

From: [redacted]@spfl.co.uk>  
Sent: 09 October 2019 11:20  
To: First Minister  
Subject: Invitation : Betfred Cup Semi-Finals | 2019/20 | First Minister

Good morning

I would appreciate if you could pass the attached invitation letter from our Chief Executive, Neil Doncaster, to the First Minister.

Kind regards - [redacted]

[cid:image001.png@01D57E01.087D15A0]

[redacted] | PA to Chairman & Chief Executive  
The Scottish Professional Football League Limited  
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T: www.twitter.com/spfl<http://www.twitter.com/spfl>



## BETFRED CUP SEMI-FINALS 2019/20

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### HIBERNIAN v CELTIC

The National Stadium, Hampden Park

Saturday 2 November 2019

Kick-off 5:30pm

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### RANGERS v HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN

The National Stadium, Hampden Park

Sunday 3 November 2019

Kick-off 3:00pm

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Dear First Minister

I have pleasure in extending an invitation to you and a guest to attend either or both of the above Betfred Cup Semi-Final matches to be held at Hampden Park, Glasgow.

An informal buffet will be available in the Millennium Suite from around 90 minutes before kick-off on each of the match dates. Please also note that in the event of a draw after normal time, there will be extra time of 30 minutes (15 minutes each way) and thereafter, if necessary, penalty kicks.

I would appreciate if you could reply directly to **[redacted]** by email: **[redacted]@spfl.co.uk** as soon as possible indicating your availability, the name of your guest and whether car parking would be helpful. All tickets, passes (hospitality/car park) and final details will be issued as soon as possible thereafter as required.

I do hope you will be able to join us.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]  
Chief Executive



ND/MS

5 March 2020

Humza Yousaf MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

*By email only - CabSecJustice@gov.scot*

Dear Humza

Thank you for your letter of 15 January 2020, which has now been considered by a meeting of the SPFL Board of Directors.

We are unsure what is intended to be the “long-standing issue”, to which you refer in your letter. If you mean sectarianism in Scottish society, then we agree that this is indeed a very long-standing and, might be said, endemic issue, which can only successfully be tackled by society working together as a whole. Football, as an important part of Scottish society, absolutely has a part to play in tackling Scotland’s particular brand of sectarianism. In that regard, we are pleased to be part of the Scottish Government’s Cross-Party Working Group on Combatting Sectarianism in Scottish Society.

However, any action that football takes will be wholly ineffective in bringing an end to this scourge unless there is a concerted effort led by the Scottish Government to deal with the root causes of such sectarianism throughout Scottish society. For example, the extensive sectarian disorder around the various marches and demonstrations in Glasgow and the West of Scotland during the last year had nothing to do with football.

If however, by “long-standing issue”, you are referring to Unacceptable Conduct at football matches in Scotland, extensive work and significant progress has already been made in ensuring that Scottish football matches are, and remain, safe and enjoyable environments in which to enjoy sport. It will not have escaped your attention that at the Celtic v Rangers match on 29 December 2019, there were just four arrests. There will be few entertainment events that take place in Scotland this decade where over 60,000 people will come together in a highly charged and passionate atmosphere and produce fewer arrests.

Notwithstanding the additional tension that has been created by very close title races in three of the SPFL’s four League divisions and by an Old Firm final in the Betfred Cup at Hampden Park, this season to date has seen a reduction in Unacceptable Conduct across the game in Scotland. This change has been achieved by our clubs tackling Unacceptable Conduct head on. Examples of the recent work that has been carried out include the following:

5 March 2020

Humza Yousaf MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
Scottish Government

