both the Old Firm clubs have robust responses to these kinds of widespread perceptions among other supporters. In particular, the representatives of the Rangers Assembly argue that the atmosphere at Ibrox has definitely improved in recent years. They insist that:

- fans certainly do get arrested now if they sing sectarian songs;
- display is much more neutered now, people just do not wear para-military T-shirts or head gear;
- the team contains more Catholics than Protestants – *“and who cares?”* They claim they are now on the end of chants at away grounds about having *“more Tims than Celtic”*.

They argue that, of course, there is still a problem, but its nothing like as significant as it was or as it is supposed to be. The real problem now is the *“add-ons”*. Slipping ‘F*** the Pope’ into traditional songs and the like. The truth is that the vast majority of Rangers fans simply have no interest in bigotry. The supporters of *“silly wee clubs”* moan about Ibrox but:

“they come to a big city, they are charged more here than they are used to, the football their team play is negative, and they get beat – so of course they don’t like coming!”

5.14. These are strong responses but, nonetheless, there does seem to be a need for the Old Firm clubs to assess the ways they have come to frame and set up matches in their stadiums. To consider whether they could add rather more of a Scottish element to their displays and promotion – which certainly does not entail abandoning their heritage – and to ensure that what they regard as proper and entertaining does not carry, however faintly, messages apparently facilitating sectarian attitudes. The basic point is that, at the moment, they are not convincing other supporters that they have fully embraced an anti-sectarianism perspective.

Do the Positioning of Away Fans and the Styles of Policing and Stewarding of Away Fans in the Glasgow Grounds Add to the Problem?

5.15. The fans of most of the other major clubs in Scotland, quite independently, conclude that being a visiting fan at Ibrox or Parkhead is, for many, a very unpleasant experience (see Annex 2 paras 13-23). Many dedicated fans had simply stopped travelling to the Glasgow grounds, because they felt they could not put up with it any longer. At the time of the consultation, some supporters groups were in correspondence with one or other of the Old Firm or with the Strathclyde Police about their treatment on recent visits to the city. Indeed, the fans of most of the other major clubs in Scotland are convinced that the Old Firm do not really want away supporters in their stadiums and so make the experience as bad as it can be to try to discourage their attendance. There are four main factors that seem to provoke this widespread reaction:

- the atmosphere at the two grounds;
- the position which away fans are allocated in the two grounds;
- the attitude of the police and the stewards at the two grounds;
- the procedures police and stewards apply to visitors which seem to have no clear safety or anti-hooligan purpose.

The first of these has been discussed in the previous section. The final three will now be outlined. It could be argued that some of this has ‘nothing to do with’ issues of sectarianism in Scottish football. But, as will be argued below, issues do arise here which are directly relevant to perceptions of sectarianism in Scottish football.

- 5.16** At both grounds, the positioning of fans of the visiting team seems to have the perverse effect of putting visiting fans nearest to what are seen as the more volatile, lower class, younger, sections of the home support. Thus, in the words of the Dundee United supporters:

“they tend to bring together what they are apparently trying to separate”.

That is, because of the need to have a ‘Rangers end’ and a ‘Celtic end’ at the Glasgow grounds, away fans tend not to be placed near to long-term season ticket holders at Ibrox or Parkhead, but close to groups who only get tickets for particular matches and who are believed to be less responsible, less staid, and have less to lose (ie the right to a season ticket). Moreover, at Parkhead away fans are put in an area with a restricted view. When visitors stand up to follow the game, their view often, according to these supporters, made worse by police and stewards positioned in the sight-lines to goalmouths, they are routinely told to sit down or they will be ejected from the ground. Most fans agree that the, relatively new, place they are positioned in at Ibrox is much better than the old – in which they were routinely bombarded and spat on by Rangers fans sited above them, but it still suffers from the main disadvantage detailed above. The representatives of Celtic supporters agreed that away fans at Parkhead are placed near to the noisier, younger, non-season ticket holding, home fans. It seems worth considering whether this kind of positioning is a factor in facilitating sectarian displays and in creating an impression of widespread sectarianism.

- 5.17** The Strathclyde Police have a very poor reputation with the supporters of non-Glasgow clubs. They are seen as over-zealous, as unfriendly, as uncommunicative, as ignoring what the home fans do while lifting away supporters for doing exactly the same or even less. The supporters of other clubs frequently claim that police in Glasgow are quite likely to use sectarian language themselves if away supporters protest about activities of the home fans, and that they ignore reasoned complaints, including those about the sectarian chants, songs and displays of the home fans. The stewards employed by the Glasgow clubs are seen as suffering from many of the same faults, and, moreover, it is quite unclear whether their precise allegiance is to enforcing the supposed rules or to the home club. As clubs have moved more to

employment of stewards rather than relying on (and paying for) a police presence, then it becomes necessary to discuss their role, what briefings they are given and how their understandings of 'the rules' act out in practice. Nowadays it is conventional to refer to the 'professional stewarding' at football grounds, but how truly professional this actually is requires some investigation.

- 5.18** One of the main complaints of the non-Old Firm supporters is that they are treated as 'the problem' at the Glasgow grounds, even when the home fans seem to be openly breaking the law or the rules laid down. Many supporters believed that football grounds offer an open sanctuary to bigots and that the authorities simply do not enforce laws against sectarianism in them. In the words of the Partick supporters:

"It must be the only crime where you know a crime is being committed, you can hear a crime being committed, you can see who is doing the crime, but nothing is done about it."

Many supporters tend to see an inconsistent and half-hearted application of the law by police and stewards in the Glasgow grounds, with the law appearing to be applied in favour of sectarian fans, sectarian songs and sectarian actions. To them, this practical experience undercuts the anti-sectarian messages emanating from the top of various organisations. It should be noted that some recent media stories also suggest there are discrepancies in the styles of policing between Parkhead and Ibrox, and point to quite large variations in the number of arrests relating to offences aggravated by religious prejudice at the two grounds (eg. "Who's Getting Cuffed Today?", Sunday Herald, Sport Section, 24th April 2005). And, in addition to this evidence, some supporters are suspicious of the ways the new anti-sectarianism legislation is being applied because they believe it is being used proportionately more against away fans than the home fans of the Glasgow clubs. Some groups are in correspondence with one or other of the Old Firm or with the Strathclyde Police about their recent experiences.

- 5.19** It should worry all those in charge of Scottish football when supporters right across the country believe that the police and stewards ignore the sectarian actions and attitudes of the home fans in Glasgow in favour of heavily policing the small number of away supporters. The point has been made about the slippery nature of the designation of some actions and symbols as 'truly sectarian', as discussed in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.4 above, but the broad anti-sectarianism message does seem to be being undermined by the routine practices of policing and stewarding in the Glasgow grounds. Obviously, the police have practical problems, as will be discussed more in paragraph 5.29 below, but it is arguable that current forms of control are adding to a sense amongst Scottish supporters that the touted laws and rules are not really being applied at all evenly, and that there tends to be one rule for them and another for fans of the Old Firm.

- 5.20** An additional issue concerning policing in the Glasgow grounds was raised by Mr. Murray, the Chief Executive of Rangers, as part of his response to the Panorama programme of February 2005 on sectarianism in Scottish football. He stressed problems in identifying precise statistics on ‘sectarian arrests’ saying:

“Panorama also focused heavily on the number of bans imposed by the club for sectarian behaviour and relentlessly quizzed me on the subject despite being told before filming that we have great difficulty in learning if fans who fall foul of the law have done so specifically for sectarian reasons. Yes, we can discern if our supporters have been arrested and charged and, indeed, convicted but we don’t always learn for sure if these fans were guilty of sectarianism. Our own Head of Safety Laurence Macintyre, being the former Match Commander at Ibrox, has a good relationship with Strathclyde Police and has a protocol in place to try to discern as much information as he can. However, Rangers is not a law enforcement agency and due to Data Protection implications the police are limited to the information they are allowed to release”. (press release accessed on 17th January 2006 on <http://www.royalhouseofstewart.org.uk/dmrhc.htm>)

While Cardinal Keith O’Brien wrote to the Crown Office on September 26th 2006 asking for more information on ‘offences aggravated by religious prejudice’ for the years 2004 and 2005, and suggested:

“Without an ongoing commitment on the part of the prosecuting authorities to publish a detailed analysis of such offences we will have no way of quantifying the problem we face or determining whether or not it responds to initiatives aimed at eradicating it or the extent to which anti-sectarian initiatives are working. If 85% of sectarian attacks in 2004 were not related to football, it seems pointless to channel all our energies into an exclusive focus on football clubs.” (press release accessed on http://www.scmo.org/_titles/view.asp?id=484)

Without agreeing with all the conclusions the Cardinal draws, this does seem another area where what is ‘sectarianism’ and ‘sectarian behaviour’, is currently being left vague and unclear. If sectarianism is, indeed, Scotland’s shame, and if the aim of policy is to monitor and decrease its manifestations in Scottish football, then more precision is required in the categorization of arrests and in the production of relevant statistics, as much as anywhere else.

- 5.21** Certainly, on the basis of this consultation, there seems to be a need to evaluate, in conjunction with the police forces and the stewarding companies involved, just how they handle away football fans, why they approach the task in the ways they do, and whether the training the police and stewards receive in dealing with football fans – who are also citizens – is entirely appropriate. In Glasgow the basic approach appears to be that all away fans are potential hooligans and so should be treated as a threat, and be subject to tight control, but there is a need to consider whether this really the correct approach to take with a few hundred fans, often including many women and children, from a large number of the non-Glasgow clubs.

5.22 The away fan experience is made worse because the police and/or stewards often enforce procedures on them that have no obvious safety or anti-hooligan purposes. For example, in the Glasgow grounds, away fans are usually held back in grounds at the end of matches, a measure presumably intended to separate them from the home support but, as many away supporters wryly noted, in fact it merely serves to give the home fans time to regroup to ‘ambush’ visiting supporters outside the ground. Now, there may well be good reasons for some of the specific controls exerted on away supporters, but these reasons do not currently appear to be clearly communicated to those supporters, and, if their experience is that they make them even more vulnerable in what is, anyway, a hostile environment, then they are likely to be experienced as annoying, petty and irksome. There is a need to include this point, about the extra marshalling of away fans and the way it is explained to them, in some wider consideration of the ways in which away fans are treated in the Glasgow grounds.

