

F/T: 0300 244 4000  
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Neil Doncaster  
Chief Executive  
SPFL  
Hampden Park  
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G42 9DE

18 June 2019

Dear Neil,

As you know, the Scottish Government has been in discussion with the SPFL, Scottish FA and a range of other stakeholders how we can work together to effectively address unacceptable conduct in football.

While these discussions have been ongoing for some time, particularly following the 2016 Scottish Cup Final, there has been renewed emphasis following a number of unsavoury incidents over recent months. I know you agree these incidents have been unacceptable and have no place in our national game.

We need robust data to understand unacceptable conduct at football, and to take appropriate action to address it.

The data the SPFL and the Scottish FA provide has been helpful – complementing other information – to help us gain a clearer understanding of the behaviour of spectators in grounds. While the vast majority of supporters are a credit to their clubs, it is clear that problems remain and further action is required.

We have already met to consider what additional measures can be taken, and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you before the new football season commences.

As we discussed today, you will be aware that there has been Parliamentary and media interest in the data you provide us with and further calls for this data to be published.

While this data is collated by the football authorities and provided to us on the basis it is “confidential and is not published”, our clear and consistent preference has been for this data to be published. My predecessor emphasised that when he wrote to you on 29 May 2017,

Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire  
Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered  
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and I believe there continues to be a strong case for the data to be made available more widely.

It is only through open and honest discussion, based on robust evidence, that we can work with all of our partners to tackle the unacceptable conduct by some spectators which continues to shame our national game.

The behaviour we have seen in recent months in football is unacceptable and should not be tolerated. Communities expect all possible steps to be taken to tackle it. Transparency and openness is crucial to strengthen public confidence – and that is why I believe this data should be published.

I thank you taking the time for our call today and for your commitment to discuss this matter at your next board meeting. I would appreciate if you can update me on the outcome of this board discussion.

I am copying this letter to Scottish FA chief executive Ian Maxwell.



**HUMZA YOUSAF**

Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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Chief Executive  
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29th June 2017

Dear Neil,

The disorder that marred the 2016 Scottish Cup Final highlighted the importance of football taking action to address unacceptable conduct. I note the rule changes and associated guidance put in place by the SPFL and Scottish FA following those shameful scenes, obliging clubs to ensure all reasonable measures are taken to prevent and address issues. I also note the revised SPFL mechanism which will be put in place to deal with any cases of unacceptable conduct, ensuring club representatives are no longer involved.

You have confirmed that information on instances of unacceptable conduct across the SPFL – and appropriate Scottish Cup fixtures – will now be collated and shared with the Scottish Government on a regular basis. This data should be robust enough to shape any possible future policy and actions taken to eradicate offensive and abusive behaviour.

Data gathered over the course of the 2017-18 season will need to be evaluated to assess if the new measures introduced are sufficient. If that is not the case, I would expect further action to be identified and implemented by the football authorities. As part of that assessment, I expect the football authorities to give particular attention to any repeated offences, regardless of what reasonable measures have been taken by clubs in mitigation.

Unacceptable conduct should not be tolerated in any area of society, including football. Communities rightly expect all possible action to be taken to prevent and address it, and transparency and openness is crucial to strengthening public confidence. It is difficult to see how the building of public confidence can be achieved without being open and transparent with the data gathered. I am therefore disappointed that the data gathered will not be publically available and I hope that you will reconsider this decision.

I am copying this letter to Scottish FA chief executive Stewart Regan.

**MICHAEL MATHESON MSP**

**From:** [Redacted]  
**Sent:** 24 September 2018 10:26  
**To:** [Redacted]  
**Subject:** FW: Unacceptable conduct data

For info.

**From:** [Redacted]  
**Sent:** 23 September 2018 15:16  
**To:** [Redacted]  
**Subject:** RE: Unacceptable conduct data

[Redacted]

I'm waiting on Board approval before sharing info.

Out of the office until Friday 28<sup>th</sup>

I'll get back to you next week.

[Redacted]

Scottish Football  
Association

**From:** [Redacted]  
**Sent:** 20 September 2018 12:57  
**To:** [Redacted]  
**Subject:** Unacceptable conduct data

[Redacted]

I have now received all unacceptable conduct data from the SPFL for season 17-18.  
Do you have anything covering Scottish FA – presumably just domestic – fixtures?

I'll be providing advice to Ministers and I'd like to provide a rounded picture, or at least touch on what the position is with the Scottish FA.

Thanks

[Redacted]