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- Heart of Midlothian closed part of their Wheatfield Stand to home fans, which involved relocating season ticket holders. Additionally, the club has closed the corner sections of the Roseburn Stand for higher risk matches in order to increase the distance between home and away supporters and reduce the chances of Unacceptable Conduct occurring at Tynecastle Park;
- The SPFL has been auditing CCTV capability at all Ladbrokes Premiership grounds and there has been significant and demonstrable progress made at several grounds in recent years. For example, Heart of Midlothian and Hibernian have each invested over £100,000 in upgrading their CCTV systems to facilitate identification of those who engage in Unacceptable Conduct;
- Celtic have previously closed a section of their stadium as a result of Unacceptable Conduct (for two matches in 2017) and did so again in 2019;
- Rangers launched their 'Everyone Anyone' campaign at the start of this Season. As you know, this campaign has a stated aim of sending a clear message of zero tolerance to all forms of discrimination, on and off the pitch. We fully endorse your comments that this is a fantastic initiative by Rangers. Rangers have also put a number of fans (found to have committed Unacceptable Conduct) through an anti-sectarian rehabilitation course;
- In addition to the fact that the majority of SPFL clubs each have a Supporter Liaison Officer (who acts as a conduit between the fans and the Board), a number of clubs have now also introduced 'fan reporting numbers' – these are dedicated telephone numbers that can be used by fans to report (by text) Unacceptable Conduct in the moment, thereby reducing the barriers to reporting;
- All SPFL clubs participated in anti-discrimination events promoted by Rainbow Laces and Show Racism the Red Card again this Season; and
- SPFL clubs continually review their operational processes with a view to making improvements and responding to changing supporter behaviour. The use of pyrotechnics at events (including concerts, festivals and football matches) is one challenge that has posed practical difficulties for clubs. Motherwell are one SPFL club that has seen instances of pyrotechnics being used in its stadium. Given such previous incidents, Motherwell amended its approach to crowd management in order to better govern the flow of spectators to the stadium and to facilitate the search process of supporters as they arrive.

As you and your officials will be aware, the SPFL introduced numerous rule changes in 2016, which significantly strengthened the obligations on SPFL clubs to identify and punish individuals who engage in Unacceptable Conduct within stadia during matches.

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Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
Scottish Government

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This very difficult exercise in terms of identification and evidence gathering can only be successful with the full co-operation of Police Scotland and with the availability and benefits of the latest and most sophisticated CCTV systems. Our clubs are making the required investment in terms of time, effort and finance and, as more of the most serious and repetitive offenders are the subject of prosecutions (made possible, in part, by the better communication and evidential material provided by clubs and 'criminal' football banning orders), we are entitled to be hopeful that this should bring returns in terms of reductions in the numbers and seriousness of incidents. There are numerous examples of clubs issuing statements condemning the behaviour of their own supporters and detailing what action has been, or will be, taken against the individuals involved – in order to deter other individuals from engaging in similar behaviour. One high profile example is the statement issued by Motherwell in response to objects being thrown at the Rangers captain, James Tavernier, last season. Disappointingly, in that case it was reported that the Crown chose not to proceed with charges against one of the individuals alleged to have been responsible.

The SPFL has also recently received mid-season statistics from Police Scotland's National Football Information Point Unit which show a reduction in the number of fixtures with incidents and a significant increase in the number of refusals and ejections at matches. This increase highlights the focus that clubs put on the match day operation and demonstrates action being taken to prevent incidents of Unacceptable Conduct occurring or continuing.

Turning to specific points in your letter, I can confirm that:

- A bottle was indeed thrown onto the pitch at Easter Road during the Hibernian v Rangers game on 22 December. As a result of their investment in CCTV technology, Hibernian were able to pass images of the individual to Police Scotland and it is understood that a man has now been charged with culpable and reckless conduct. As the individual responsible was not the individual recorded as the 'holder' of the seat, the identification process required an investment of significant time and resources by Hibernian in collaboration with Police Scotland.
- The FIFA three-step protocol was in effect at the UEFA match in Sofia between Bulgaria and England in October 2019 but was not, in fact, used. In the first half, black players in the England team were booed and subjected to monkey chants.

Several spectators in the home end were observed making Nazi salutes. In response, the referee invoked step one of the protocol by halting the match while a stadium announcement was made. Despite racist abuse continuing thereafter and during the second half of the match, neither step two of the protocol (a further suspension of the match, with players being sent back to the dressing rooms) nor step three (abandonment of the match) were invoked.