5.23. It could be objected that some of what has been outlined in this section has little to do with sectarianism, though some plainly does, and so is outside the scope of this consultation. However, that would be somewhat short sighted. What needs to be appreciated, as will be discussed more in the next section, is that the unpleasant experience, the inconsistent treatment, the lack of respect shown to them as both customers and citizens, all adds to the widespread sense of the Glasgow grounds as alien places, it fosters resentment and suspicion, and links into an atmosphere in which sectarianism is readily seen as an integral feature of both Ibrox and Parkhead. Moreover, to the extent that, as many of these supporters believe, people in football grounds are allowed to do and say things they cannot say in public elsewhere, then those deeply involved in sectarianism are more likely to be drawn to stadiums as places where they can readily express their views. So, to the extent that sectarian display is tolerated in football grounds, then the audience for football is quite likely to become more, rather than less, inclined to sectarianism. Inconsistencies in the ways football fans are policed and stewarded may, then, become part of the problem, rather than part of the solution to sectarianism in football.

Can Ticket Allocation Procedures for the Away Games of the Old Firm be Modified so as to Enable a More Effective Sanctioning of Supporters who Mis-behave?

5.24 Officials from both parts of the Old Firm tend to locate the main issue of contemporary sectarianism in Scottish football as lying in their away support. Both argue that they have eradicated, or are on the way to eradicating, sectarian symbols and behaviour at Parkhead and Ibrox, but both admit that their away supporters can still step out of line. They tend to see this as a problem of ‘inconsistent policing’ in other areas of Scotland. So Mr.Lawwell, Chief Executive of Celtic, commenting recently on the singing of IRA songs at Tynecastle, argued the point that these were political rather than ‘sectarian’, but nonetheless admitted it was embarrassing for the club, and went on:

“One of the reasons the away support is still an issue is that it is not within our jurisdiction. You need the local police forces and the local stewarding to identify and then police or eject supporters, or identify to us those that are creating the problem”. (Scotland On Sunday 7. May, 2006)

But the problem is also that the Old Firm clubs have less control over the allocation of away tickets than they do over tickets to their own stadiums, and so are less able to sanction supporters who do mis-behave in ways linked to sectarianism.

5.25 The last section revealed that the perception of other supporters from around Scotland does not really chime in with this managerial view. Away supporters see both the Glasgow grounds, Ibrox more than Parkhead, as repositories of sectarianism, and associated bad behaviour. And they also see inconsistent policing and stewarding in them, so there is a definite conflict of perceptions here. But non-Old Firm fans do tend to agree that the away support of Celtic and Rangers form a major part of the problem of sectarianism in contemporary Scottish football (see Annex 2 paras 24-32). There are two main reasons for this view:

- the travelling support of the Old Firm are allowed to do things that non-Old Firm fans cannot do in the Glasgow grounds or even in their home stadiums; so the inconsistent application of supposed laws and rules is even more evident;
- the away support of Celtic and Rangers are thought to be more vociferous than their home support, the ‘hardcore’, and some supporters believed this is a result of the processes of ticket allocation operated by the Old Firm clubs.

5.26 A few groups of supporters were relatively sanguine about visits from the Old Firm. Some drew a distinction between the two clubs. Generally, however, the away support of both Rangers and Celtic are regarded as a real problem. As one group of supporters typically put it:

“When Rangers and Celtic come to Dunfermline they get away with murder”.

At many grounds the police do not eject Old Firm fans who transgress various rules and laws, because it is simply easier to police them inside the stadium than outside. This may well be regarded as sensible, pragmatic, policing but to the home fans it clearly reveals *“its one rule for them, another for us”*. So, for example, at many grounds, the away Old Firm fans enter stands which are explicitly for home fans but match commanders think it best to leave the fans in ‘wrong’ areas rather than ejecting them. The result is that rules are clearly seen to be broken. Many think the Old Firm travelling fans are treated leniently, basically because of the sheer numbers involved, and that, away from home, they often do as they want. At most grounds, stewards do not go into Old Firm support because of their numbers, and the costs of policing mean that there are not enough police to deal with the several thousands of fans the Old Firm bring with them. When home supporters complain

to the police about, for example, the slogans carried on banners/flags etc they are usually told to “*mind your own business*” or “*we have it under control*”.

- 5.27** Some fans have a more sophisticated explanation about why the Old Firm away support might be more vociferous and unpleasant than their home support. They believe the system of allocating tickets to away matches by the Old Firm might exacerbate the problem. They suggest that these tickets, especially when games are played on a Sunday, tend to fall into the hands of lower class/younger Old Firm supporters who cannot afford season tickets at the Glasgow grounds. They have less to lose in terms of club sanctions and are, culturally, less well-mannered than the typical Old Firm home support. Thus, once again, supporters of other teams tend to come into closer contact with part of the Old Firm support that is more likely to act in sectarian ways and that seems to have little to lose by bad behaviour. Their numbers tend to swamp the control resources available to smaller clubs and either there is no available sanction that can be applied on them by the club they support, or there is no clear evidence that any such sanction is often applied.
- 5.28** The supporters groups of the Old Firm tend to agree that there is a problem in their away support, though often denying this was sectarian, and also arguing that they were usually ‘wound up’ by the activities of the home support. To simplify, the Old Firm tend to subcontract the issuing of away tickets to their supporters groups, tickets are allocated on a rota basis to supporters clubs on an away registration list. The problem is that tickets can be allocated to one person but used by another, and that the away fans often do not sit in the actual seat their ticket is valid for. So it is hard, even with CCTV cameras to identify the precise individuals who cause trouble. They believe it should be possible to trace tickets back to the supporters club or to the person they were issued to, and, in principle, sanctions could be applied against those who ordered the tickets if necessary.
- 5.29** Two main policy implications arise from the evidence in this section. Firstly, it raises again the necessity of reviewing the policing styles around football and any sectarianism. It may well be practical policing to adopt a ‘soft’ approach with the Old Firm travelling support, and dealing with several thousand, often inebriated, men is undoubtedly a very difficult proposition. But it has to be realised that one cost of this is to instill a deep sense of unfairness into the fans of the home clubs, who cannot do what the Old Firm fans do either at home matches or at their away matches. Policing policies have to be efficient, certainly, but they should also be transparent and comprehensible. There are inconsistencies in application here, quite obvious to the ordinary fans of other teams, and such an approach to policing the Old Firm’s away support engenders a cynicism about the real priority the police give to acting on anti-sectarian legislation. Secondly, Rangers and Celtic need to consider whether their present procedures for the allocation of away tickets are really appropriate for limiting bad behaviour, including sectarian displays, on away grounds. If it is impossible to link a particular individual to a particular seat are the Old Firm ready to alter current arrangements, so that some kind of cost exists, and is seen to exist, for bad behaviour? Are they prepared to reward good behaviour?

What are the Responsibilities of the Scottish Media in Regard to the Portrayal and Amplification of Sectarianism in Scottish Football?

5.30 Without any prompting many supporters are critical of the role of the media in portraying and amplifying sectarianism in Scottish football (see Annex 2 paras 33-35). These criticisms tend to vary. While Old Firm supporters are inclined to believe that the media is all too ready to attribute bad behaviour to Old Firm players and fans, supporters from the rest of Scotland argued that ‘the West Coast media’:

- is in thrall to the Old Firm and will not criticize and report honestly on the bigotry of their supporters;
- tends to read other rivalries and conflicts through a sectarian lens, so that what is largely a parochial West Coast issue gets portrayed as an all-Scotland problem, an error which has the function of diminishing the specific responsibilities of the Old Firm.

5.31 Some supporters mentioned the effects of TV comedy sketches that had given them a sectarian label which was then picked up by other fans. Others described how outbursts by players about supposed sectarian affiliations had ruined their previously good relationships with the supporters of other clubs. They feel that players have to be made much more aware of the effects of such comments, which can have significant effects far from the pitch, and that people working in the media have to become more responsible and aware of the dangers of gratuitous ethnic labelling.

5.32 It is always comforting for the media when views appear to be divided about their role, because it seems to suggest that they are going ‘straight down the middle’, pleasing no one, and therefore doing something right. The truth is rather more complicated. Few supporters (in fact no supporters!) praised the Scottish media for their role in limiting sectarianism around Scottish football and some gave examples of where harm has been done. It was argued earlier that sectarianism has become the vernacular for all Scottish football and this affects journalists as much as anyone else. Bruce et al, in their book “Sectarianism in Scotland” (2004, 133-149) offer some criticisms of the way the media can add a ‘sectarian’ gloss to stories which, in fact, have little to do with actual sectarianism and add:

“Sectarianism is a convenient frame in which to dramatise stories and through which to present aspects of Scotland”.

If sectarianism in Scottish football is to be limited then maybe there is a requirement for the senior staff, journalists and personalities in the Scottish media to consider whether they want to go on producing routine stories about ‘sectarian division’ and, rather, reflect on their own role in the replication of commonsense understandings about the issue. It would be helpful to limit the expression of sectarian sentiments and in easing sectarian conflict if journalists and entertainers

could start to rethink their own everyday positions, stories, angles, and jokes concerning sectarianism and Scottish football.

5.33 But this is not simply an issue for the mass media. Football now has its own specific sub-cultural media consisting of, usually, irreverent, fanzines and football web-sites. Some of these can be prime carriers of sectarian sentiment, especially in the forms of jokes, humour, and the regular denigration of other clubs and supporters. While their sales and viewing figures are generally very small in relation to that of the mass media, nonetheless the role of this type of outlet requires more investigation because:

- arguably, they have a big influence on how a lot of supporters view the issue of sectarianism in Scottish football;
- the mass media sometimes takes them as representing ‘the voice’ of the average fan;
- clubs are often held to account for their content, though they have virtually no control over this.

