

MEETING TO DISCUSS UPCOMING CELTIC V RANGERS FIXTURE

Friday, 12 March 2021 – virtual meeting via MS Teams

Attendees

Scottish Government

- Cabinet Secretary for Justice
- Minister for Public Health and Sport
- Jason Leitch, National Clinical Director
- Michael Kellet, Director of Population Health
- Clare Hicks, Police Division
- [REDACTED], Active Scotland Division
- John McFarlane, special adviser
- Davie Hutchison, special adviser
- [REDACTED], Communications

Police Scotland

- Iain Livingstone, Chief Constable
- Bernie Higgins, Assistant Chief Constable and Gold Commander for Celtic v Rangers on 21 March
- Mark Sutherland, Chief Superintendent

Glasgow City Council

- Susan Aitken, Leader
- Annemarie O'Donnell, Chief Executive
- Colin Edgar, Head of communication and strategic partnerships
- Mairi Millar, Head of Licensing and Democratic Services
- Denise Hamilton, City Centre Manager / Head of City Services Group
- Kirsty MacAlpine, Senior Advisor to the Leader

Celtic

- Peter Lawwell, Chief Executive
- Michael Nicholson, Company Secretary
- Ronnie Hawthorn, Head of Safety and Security

Rangers

- Stewart Robertson, Managing Director
- Robin Howe, Head of Security
- Andrew Dickson, Head of Football Administration

Summary of meeting

HY welcomed attendees to the meeting, which he said was intended to look ahead to the forthcoming SPFL Premier League Celtic v Rangers fixture on 12 March 2021 and not look back at the events of last weekend. The Scottish Government is concerned about the potential for disorder and the risk to public health and therefore has two clear asks of Celtic and Rangers:

- Clear and unambiguous messaging from the clubs communicating a stay at home message to supporters at the earliest opportunity; and
- To engage directly with supporters and supporters' groups to reinforce those messages.

JL reinforced the stay at home message, which he said was particularly important at this fragile stage of the pandemic.

The Chief Constable highlighted the unique circumstances of this season – with Celtic pursuing a historic tenth successive title and Rangers denying it – as well as the challenges of the pandemic. He recognised the experience and integrity of all parties, and their determination to ensure the game takes place safely. He confirmed Police Scotland has the capacity and capability to protect public order and minimise the risk to public health – particularly if both clubs communicate the stay at home message to supporters.

HY reinforced the importance of clear, early messaging to supporters, using influential role models including managers, players and ambassadors.

SR welcomed the opportunity to attend the meeting and said Rangers' partnerships are strong and club staff are experienced in successfully managing games with Celtic. The club understands the gravity of the situation with the pandemic, he said, and is happy to agree to the two asks presented by HY. The club will meet supporters' groups next week, and the manager will attend to reinforce the stay at home message. Messaging – which will be straight-forward and direct – will be issued by the club.

PL confirmed the asks from the Scottish Government were not too big. He emphasised that Celtic already have operational plans to safely hold matches during the pandemic, and these would be in place for the forthcoming fixture. The club has already met supporters. RH said the club had a strong communications strategy in place, and the role of the Supporters' Liaison Officer had been important.

SA said the messaging from the clubs was important, and Glasgow City Council would amplify that through its channels. She said strong, long-standing relationships are in place, and the council will deal with circumstances it is presented with.

JL said clinicians would be happy to speak to supporters' groups to highlight public health issues, or to discuss these issues with club representatives to assist messaging.

The Chief Constable said a series of tactical approaches are in place for the fixture – some public and some private but all are proportionate to ensure the public are protected. BH said planning for this fixture had been underway for some time, and sufficient resources are available to deal with circumstances on the day. Protecting

public health – while maintaining physical distancing – were crucial for officers on duty. Police Scotland will issue messaging, and deploy proactive tactics ahead of the game with known risk supporters. MS highlighted the community impact assessment, and working with the local community to address concerns. The Chief Constable said every Division had an operational plan in place for a Celtic v Rangers game, reflecting the Scotland-wide interest in the fixture.

HY said clear and unambiguous messaging over the weekend would help provide confidence and reassurance to Ministers. He again stressed the importance of direct engagement with supporters and supporters' groups.

MG thanked all attendees for their contributions and emphasised the Scottish Government commitment to working in partnership to ensure the fixture is a success. We do not want to jeopardise the progress we have made in suppressing the virus – and that is why it is so important people stay home and stay safe.

Active Scotland Division

Scottish Government

12 March, 2021