So, discussing the issue of sectarianism with the main contributors and editors of major fanzines might yield extra information useful to the future progress of anti-sectarian initiatives.

6. Recommendations for Action

- 6.1.** The previous chapter outlined the problems lying around six issues for policy making which arose out of the consultation with football supporters. This chapter sets out a series of recommendations for policy action, designed to begin to deal, in a limited but practical way, with these problems.

Defining ‘Sectarianism’ and the Limits of the Initiative

6.2 It is recommended that:

- The Scottish Executive provides and publicises a clear statement of its specific objectives for the anti-sectarian initiative in Scottish football and sets out a timescale for change, against which progress can be measured;
- The Scottish Football Association provides and publicises a clear statement of what UEFA’s current disciplinary regulations in regard to discriminatory behaviour mean, in practical terms, for all of Scottish football;
- The Scottish Executive and the Scottish Football Association distinguish between the two components of ‘The Old Firm’ and deal separately and distinctly with any issues of sectarianism in each case;
- The Scottish Executive and the Scottish Football Association alert all other professional clubs to the dangers of second hand sectarianism; advise clubs that the use of this routine vocabulary of abuse is not in the best interests of Scottish football; and requires them to take the actions necessary to regularly inform their fans of the possible consequences of the continued use of this language and imagery.

Making the Old Firm More Recognisably United in the Anti-Sectarian Initiative

6.3 It is recommended that:

- Celtic and Rangers merge their current anti-sectarian initiatives into one single and joint campaign, adopting a title and style which clearly indicates their clear and collective determination to stamp out any associations they may be thought to have with pro-sectarian sentiments or actions;
- The Scottish Executive and the Scottish Football Association fund a sustained publicity campaign against sectarianism, and Rangers and Celtic help engage past and present players, coaches, and celebrity supporters in the campaign, designed to portray sectarianism as out of date, as unfashionable, and as dangerous to the future of Scottish football;
- The Scottish Football Association, all the major clubs and the Scottish Professional Footballers Association ensure that all professional footballers playing for major clubs receive anti-sectarian training, and are regularly

made aware of the dangers of making easy and unsubstantiated references to the supposed sectarian affiliations or actions of other players, clubs, referees, journalists, etc;

- Celtic and Rangers, with the assistance of the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Football Association, encourage their organised supporters groups to engage in a regular series of meetings to discuss common problems, including, but not confined to, any issues of sectarianism;
- The Scottish Executive commission a review of the effectiveness of policies used in recent campaigns, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, to exclude various kinds of inappropriate behaviour from football stadiums, so as to learn from innovative ideas and to follow best practice;
- The Scottish Executive and sportscotland encourage the development of supporter-led initiatives to counter sectarian sentiments and actions, by providing a small fund which supporters groups could apply to, so as to cover the expenses of such initiatives.

The Pre-match and Half Time Entertainment at Ibrox and Parkhead

6.4 It is recommended that:

- Rangers and Celtic evaluate the form and content of their current pre-match, half-time, and post-match entertainment to assess whether their current patterns:
 - could give the impression of being conducive to the expression of sectarian sentiments;
 - could be modified so as to more clearly emphasize that both are Scottish clubs with deep connections to a non-sectarian, contemporary, forward looking, Scottish society and to Scottish football.

The Positioning, Policing and Stewarding of Away Fans in Glasgow

6.5 It is recommended that:

- The Scottish Executive, the Strathclyde Police Force, Celtic, Rangers, and the stewarding companies they employ, review existing policies for, and styles of, marshalling football fans in the major Glasgow grounds and establish whether these are appropriate for the likely threat posed by most fans from most clubs in Scotland;
- The Scottish Executive, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the stewarding companies employed review the current policy and style of policing and marshalling football fans at all the major grounds in Scotland, to eradicate any inconsistencies; to recommend styles and procedures which should be followed across the country; and to spread best practice (and see paragraph 6.6 below);

- Rangers and Celtic review the current positioning of away fans in Ibrox and Parkhead to ensure they are provided with average levels of comfort and viewing, and that these positions are those best suited to limiting outbreaks of sectarian sentiments;
- Celtic and Rangers review the existing policies for, and styles of, stewarding football fans at their grounds and establish whether these are appropriate, and whether they are communicated clearly to all fans;
- Strathclyde Police and the stewarding companies employed at Parkhead and Ibrox adopt procedures so as to communicate clearly with away fans, particularly to ensure that the reasons for any special controls directed at them are perceived to be both sensible and appropriate for their safety;
- Rangers, Celtic, their stewarding companies and the Association of Chief Police Officers review the current anti-sectarian training received by police and stewards deployed at Ibrox and Parkhead, to establish if this training is best suited to spreading a clear and consistent anti-sectarian message;
- The Scottish Executive commissions a review of the use, so far, of the new law of ‘offences aggravated by religious prejudice’ at football grounds. This review should include:
 - an assessment of its use against home fans and away fans at all major grounds in Scotland;
 - suggestions for a more pertinent classification of offences committed in football grounds to help reveal the true extent of the problem of sectarianism in Scottish football;
- The Scottish Football Association and the Association of Chief Police Officers enter into a sustained dialogue with organised supporters groups across Scotland. The aim should be to discuss and explain styles of policing and the routine application of laws designed to prevent sectarian sentiments and actions at football grounds;
- The Scottish Executive maintain a regular consultation with football supporters across Scotland to establish whether they note any changes or improvements in policing and stewarding policies through time, and whether they believe progress is being made through the initiative against sectarian displays Scottish football.

The Behaviour of the Away Fans of the Old Firm

6.6 It is recommended that:

- Celtic and Rangers review their current procedures for the allocation of tickets for their away matches with a view to making changes which will make it absolutely clear that individuals and/or supporters’ groups will be liable to punishment by the club in the event of misbehaviour linked to sectarianism;
- Rangers and Celtic promote mechanisms and provide aid which will facilitate greater self-policing amongst their away support, for example,

providing preferential ticket allocations to supporters' groups with the best records of behaviour;

- The Scottish Executive, the Association of Chief Police Officers, and the stewarding companies employed review the current policy and style of policing and marshalling football fans at all the major grounds in Scotland, to eradicate any inconsistencies, to recommend styles and rules which should be followed across the country, and to spread best practice (see paragraph 6.5 above);
- The Scottish Executive and sportscotland encourage the development of supporter-led initiatives to improve relations between away fans of the Old Firm and home fans around Scotland, by providing a small fund which supporters groups could apply to, to cover the expenses of such initiatives.

Discussing the responsibilities of the Scottish Media in regard to the portrayal and amplification of Sectarianism in Scottish Football

6.7 It is recommended that:

- The Scottish Executive and the Scottish Football Association hold meetings with editors and sports editors of the major media companies in Scotland to emphasise:
 - the importance of the media in reporting accurately and clearly on any future displays of sectarianism within Scottish football;
 - the dangers of adding a 'sectarian gloss' to stories where the emphasis is unjustified by the facts of the event;
 - the dangers inherent in routine expression of sectarianism in humour, attributions of allegiance, and the like;
- The Scottish Executive commissions a consultation with the editors and main contributors to the major football fanzines in Scotland so as to establish their views and to discuss the consequences of the routine expression of sectarian sentiments, epithets and humour in these significant sub-cultural outlets.

Annex 1: The Supporters Groups Consulted

Aberdeen FC Supporters Forum
Airdrie FC Supporters Trust
Celtic Supporters Association
Affiliation of Registered Celtic Supporters Clubs
Association of Irish Celtic Supporters Clubs
Dundee FC Supporters Association
Federation of Dundee United Supporters Clubs
Dunfermline Athletic Supporters Club
Bairns Trust
Federation of Hearts Supporters Clubs
Hibernian FC Supporters Association.
Inverness Caley Thistle Supporters Club
Kilmarnock FC Supporters Association
Livingston FC Supporters Club
Motherwell FC Supporters Club
Jags Trust
Rangers Assembly
St. Johnstone FC Supporters Club
St. Mirren Independent Supporters Association

Annex 2: More Detail of the Consultation with Fans

Please note: This section follows the structure of sections 3 and 4 of the main report and, for comprehensibility, there is some repetition of some of the arguments contained there. What this section adds is more detail and more evidence of the views of supporters on the various themes identified.

What is Sectarianism?

1. One problem inherent in the issue of sectarianism in Scottish football is that a lot, perhaps most, of what commentators, the media, ordinary people, many football fans, regard as 'sectarian' is not so in any objective sense. This point was posed plainly by a representative of the Association of Irish Celtic Supporters Clubs. He argued that we have to get our definitions quite clear. He accepted what he thought was the official definition of sectarianism – 'intolerance of another religion' - but now, he thought, the Scottish Executive seemed to be engaged in a process of the sectarianization of Ireland. His argument was that Celtic supporters, except on very rare occasions, sing and chant about Ireland and Irish patriots. They do not, except for those rare occasions, denigrate any other religion. So, to his group, the Scottish Executive seems bent on trying to sectarianize "*our country*". The Irish flag, the Irish national anthem, Irish patriotism, are not sectarian. 'Fenian Bastard' and 'Orange Bastard', 'F*** the Pope' and 'F*** the Queen' are terms of sectarian abuse, but it appears that the Scottish Executive is also trying to say that songs which refer to Irish patriots - usually men honoured by the Irish government - are sectarian. They are not. They are political. It's a separate issue about whether football matches are appropriate places to sing them, but they are not sectarian. The songs and symbols of Celtic are generally not about religion but about politics. So, his group does not object to displays of the Union Jack, the flag of Ulster, the singing of 'Rule Britannia', 'Dam Busters', etc. but: "*We do object to chants and songs targeted at people because of their religion or background*". His argument continued on that, by using a very loose definition of what is sectarian, the Scottish media seek to portray the problem as evenly-balanced, with the two clubs, Rangers and Celtic, equally at fault, but, following the logic of his argument, it is not. Rangers have the heavier, truly sectarian, weight here as a few brave journalists have made clear. So, in his view, the Executive needs to separate the issue of Rangers **'and'** Celtic, they should not be treated as a duo. They should deal with Rangers, deal with Celtic, but in different ways. There is no point in being 'even handed' when the problem is not truly balanced. While his was the clearest statement, it should be noted that, while the representatives of the other two main Celtic groupings regretted the singing of IRA-related songs and the like, as will be detailed below, they also denied these are sectarian. Indeed, the supporters of some other clubs also worried about accusing Celtic fans of being sectarian, because they believed that what the Celtic support mainly engage in were songs about Ireland

and support for nationalist and republican politics, rather than any religious or ethnic derogation of other groups.

2. Another problem is that sectarianism has become the vernacular, the vocabulary, of all Scottish football. Most supporters distinguished sectarianism, which they think is objectionable, from 'winding-up' or 'noising' up opposing fans, which they see as an inherent part of football support and football tribalism, which they do not want to lose. The trouble is that the two have become very closely entwined in Scottish football. The songs and attitudes of the Old Firm 'wind up' a lot of other fans who then respond in a similar way. The stadium manager at Aberdeen, for example, had stopped the playing of 'Flower of Scotland' at Pittodrie when Rangers were the visitors, because it was **only** played when Rangers were the visitors. Similarly, football supporters of other clubs borrow the chants, songs and symbols of one of the Old Firm to 'wind-up' the support of the other half, or to spice up their confrontations with other clubs. So 'The Billy Boys', becomes 'Killy Boys', 'Caley Boys', 'Airdrie Boys', 'Livvy Boys', and so on and so on. Some clubs attribute a religious label to other clubs on the basis of that club's name – according to St. Mirren supporters Motherwell have so labelled them, and so some St. Mirren fans have started carrying Tricolours to these games *"just to wind people up"*. Attributions are also made on the ethnic origins of owners/managers, so supposed 'Little Celtics' and 'Wee Rangers' abound. In short, there is a great second hand sectarianism in Scotland, where as many supporters put it, smaller clubs *"bounce off the Old Firm"* and conduct their rivalries in what can be easily be believed to be sectarian epithets, even though the participants know they are only being playful. Thus at the opening match of the 2006-07 season at Ibrox, Rangers' Head of Safety and Facilities was said to have alleged that the Dundee United supporters had indulged in sectarian chanting while Rangers fans had not. But officials of the Dundee club retorted that all they had been singing was 'United Boys', sung to the same tune as one of the songs Rangers were trying to outlaw, but containing no sectarian words. Or again, during the consultation the Aberdeen supporters referred to their displeasure at hearing sectarian singing by Kilmarnock fans. When asked, the Kilmarnock support said it was 'The Killy Boys', which contains no sectarian sentiments at all. However, they did agree, that a lot of Celtic fans don't like them singing 'The Killy Boys', so they sing it all the more! The Celtic supporters just assume its those *"typical Ayrshire Huns"* but its not at all sectarian in words or intention, but the sectarian attitude is so inbred in the Old Firm that they are unable to make such distinctions. Or again, in early August 2006 the Chairman of St. Mirren urged the club's fans not to sing a song at a forthcoming match at Parkhead which contained the lines:

*"We hate the boys in royal blue, we hate the boys in emerald green,
so f*** the Pope and f*** the Queen!"*

He asked them not to sing *"re-jigged versions of other clubs' songs"*.

Can the Old Firm become More United?

3. Most of the fans of other clubs were quite unimpressed by the efforts Rangers and Celtic are currently making in their anti-sectarian programmes. Usually they were seen to be paying 'lip service' to what now had to be done, rather than being wholeheartedly committed to real change. Partly this was because most supporters did not see that much alteration in what goes on in the Glasgow grounds when they visit them, but it was also because the Old Firm were seen to be acting separately and rather discretely in these programmes. One supporter in the Airdrie consultation was a teacher at a Glasgow school. The Old Firm Alliance had given coaching sessions at her school, but the clubs had come separately. This only served to emphasize to the children that there is a big divide between them. Why couldn't they come together? The general feeling was that, often, the supposed message is belied in the ways it is being implemented.
4. Of course, any joint initiative needs to be thought through and well planned. The representative of the Celtic Supporters Association remarked on The Two Flags against Sectarianism initiative that took place at the Old Firm match in April 2006. This, he believed, had been received very badly by a lot of Celtic supporters. It was initiated by a relatively new grouping at Parkhead - the Jungle Bhoys - who proposed it to the club, who told the police, it got to a similar group at Ibrox - Blue Order - and found its way into the Daily Record. His view was that this new group got involved in an initiative without the necessary preparation. He also claimed that the Rangers anti-sectarian banner was soon over-draped with an Ulster flag and was, in any case, removed at half-time, all of which did not serve to endear this initiative to the Celtic supporters. There certainly was a lot of chat about this on the Celtic website at the time, and it does seem that this particular initiative may well prove to be counter-productive rather than helpful (and see the account of this match by S. Halliday in The Scotsman, 24th April 2006). We also need to be aware of the possibility of unintended consequences from apparently worthy initiatives. One Airdrie supporter referred to the green and blue wrist-band with an anti-sectarian message originally issued by Strathclyde Police. He had taken it up to generate funds for a local hospice. He had distributed 67,000 to schools throughout Lanarkshire, and the uptake, at £1 a time, was 9,500. He had received many complaints from schools and parents about promoting an anti-sectarian message! He had issued another 100,000 to the business sector and sold just 33,000. His somewhat chilling conclusion was: "*Sectarianism is much more acceptable than racism in this part of the world*".
5. What some fans want to see is a far more public presentation of the Old Firm's commitment to anti-sectarianism, with, say, the messages at Ibrox, which currently point inwards at the home crowd, being placed, like some anti-racism posters, on the perimeter advertising boards, so that the whole nation could get the message. They wanted more joint initiatives, like coaching, or via the involvement of players, high profile supporters and club managements in TV advertising (as is done in some anti-racism campaigns). Such methods were seen as much more likely to convince

people that real change is actually underway, than distinct action by each club. Motherwell supporters, for example, would:

“like to see the players mixing more, more mingling generally”

and they wanted the young players at each club, the, mainly Scottish, players who are under 21, *“who know the score”*, to be used in joint campaigns against sectarianism.

Can Rangers and Celtic be Persuaded to Modify their Pre-match/Half time ‘Entertainment’?

6. The broad atmosphere at both Glasgow grounds, but especially Ibrox, is conducive to making many supporters believe that sectarianism is all around them. The words most often used about going to the Glasgow grounds is that the trip is *“intimidating”, “frightening”* and *“daunting”*. As the St.Mirren supporters put it about Ibrox:

“Its not like going to any other football match. None have the same edge. They are trying to slightly sanitise it, but supporters just fill in what is missing. Its no normal football club you're going to”.

And the Motherwell supporters said:

“There is an ‘atmosphere’ at both grounds which is not all to do with sectarianism, but that’s a big part of it. There’s a tension, a whole hostile atmosphere.”

7. The supporters of a majority of other clubs believe that what makes the atmosphere odd at both Glasgow grounds is:
 - the two clubs do not present themselves as being Scottish institutions;
 - their pre-match build-up and ‘entertainment’ tend to be rather ‘old fashioned’ and geared around a display of ethnic differentiation;
 - Rangers in particular exudes a triumphalist tone which can easily spill over into a easy denigration of any other supporters.
8. One of the things the fans of other clubs find disturbing is that, and arguably increasingly, Celtic’s displays centre on Ireland and Rangers’ on England. What seems to be missing to other fans is much sign that they are, infact, major Scottish organizations. As the Motherwell supporters put it:

“Rangers are Englified, not Scottish, and Celtic are Irish not Scottish”.

They, like many other supporters did not like the apparent denial of Scottish identity and, again like many others, they could not see what symbols like 'Rule Britannia', 'The Fields of Athenry', Ulster Flags or Saltires with the Red Hand of Ulster or the Tricolour, have to do with a specifically Scottish football. The supporters of St. Mirren said:

*"Both are Scottish clubs, both trade in Scotland but neither shows much sign of being Scottish. At Celtic the whole celebration is based around Ireland, their origins and roots, but we are in the twenty-first century now and multiculturalism. It is hard to take their bombardments, and they represent the split in our society. There is constant abuse across the religious divide. Rangers with their 'F** The Pope' and 'The Billy Boys' certainly cross the line".*

When it was put to supporters that the Old Firm claim to be honouring their roots or 'heritage' they were none too impressed. They argued that it seemed unnecessary to go right back to when the clubs were formed and celebrate only that part of your heritage; that the various displays had more to do with the political situation in Northern Ireland than any 'heritage'; and that both clubs seemed to be making rather more of their non-Scottish links (as a marketing ploy) than they had in the past, so deployment of 'heritage' arguments appeared somewhat opportunistic. As the Motherwell fans put it:

"At Ibrox the band plays the national anthem within two minutes of the end of the match, and our fans respond by singing 'Flower of Scotland'. To me that is a sectarian act, because no other Scottish ground plays it. Then its 'Fields of Athenry' at Parkhead. Rangers are getting more English, the supporters have started wearing English jerseys. They seem to be trying to relate to Britain, not Ireland and not Scotland".

While those of Inverness CT said:

"If its 'heritage' why is it not more Scottish? They weren't born in Ireland, and if they are going to fly flags then let's have the flag of St. Andrew. Rangers' British thing seems to have got more noticeable since David Murray stood up against the Scottish Parliament".

And those from Kilmarnock added:

"why do you have to go back to King Billy for your heritage? And why all the Tricolours at Parkhead? Some of us are probably as Irish as they are but we just don't go on about it".

While the fans of Dundee United argued that the chants of 'F** the Pope' that rang around Ibrox had little to do with supporting a team or honouring heritage but a lot to do with denigrating others. But the supporters of Inverness CT thought Parkhead

was the worst: *“its abuse for 90 minutes at Parkhead.....from the family section!”*. Moreover they are warned, *“when we go to Glasgow we are told ‘we cannot guarantee your protection if you wear the away colours’”*.

9. Given the general suspicion about ‘heritage’ arguments, it is not surprising that most Old Firm supporters tended to see a subtle sectarianism as the real focus of the pre-match and half time ‘entertainment’, especially at Ibrox. It was the Association of Irish Celtic Supporters Clubs who described the Ibrox ‘entertainment’ as *“like the last night of the Proms”*, with its musical allusions to the Second World War, militaristic tone, flag displays, and so on, but this did catch the flavour of many other supporters groups comments. The Aberdeen supporters, for example, cite the songs, flags and chants as indicating that not much has really changed and argue that, as most people at Ibrox sing the songs, it cannot truthfully be said to be only the action of a small minority. One participant referred to the playing of an old Boys Brigade hymn ‘The Anchor’ at Ibrox as indicating a difference between what Rangers say and what they actually do. *“Surely heritage doesn’t stop you looking forward?”* Like many other groups they wondered why Rangers keep playing a medley of the ‘old songs’ – ‘Billy Boys’, ‘Follow, Follow’ etc - before the kick off? And why have Andy Cameron on the park leading ‘community singing’ at half time? He has altered the words a bit now, but it just stirs things up for all the wrong reasons. This kind of ‘entertainment’ ‘winds up’ a lot of folk who then respond in a similar way. And why have Rangers fans started wearing England replica shirts? Celtic have genuine historical links to Ireland but not Rangers to England. The Dunfermline supporters described how the away support at Ibrox is surrounded by Red Hand of Ulster flags, other sectarian flags, and constant sectarian singing. It now has what they described as a ‘Dutch band’ (other supporters groups described this as a ‘flute band’ or ‘Orange band’) that plays Rule Britannia, the Dam Busters March, etc - songs linked to English football not to Scotland.

“They do this to oppose Celtic’s stress on Ireland. There is no need for it, its got nothing to do with football, and both clubs should more clearly display that they are Scottish clubs, who make their money in Scotland”.

Hibernian supporters said that at both stadiums, music was played over the loud speakers that was linked to the sectarian tradition. At Ibrox, what have the Dam Busters March, the Great Escape, Rule Britannia, got to do with contemporary Scottish football? Why do the clubs not play the latest pop-songs as most other clubs do? And why have ‘entertainers’ like Andy Cameron at Ibrox peddling the same old, tired, ‘jokes’. All this was evidence that both clubs, but Rangers in particular, were not really that ready to make a new start and to renounce the sectarian links that had been, and are, so profitable for them. The Hibernian supporters suggested some of the deep problem here:

“racism does not make money, but sectarianism does”.

10. To this was added, particularly in the evaluation of Rangers, that the stadium atmosphere involved a particularly triumphalist tone. The Airdrie supporters said they are always nervous about going to the Glasgow grounds, *"after 10 minutes of all that bile you've had enough"*. They believe that Old Firm fans feel they are superior, they think they are on a bandwagon and look down at you, *"They treat everyone with contempt"*. And people follow them simply to be part of something successful. They understand 'heritage' arguments *"that's okay, but its used for something else, its an excuse"*. Rangers fans see themselves as superior and *"look down on Celtic fans as inferior"*. This, they feel, came in with the Murray years and the importing of English players. *"They think they have a God given right to win everything"*. Its not just for 90 minutes either but '24/7' and the Orange Order has a big influence. Supporters from St.Mirren argued that, for outward sectarianism, Rangers fans are by far the worst. When you go to Parkhead the supporters are quite friendly but Rangers fans *"feed off the triumphs of the past"*, *"you are bombarded with triumphalism"*, *"its an English-type of thing"*. One man had recently been at a Rangers versus Hibernian cup-tie. Just after the club put messages on the video screens seeking to dissuade their supporters from singing sectarian songs etc you were immediately hit with The Dam Busters, Land of Hope and Glory, and flute music. The environments the two Glasgow clubs generate have consequences and the clubs should be made to realise this, and stop their bombardments. At the moment it's lip service but with no end results. Parkhead has some good intentions, and there's a strong and consistent message from the club about what it won't stand. But the problem is that both clubs say they won't tolerate sectarianism but they do in their own grounds. Rangers have not lost the sense of being part of the dominant group in Scottish society, there's not the same edge at any other club. *"You are made to feel very much the outsider, and an inferior outsider"*.
11. Of course, the supporters of both the Old Firm clubs have robust responses to these kinds of widespread perceptions among other supporters. The representative of the Association of the Irish Celtic Supporters Clubs was asked if the club was maybe just a little bit too 'Irish' in its displays. He replied that Scottish journalists often write anti-Irish stuff, about *"a hokey-cokey style of 'Irishness'"*, akin to racism. The Scottish Executive should address this, because they would not allow it to be directed against Asians or blacks. He added that you have to be careful not to drift into this kind of racism. At the moment in Scotland you can say things about Ireland and the Irish, that you cannot say about Africa and Africans. Celtic's 'Irishness' can only offend those ready to be offended by Ireland and the Irish. It's important that the club's Irish links are maintained and any attempt to change them would lead to resistance. The supporters of other clubs often don't realise they are expressing anti-Irish sentiments when they wind-up Celtic supporters. But, for example, why do they boo those players born in Scotland who choose to play for Ireland but not those born in Scotland who choose to play for Northern Ireland, or those born in Sweden or England who choose to play for Scotland? The representatives of the Celtic Supporters Association and the Affiliation of Registered Celtic Supporters Clubs argued that great strides have been made at

Celtic Park to reduce sectarian chants and songs (as many supporters of other clubs recognized), indeed, “*maybe its too quiet now*”. There are good programmes for the young, tending against sectarianism, and the end of the conflict in Ireland should have a cooling effect, but today’s youngsters will not just put up with it, “*like we tended to do*”. To them Ibrox is still much the same as it always has been. Its like a rally - flute bands, drums, flag waving, pictures of spitfires and bombers - what is all that about? The hierarchy at Rangers allow all this, indicating that there is no real clear change of heart. Its certainly not all Rangers fans by any means, but there is much more of a hardcore in their support. They also noted that Celtic’s marketing used the colours of the Irish tricolour more than in the past, but saw no harm in that. They didn’t think that more Saltires would be too popular at Parkhead.

12. The representatives of the Rangers Assembly argued that the atmosphere at Ibrox has definitely improved in recent years. Of course, there is still a problem, but its nothing like as significant as it was or as it supposed to be. The real problem now is the “*add-ons*”. Slipping ‘F*** the Pope’ into traditional songs and the like. The Assembly members argued that ‘The Sash’ is **not** a sectarian song nor are ‘Follow, Follow’, ‘Dam Busters’, ‘Rule Britannia’ etc. Then, sectarianism is not a football problem but a social problem for Scottish society. The key to the real issue of sectarianism in Scotland is the division in the school system, but that is far too much of a hot potato for Scottish politicians to deal with. They argued that they are proud to be British, but others do not like Britain. They are proud of their heritage too, but are not allowed to be. Rangers supporters are British, but also proud to be Scottish. There are more and more Saltires at Ibrox and no flags of St. George which is a rather strange situation if Rangers are supposed to be trying to be ‘English’. The club had held a card display in three stands in season 2005-06 – one Union Jack and two Saltires – so what is sectarian about that? Asked about what supporters of other clubs regularly referred to as a ‘flute band’ or ‘Orange band’ at Ibrox, the dismissive reply was “*It’s a brass band!*” Asked about Andy Cameron and his ‘old jokes’, they responded that people who complain about that don’t know Andy Cameron, he is married to a catholic and is totally against bigotry. He was one of the first to stand up against it. In their view, the plain truth is that the vast majority of Rangers fans simply have no interest in bigotry.

Is the Policing and Stewarding Treatment of Away Fans in Glasgow Part of the Problem?

13. On the testimony from the consultation, being an away fan at the Glasgow grounds is a grim adventure. It should surely worry all those involved in organising Scottish football when the senior supporters of Hearts, Hibernian, Aberdeen, Dunfermline, Falkirk, Partick, Livingston, Dundee United, Dundee, St. Mirren, Kilmarnock, Motherwell, Inverness Caley Thistle and St.Johnstone all, quite independently, conclude that being a visiting fan at Ibrox or Parkhead is, for many, a very, very, unpleasant experience. In these consultations it emerged that a surprising number of dedicated fans had simply stopped travelling to the Glasgow grounds, because they could not put up with it any longer (the breaking point for one being when fighting broke out in the family enclosure at Parkhead!). As will be sketched later, at the time of the consultation, some supporters groups were in correspondence with one or other of the Old Firm or with the Strathclyde Police about their treatment on recent visits to the city. Indeed, the fans of a majority of the other major clubs in Scotland are convinced that the Old Firm do not really want away supporters in their stadiums and so make the experience as bad as it can be to try to discourage their attendance.
14. The Strathclyde police have a very poor reputation with the supporters of non-Glasgow clubs. They are seen as over-zealous, as unfriendly, as uncommunicative, as ignoring what the home fans do while likely to lift away supporters for doing exactly the same or even less. It is claimed that they are quite likely to use sectarian language themselves – ‘Fenian bastard’, ‘Orange bastard’ - if away supporters protest about activities of the home fans, and, in any case, they ignore reasoned complaints. They put fans backs up and cause difficulties, through their approach to policing supporters. They are seen to be supporters of the home team rather than impartial enforcers of the law, though one East Coast female fan could only explain their lack of courtesy and client focus through joking that:

“I believe they tell all the Catholic police you’ll be going to Ibrox, and all the Protestant police, you’ll be going to Parkhead, ... you go and work out all your badness there!”

The stewards employed by the Glasgow clubs - or “*para-militaries*” as some supporters chose to designate them - were seen as suffering from many of the same faults, with their precise allegiance – to the supposed rules or to the home club – being quite unclear.

15. One of the main complaints of the non-Old Firm supporters was that they were treated as ‘the problem’ at the Glasgow grounds, even when the home fans were breaking the law or the rules laid down. Most groups argued that the police and stewards over-concentrated on the small number of away fans, ignoring what the home fans did. Many supporters believed that football grounds offer an open sanctuary to bigots and that the authorities do not enforce laws against sectarianism

in them. The Partick Thistle supporters argued that all around you is cursing, swearing, sectarian chants and songs:

“Its ninety minutes of haranguing and sectarian epithets but if the police take any action it is against the small wedge of Partick Thistle supporters”.

And Livingston supporters agreed:

“The police should be neutral, there to look after you, not actually causing problems. The Glasgow police have a very bad attitude, and are the worst in Scotland”.

16. Aberdeen supporters also believed that away fans tend to get hauled out for using language and actions similar to what the home support uses, with no action being taken against them. If you complain to the Strathclyde police about the intimidation you are just told *“If you don't like it, don't come”*. The sergeants and other officers seem to set an attitude for all the police as an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ approach. They turn their backs on the home support and stare at the away support, so the home fans can get away with abusing the visitors. Two weeks previously to the meeting with them, Aberdeen took 900 supporters to Ibrox and fifteen were arrested, *“There's not been 15 arrested in all the rest of Scotland! That tells you something”* especially when they discovered that only five Rangers fans were arrested at the same match. The fans of Hibernian agreed that police at both Glasgow grounds tend to concentrate on the thousand or so away supporters, rather than trying to curb the clear sectarian behaviour of Old Firm home fans. They thought this was because the police tend to be supporters of the Glasgow team they are supposed to control. They assert that police tend to watch, control, and arrest away fans for lesser or no actions, while the home fans are allowed to get away with provocation (singing, spitting, swearing, throwing items) as well as their full sectarian repertoire. Indeed, they claim that if away fans try to complain about the behaviour of Old Firm fans then they are quite likely to be told to *“F*** off you Fenian b***** and get back to Edinburgh”* or *“Away you go, back to Edinburgh”* by the police and stewards. In their view, the police are bad at Ibrox, the stewards at Parkhead. If they got arrested at an away match they got banned by Hibernian FC and might not be allowed to renew their season tickets, but at Ibrox ‘Govan, Govan, Give Us the Sash’ rings out and the police take no action at all. So the Hibernian fans, like many others, tend to see an inconsistent and half-hearted application of the law by police and stewards in the Glasgow grounds, with the law appearing to be applied in favour of sectarian fans, sectarian songs and sectarian actions, which, in their eyes undercut the anti-sectarian messages emanating from the peak of various organisations.
17. Dundee United supporters also argued that the policing of away fans in Glasgow is *“draconian and over the top”*. *“They seem to start from a perspective that every fan is a hooligan”*. *“We are treated as second class citizens”*. They believe that civil liberties are getting ignored, and that, while the behaviour of fans has

improved in recent years, they seemed to be getting more inconvenience from the police and their partial interpretation of the laws. Again, Dunfermline take very few supporters away to Glasgow - 100 or so normally - and they have no interest in fighting. Yet the Old Firm stewards concentrate on them, stare at them, while ignoring the home fans. They try to throw Dunfermline fans out for simply singing their, non-sectarian, Dunfermline, songs, while the home support does as it wants. Sometimes, at Parkhead, the stewards can outnumber the away fans. They are an easy target. *"We're an inconvenience really, they don't want us there because they want to sell the seats to their own fans"*. Home fans are allowed to stand up while away fans are not. When they complain to the police about the sectarianism of some of the songs/flags etc they are told *"There's nothing I can do about it"* or *"I can't see any flags"*. Many Rangers fans, they feel, are not really there for the football, but to celebrate sectarianism. Its *"horrible singing and rubbish in your face all the time you are there"*, and seeing children of eight or nine waving sectarian flags and singing about King Billy is *"terrible"*. All in all, its unpleasant and very intimidating, *"we are treated like cattle really"*, *"it should be a football match not a concentration camp"*, and quite a lot of Dunfermline fans have simply stopped going. Parkhead is not nearly as bad, though, there too, they feel the stewarding is far too heavy-handed.

18. Falkirk fans felt they had a bad experience at the away game at Ibrox in December 2005. On that day, Rangers held one of their 'flag parades' (which have received some adverse publicity in the press) around the perimeter of the pitch at half time. According to the Falkirk fans, there were Union Jacks, but also flags of the Cross of St. George, the Red Hand of Ulster (including the Ipswich Loyal Rangers Club and the Auchinleck Rangers Supporters Club), and some flags had the logos of paramilitary groups on them. It was not the flags particularly, but what was written on some of them and what underlay the parade. Some of the Falkirk support (containing both protestants and catholics) were offended by this, especially as the paraders taunted the away support as they passed by. Complaints to police got the reaction – *"Nothing they're doing is a prescribed action"* and one Falkirk office holder was almost ejected from the ground by police for protesting too much. The police at Ibrox *"did not want to know"*. Indeed, they asserted that the police withdrew from the trackside during the parade leaving the away fans more vulnerable to taunting by the paraders, who had clearly removed references to the UDA etc from the flags but carried them on the T-shirts they wore. The Falkirk fans regarded this as an example of Rangers appealing to *"the lowest common denominator of their support"*, like the orange strip, and this was because both Old Firm clubs made a lot of money out of sectarianism. They had complained by letters to Rangers, whose replies suggested, eg. that the word 'loyal' on the flags meant the carriers were loyal to Rangers rather than intending any political meaning. They had drawn Rangers' attention to a website where the Ipswich group appeared close to sectarian songs etc. They did not feel that Rangers' response to their letters revealed that the club was truly serious in trying to stamp out sectarianism from its own support. Sectarianism was still prominent in both stadia, and *"you can see it quite blatantly from the away ends at both grounds"*, yet the

authorities say they cannot identify offenders. Generally, going to the Old Firm grounds was an unpleasant and intimidating experience, *“like going to Bosnia”*, as one participant put it. Police and stewards concentrate on the 850 away Falkirk fans and penalise them for actions - shouting, celebrating a goal, standing up (again reference was made to the restricted view position away fans have at Parkhead) - while ignoring the thousands of home fans doing the same or worse. They made reference to the *“para-military stewards whose allegiance is to the club not the law”*. If you complain to the police, they support the stewards. *“Anymore from you and you’ll be ejected”* being cited as a typical police response to complaints. One man had been a policeman and said that one of the first things he learnt was *“you do not arrest your own boys”*. Once again, many thought that the Old Firm do not really want away fans at their grounds.

19. Hearts fans, too, saw the Strathclyde Police as particularly heavy-handed, and as simply bracketing all away football supporters as potential hooligans. The Federation has been pursuing their actions at the October 2005 match at Parkhead. At this match fifteen Hearts supporters were arrested, and just four Celtic fans, most for breach of the peace, often aggravated by sectarianism. At the time of the consultation, ten of the fifteen had been in court and found not guilty or the case against them had not been pursued. They feel the police have not been very helpful in their dealings with the Federation. Their interpretation is that the new sectarianism legislation was available, and the police used it to make an example of the minority away support. They see Parkhead as worse than Ibrox now. These fans see inconsistent policing on the Glasgow grounds where the home fans do as they please (spitting, throwing items at the away fans, mimicking IRA snipers, etc) while away fans are warned or arrested for the slightest offence or randomly, and, once again, the restricted view at Parkhead was mentioned. They, too, firmly believe there is an agenda to make the whole experience so bad that they can get rid of away supporters entirely, so more seats can be sold to the fans of the Glasgow clubs.
20. Motherwell supporters felt that, at the Glasgow grounds *“their stewards monitor us a bit heavier than they do their own”*. Home fans are allowed to take in flags and banners – they are not, *“and some of their banners are very provocative to other supporters”*. They had been in correspondence with Rangers, about the number of Motherwell supporters ejected for gesticulating at Rangers fans when very few Rangers fans had been arrested for similar offences. *“There is no justice at the Glasgow grounds, we should all be treated the same”*. But the police can’t throw out the home fans, so, at both grounds, every movement the away fans make is watched. At Parkhead they seem to be outnumbered by the stewards. The stewards are worse than the police, but the police just back the stewards. They believe, *“they want to eject us!”*. The focus of control is heavily on the, comparatively, very small away support, and it upsets them. St.Mirren echoed the general theme - Parkhead has a restricted view, and Ibrox is not policed too well. They are treated like second class citizens at both grounds, but have no real problems with the police. They do not protect you though. If you ask them why

they do not stop the sectarianism they reply, *“You don’t need to know”* and if you press the point they threaten to arrest you, *“Because you’re from Paisley”*. The overall outcome is that lots of people simply will not go to the Glasgow grounds, and they certainly won’t take their children.

21. It may be thought that this section has dwelt for far too long on the testimony of the supporters of various non-Old Firm clubs, though that has by no means been exhausted. This has been done quite deliberately to stress how consistent, and how consistently unpleasant, is the experience of being an away fan in the Glasgow grounds. These supporters across Scotland believe that the police and stewards ignore the sectarian actions and attitudes of the home fans in favour of heavily policing the small number of away supporters. Again, and while we must remember the point made about the slippery nature of the designation of some actions and symbols as ‘truly sectarian’ as discussed earlier, the anti-sectarian message seems to be being undermined by the routine practices of policing and stewarding in the Glasgow grounds. Obviously, the police have practical problems, as will be discussed more below, **but** the agents of control are adding to a sense amongst Scottish supporters that the touted laws and rules are not really being applied, and that there is one rule for them and another for the Old Firm. In Glasgow the approach appears to be that all away fans are potential hooligans and so should be treated as a threat, and be subject to tight control but there is a need to discuss whether this really the appropriate approach to take with a few hundred fans, often including many women and children, from a large number of the non-Glasgow clubs.
22. The away fan experience is made even worse because the police and/or stewards enact procedures on them that have no obvious safety or anti-hooligan purposes. So, for example, sometimes in the Glasgow grounds, even if the away supporters have bought up a whole section of seats, they are not allowed to enter the section until the last minute, which causes crushing and inconvenience and the reason for this is not at all clear, nor is any attempt made to make it clear, to them. It could be objected that much of what is outlined in this section has little to do with sectarianism, though some plainly does, but the point, that will be added to a little more in the next section, is that the unpleasant experience, the inconsistent treatment, the lack of respect as customers and citizens, all adds to the widespread sense of the Glasgow grounds as alien places. Such treatment fosters resentment and suspicion, and links into an atmosphere in which sectarianism is seen as an integral feature of both Ibrox and Parkhead.
23. However, it is not just the Strathclyde Police and Glasgow stewarding that came in for criticism, as will become plainer below. According to the Airdrie supporters for example:

“The Tayside police have no people skills and you are not going to be allowed to enjoy yourself. They have an attitude of anticipating a problem and end up causing it”.

Or as more simply put by the Kilmarnock supporters:

“The Tayside police are murder too”.

Nor were they thought to be amenable to reasoned approaches. The supporters of St. Johnstone argued:

“It’s a police state at football grounds now”.

They think there are wide inconsistencies in approach. Premier League grounds are policed in very different ways than Division 1 grounds, and:

“Ross County and Inverness have entirely different stewarding policies”.

What all this criticism points to is a need to evaluate the current policies for marshalling fans, by police and stewards, on most of the major grounds in Scotland, and an examination of how police and stewards communicate those policies to fans.

Can Ticket Allocation Procedures for Old Firm Away Games be Modified to Enable an Easier Sanctioning of Supporters who Mis-behave?

24. Officials from both parts of the Old Firm tend to locate the main issue of contemporary sectarianism in Scottish football as lying in their away support. They tend to present this as a problem of ‘inconsistent policing’ in other areas of Scotland but seem ready to admit that the clubs have less control over the allocation of away tickets than they do over tickets to their own stadiums, and so are less able to sanction supporters who do mis-behave. In the last sections I have tried to suggest that the perception of other supporters from around Scotland does not really chime in with this managerial view. But non-Old Firm fans certainly do tend to agree that the away support of Celtic and Rangers are a major part of the problem of sectarianism in contemporary Scottish football.
25. Some groups of supporters were relatively sanguine about visits from the Old Firm. The supporters of Livingston, for example, argued there is no real problem with the away Old Firm fans. Yes, they do have their flags and banners, *“but we laugh that off”*. And, for them, its just a 90 minute thing, you can talk to the Old Firm supporters before and after. (Livingston has an away-supporters bar which is, apparently, well frequented by Old Firm fans). Sometimes there is trouble where the away hospitality seating is too near to the home season ticket holders and *“those in suits can be as obnoxious as anyone else”*. The basic point is that the Old Firm bring so many supporters that its matter of sheer power and they can say and do things at a football ground and get away with it, which they could not do elsewhere or in the streets. The Aberdeen fans drew a distinction between the two clubs. When Celtic come here its banter, but its *“poisonous stuff with Rangers... you’re anxious all the time”*. If we beat Celtic you can shake hands with their support, not with Rangers. Its not just the 90 minutes with them, and they have their orange

strips on. *"Its vitriolic from the word go"*. Last time Rangers were at Pittodrie 120 seats were broken in stadium, it was just 15 when Celtic were there. The police allow flags in early, they can lay out their flags but nothing which is para-military or offensive.

"But anyway, there is no comparison between the treatment of the Old Firm fans here and what we get in Glasgow, where sometimes riot police get deployed around the grounds. There is a tight and clear marshalling programme, but the Aberdeen police do not treat individuals badly. They are better treated here than we are down there".

26. Generally, however, the away support of both Rangers and Celtic were regarded as a real problem. As one group of supporters put it:

"When Rangers and Celtic come to Dunfermline they get away with murder".

They stand outside the ground on the pavement drinking, they have all their flags with them (on poles) which they are allowed to take into the ground which home supporters are not allowed to do, they are allowed to stand up which home fans cannot do. They sing sectarian songs. The Dunfermline supporters had met the match commander recently and, when they raised this issue with him, he told them he simply did not have enough police to handle the numbers the Old Firm brought with them, and that the costs for policing which would allow him to do that would *"put Dunfermline out of business"*. So the police do not eject many Old Firm fans who transgress various rules and laws, because it is simply easier to police them inside the stadium than outside. This may be pragmatic policing but to the home fans it seems to reveal *"its one rule for them, another for us"*. This complaint was echoed by the Falkirk support. The police would not take action against the large numbers of away fans who supported the Old Firm. They tend to get away with things that the much smaller Falkirk away support cannot at Ibrox and Celtic Park. For example, they enter stands which are explicitly for home fans but the match commander thinks it best to leave the 150 'wrong' fans in there rather than ejecting them. So what are supposed to be rules are clearly seen to be broken. Rangers' fans are quite adept at getting tickets in 'wrong areas' of the ground. Again, the majority view among the Hearts supporters was that Old Firm travelling fans were treated leniently by the Lothian police, basically because of the sheer numbers involved. A previous managerial regime at Hearts had declared a ban on the carrying in of all flags, and the result was a concerted effort, including the involvement of right wing political parties, to bring in as many Union Jacks as possible. It had proved impossible to prevent thousands of flags being brought in by Rangers fans, and the policy had now been dropped. Lothian police will not go into the stands the Old Firm are in, and, if fans jump onto the pitch side track, they are just put back into their section of the crowd, whereas Hearts fans could easily lose their season tickets for similar actions. The St. Johnstone supporters agreed:

“Rangers and Celtic fans get away with things we can’t” and “The Perth police handle an Old Firm game entirely differently”.

Rangers and Celtic fans are allowed to drink in non-drinking areas and urinate in gardens. If you complain to the police they say *“We’ve got it under control”*. They had a meeting with a police inspector asking why the CCTV was switched on the home fans straight away, *“Why aren’t you telling them about their behaviour?”* He had explained that he would need to deploy two officers for each person arrested. He had to make a decision about how best to control the crowd. It was safer to leave Old Firm fans inside the ground, even though some were goading the home support. The St.Johnstone supporters believed the Old Firm:

“want only their own fans at home and to take over away grounds around the country, and they will do it too, for the money”.

27. Kilmarnock supporters argued that the home support of Rangers and Celtic can't misbehave at home as much as they would like because they might lose their season tickets, but away from home they do as they want. And when the Rock Steady stewards come down with the Old Firm fans they often get involved in problems with Kilmarnock supporters. When the Old Firm come to Rugby Park its not a small minority that sings sectarian songs. The away support has two full stands and the authorities just turn a blind eye on what they get up to. They bring 7-8,000 fans each and what to do with them is a big problem. The match commanders will not throw them out of the ground because they are worried about what they might do outside. The Kilmarnock supporters feel more intimidated by Celtic fans.

“They were given awards for what wonderful fans they were in Seville, but three days after Seville they came here and lost the league title and they certainly wouldn't have won any awards that day”.

The atmosphere in and around the ground was extremely bad. These supporters also claim that sectarian material is sold near to Rugby Park on the days that the Old Firm are visiting. A lot of the home supporters simply doesn't go to Old Firm games at Kilmarnock anymore because they are worried by the Glasgow support. Kilmarnock get kidded by other clubs about really being Rangers fans who *“can’t afford the bus fare to Ibrox”* but the reality is they dislike both sides of the Old Firm equally heartily.

Motherwell fans agreed that the away support of the Old Firm know they won't get away with some things in their own grounds and so are rather more extreme at other grounds. At Motherwell, they take both ends of the ground and two-thirds of the main stand, so they tend to surround the home support. Motherwell stewards do not go into Old Firm support because of their numbers, they simply concentrate on keeping the stairwells clear. The costs of policing are very high for Motherwell FC and the police settle for a *“softer approach and getting them out of town quickly”*. They do not ask stewards for evictions and tolerate it when Old Firm fans get into

parts of the stadium supposedly reserved for Motherwell fans. There is quite a big police presence in the town centre when they come, and the Old Firm fans are well handled. Celtic fans appear to be the better natured, but Rangers supporters do sing sectarian songs and seem like *“loud mouth thugs”*, they seem to be *“more vehement”*.

28. The Dundee United supporters also pointed to the aggressively vociferous demeanor of the away fans. They believed the behaviour of Rangers fans at Tannadice, a week or so before the consultation, was as bad as anything seen in the last five years. They stated:
- the Rangers support had been located under the TV gantry for Sentana and had been trying to make their views known via TV;
 - these included ditties about Mr. McConnell, about him being a Celtic supporter, and about his anti-sectarian initiative;
 - that only the local media had carried reports of this bad behaviour, the national media had ignored it, which they saw as reflecting the power of the Old Firm over the West Coast based media, and the way in which what is supposedly 'unacceptable' in society is routinely accepted on football grounds;
 - there had been no public comment about this behaviour from Rangers FC.

Generally, they think the Old Firm fans are a 'nightmare' round Dundee when they come, *“and sectarianism is part of the day out”*. There is an unofficial segregation, as residents avoid the places and pubs the traveling support takeover. The Old Firm fans are handled *“leniently”* by the local police because of the sheer numbers involved. If Dundee residents complain to police about, eg, the slogans carried on banners/flags etc they are usually told to *“mind your own business”*, and this is certainly not similar to the experience of Dundee United fans in Glasgow. So, as many other groups put it, even in their 'own ground' they are made to feel like a minority. They had raised these matters with Tayside Police but had not managed to obtain any useful response. Generally they think there needs to be much more transparency about policing policies and costs, and a lot more dialogue between the police and football fans. The supporters of Dundee FC agreed with their colleagues from Dundee United. They saw the Old Firm fans who visit Dundee as *“not uncontrollable but close to it”*. They are aware that their numbers outweigh the resources of the local police, so they can more or less do what they like. In Dundee supporters view, it is not a question of inconsistent policing, but sheer physical force (70 policemen, 7,000 fans) and having *“their nutters, their bigots, on the rampage”*. Such people would like to behave like that at Ibrox or Parkhead, but they can't. So they sing their songs and slogans more at away grounds and *“they're frightening”*. The Rangers' songs of 'God Save the Queen', 'Rule Britannia', 'The Dam Busters' etc tend to provoke Dundee fans into singing "Flower of Scotland" just to wind them up. *“You respond to their sectarianism”*. And we call them "Weegie [Glaswegian] Bastards". Dundee have their flags removed at other grounds but those of Rangers and Celtic are not taken away in Dundee. *“They are above the law, because of their vast numbers, and the police take a low risk strategy with them”*. Constant segregation increases tensions as does the alcoholic intake of

Old Firm fans. The Inverness CT support also agreed that the Old Firm's away fans are worse than their home supporters. *"Their songs are terrible. People in the Highlands don't know what they are singing about"*. They have about 2,500 fans at Inverness and there is a big police presence, but, all in all, *"there's probably more trouble with St. Johnstone going to Dingwall"*. Celtic sing the whole way through, all their songs, but they are tolerated, but Inverness fans sometime sing Rangers songs – 'Hello, Hello', 'The Sash' etc. *"Celtic songs do not mean much here"*. No one is allowed to bring flags into the grounds on poles, you have to drape them. The Partick fans had a much grimmer view than this. Old Firm away fans at Partick are bad not just because of their numbers but a whole, ugly, cultural thing. There is a lot of arrogance and gloating. The Partick supporters feel these are the Old Firm's hard core. A lot more travel than go to the game. Shops around the ground are closed on the days of Old Firm matches, and its wise to take your scarf off as you leave, even though this is your home stadium. Because its Glasgow, Rangers and Celtic fans get tickets for the wrong stands. If you inform the police they won't do anything. Their activities bring extra policing onto all fans.

29. The Dundee United fans had a more sophisticated explanation about why the Old Firm away support might be more vociferous and unpleasant than their home support. They suggest that away tickets, especially when games are played on a Sunday, tend to fall into the hands of lower class/younger Old Firm supporters who cannot afford season tickets at the Glasgow stadiums. Falkirk supporters also followed this line of reasoning. They believe that the Old Firm travelling support are often not season ticket holders at Ibrox or Parkhead. They could not get into their own grounds and tend to travel to away grounds, getting tickets through the Old Firm supporters clubs. They are, often, *"more extreme"* than the home support of the Old Firm, and do great damage to the brands of the two clubs.
30. Some of these points were put to the supporters' groups of the Old Firm. The two main Celtic supporters groups agreed with this kind of interpretation, at least to some degree. They agreed that there is a problem in the Celtic away support, especially singing Irish Republican songs and *"add ons"* to songs, rather than traditional Celtic football songs. They rejected the facilitator's suggestion that this was because they represented Celtic's 'hardcore' support. Rather, they felt, they tended to be younger and had been brought up during *"the thirty years war"*. And the most extreme of them can tip over into sectarianism, though they rejected the notion that IRA political songs are sectarian. They argued that the majority of Celtic away fans do not like such singing, but there is a definite passion there. It's the job of the police and other clubs to sort this out. If other clubs were really worried, they could be tough on Celtic away supporters by refusing to allocate them tickets, but the truth is they would hate to lose the revenue. Treasurers in Scottish football love Celtic coming - they will turn a blind eye to anything. Also, it should be remembered that these grounds are smaller, what is sung is more audible, and so a sequence of reaction and counter-reaction sets in. Motherwell supporters, for example, use Celtic's religious connections to *"wind us up"* and *"we don't want to deny where we came from"*. However, they think that self-policing is already at

work among the Celtic away fans, they interlink with police commanders and supporters at other grounds, and they are already light years ahead of the Tartan Army. They believe Celtic have a well-disciplined support, they are recognized as such by UEFA and get many invitations to England for friendly matches.

31. The Rangers Assembly argued that their worst away matches now are with Aberdeen FC and its supporters, but they are not based on sectarianism. There are currently more problems going to Aberdeen than to Celtic Park. The local media in Aberdeen and even the tannoy in the stadium stir up anti-Rangers feeling. The attitude of the Grampian police has improved in recent years but standing up "*as we all do at Pittodrie*" [because the view of the pitch is so poor] its "*Get down or you're out*" and "*Shut your mouth or you're out*". Celtic are allowed to fly their flags at Aberdeen – "*the flag of a country at war with us recently*" – but Rangers supporters are not allowed to fly theirs. What can be the justification for this? They see unfair treatment all over Scotland. People get ejected for flying the Union Jack – if you can get them in – when Tricolours fly and nothing is done. They took Union Jacks off Rangers' fans at Hibs. when our soldiers were fighting in the Gulf War! They tried to ban them at Tynecastle. How can this be justified? It's the flag of our country – what has the Tricolour got to do with Scottish football? We accept that we have a problem, but Celtic are in denial. They sang The Soldiers Song at Celtic Park when Britain was at war with the IRA. How would it go down if we sung the anthem of Al Qaeda now? There is self-policing when Rangers travel. The SFA have done a cracking PR job with the Tartan Army. They are "*all good clean fun*" we are "*a drunken rabble*". Nil by Mouth only issues press releases against Rangers. People get killed in Glasgow every week, it's the knife capital of Europe, so why pick out football? Most problems around the Old Firm games are not at the stadium at all but in places miles away, because of daft kick off times, people drinking their way through it, then meeting the other side on the streets.
32. This section has two implications for policy makers. Firstly, it raises again the necessity of reviewing the policing styles around football and any sectarianism. It may well be practical policing to adopt a 'soft' approach with the Old Firm travelling support, but it has to be understood that one cost of this is to instil a sense of unfairness into the fans of the home clubs who cannot do what the Old Firm fans do either at home matches or at away matches. There are inconsistencies in application here obvious to the ordinary fans of other teams. The supporters of St.Johnstone argued that they simply want to be treated the same as other fans:

"Why are we badly treated in Perth? They say they want atmosphere but we are not allowed to bring in musical instruments, to stand up, or to fly flags. All this in a crowd of 2,000 at MacDiarmid Park! There's no consistency in what the police do, and they just let the Old Firm fans get away with it".

Secondly, there is a need to discuss with Rangers and Celtic whether they think their present procedures for the allocation of away tickets are really adequate and whether they can outline clear sanctions that can be applied against fans who

commit trouble at away matches. Some of the problems here were indicated by the representative of the Association of Irish Celtic Supporters Clubs when asked about policing:

“Well, Strathclyde police adopt a ‘zero tolerance’ attitude. It doesn’t bother me, though I was nearly arrested for nothing at all at one match. They are a wee bit heavy-handed but that’s not the real issue. There’s no problem with other forces, though the truth is that you rarely sit in your allocated place in away stadia, you just choose one of the seats in the away stand. I have been to Aberdeen many times and never sat in my allocated seat”.

What Are the Responsibilities of the Scottish Media in Regard to the Portrayal and Amplification of Sectarianism in Scottish Football?

33. With no prompting, many fans were critical of the role of the media in portraying and amplifying sectarianism in Scottish football. These criticisms tended to vary. While Old Firm supporters were inclined to believe that the media was all too ready to attribute bad behaviour to Old Firm players and fans, supporters from the rest of Scotland argued that ‘the West Coast press’:

- is in thrall to the Old Firm and will not criticize and report honestly on the bigotry of their supporters;
- tends to read other rivalries and conflicts through a sectarian lens, so that what is largely a parochial West Coast issue gets portrayed as an all-Scotland problem, an error which also serves to diminish the specific responsibilities of the Old Firm.

34. For the Celtic supporters it was things like cub reporters digging into obscure websites and chat rooms and writing stories about all kinds of nonsense, “*They fire up the flames*”. They added:

“The media has a vital role, it should take up the initiatives of the Scottish Executive and not play to the economic agenda of selling newspapers.

While the Rangers Assembly argued that Rangers fans get picked on lines because of the size of the club. About 4% of the fans sing dubious songs but that’s quite a lot of people, but when Hearts fans sing about “*Fenian b*****” there’s not a mention of it in the press. There are a lot of people in the media who make their fortunes out of slagging off Rangers. They argued that the Scottish media thrive on sectarianism – they denigrate the Rangers’ flag display. When Arsenal had an ‘orange day’ for Bergkamp they got praised, when Rangers did it they got attacked.

35. But other fans see things somewhat differently. The Aberdeen support, for example, argued that, yes a few, but a small minority, of Aberdeen fans do sing about the Ibrox disaster being magic, and about Simpson's tackle on Durrant, but its not nearly in the same league as what the Old Firm usually get up to. But such

examples then get used by the Scottish media to water down the very real sectarianism of the Old Firm. They try to disguise their problem by putting it onto us. They also cited the example of The Sun's campaign against Aberdeen fans who disrupted a silence for George Young when most of them were young boys who had not the slightest idea who Young was. Airdrie fans argued that the Scottish media fuel a lot of the sectarianism around Scottish football "*They are not a positive force*" because they will not abhor the Old Firm, because that doesn't sell papers, and they are only interested in them. They mentioned the effect of a 'comedy' sketch by Jonathan Watson which had labelled them as "*the cousins of King Billy*" and this had quickly led to choruses by other teams of 'Go home you Huns'. Dunfermline argued that they have good relations with the supporters clubs of many other clubs – Hibernian, Rangers and, in the past, Celtic. They used to use part of a Celtic Supporters Club to have a drink before matches in Glasgow, but Chris Sutton had "*wasted*" that relationship, when he claimed that Dunfermline would "*lie down*" to Rangers in an end of season match which Rangers had to win by a number of goals to win the League (which they duly did). They feel that players have to be made much more aware of the effects of such comments, which can have significant effects far away from the pitch.