- There are significant issues with the FIFA three-step protocol – hence why, in the three years since it was introduced by FIFA (at the Confederations Cup in 2017), we are not aware of a single football match anywhere in the world, where it has been used as set out by FIFA (including by FIFA itself at its own matches).

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Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
Scottish Government

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One such concern is that the procedure potentially creates an incentive for fans of a team losing a particular match to behave badly with a view to having the game abandoned. As a result, we will continue to monitor the extent to which other countries adopt the FIFA three-step protocol or develop their own protocols. This, we hope, will create a body of evidence that can guide our own approach to any future Scottish football protocols for dealing with Unacceptable Conduct.

- In 2016, your officials helpfully agreed to review proposed changes to the SPFL's Guidance, which sets out the enforceable standards which SPFL clubs are required to meet in terms of practical arrangements and programmes to encourage a reduction in the degree of sectarian 'feeling' and actions within stadia. The Guidance is designed to minimise the likelihood of disorderly conduct occurring and maximising the likelihood of arrest and prosecution of perpetrators where disorderly conduct occurs. The Guidance requires clubs, for example, to support Police Scotland when it is decided to take action and make arrests within stadia and in the gathering of evidence (both photographic and video), enabling the identification of individuals for charging and prosecution following a match and/or for internal club disciplinary procedures.
- The SPFL intends to review that Guidance once again over the next few months with a view to bringing amendments into effect in time for the start of next season i.e. 2021/2022. It would be most helpful if your officials could review and comment on that draft amended Guidance in advance of it being adopted and SPFL Clubs being required to bring it into effect.
- Following the recent meeting between you, Calum Beattie of the SPFL and representatives from The BIG Partnership, we are continuing to consult with stakeholders on a hard-hitting PR campaign. It is vital, for such a campaign to achieve its objective of reducing further Unacceptable Conduct at matches, that it proceeds with the firm and voluble support of you and high-profile figures in the Scottish game, as well as various interest groups.

We will continue to appraise you of progress in this regard before we open discussions with you about the financial contribution that the Scottish Government wishes to make to the cost of such a campaign, as part of your mission to combat sectarianism in Scottish society.

- The SPFL has carried out a significant amount of work on potential rule changes, which would introduce a scaled system of sanctions. This issue was discussed at length at the SPFL Board meeting on 17 February and it was recognised that, in practice, such a system already operates within the disciplinary structure and processes of the SPFL. If any club is found to have breached SPFL Rules (whether relating to Unacceptable Conduct or otherwise), when determining what sanction to impose an SPFL Board Sub-Committee or Commission will take into account the club's history of similar offences.

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Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
Scottish Government

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An increased sanction will often be imposed in the event that a club has committed a similar offence in a recent season. This flexibility within the SPFL's disciplinary system avoids a scenario whereby a club commits a serious offence but only receives a light sanction as it is its first offence under a 'scaled system'. Further and in addition to the concerns set out above regarding the three-step protocol, the SPFL is firmly of the view that eradicating Unacceptable Conduct is a long-term objective which can only be achieved through education and by engaging with fans. Introducing a pre-determined set of sanctions could lead to supporters feeling as if they are being pre-judged and undermine attempts to create closer links with supporters through initiatives such as the role of the Supporter Liaison Officer.

You have asked what more the Scottish Government can do to support the work undertaken by football authorities and clubs. The most significant assistance that could be given would be changes to legislation, which would either (i) create a presumption in favour of the imposition of a Football Banning Order ("FBO") or (ii) require the Court to actively consider the imposition of a FBO, in all cases in which the imposition of a FBO would be available to the Court. At present, and for a variety of different reasons, we are continuing to see offenders leave Court without a FBO. Club bans are simply not fully effective, as they cannot practically be applied at away matches and do not carry any criminal sanction if breached.

There is a continuing issue with the number of such banning orders imposed in Scotland as a proportion of football related prosecutions (relative to England and Wales) and we have been working with the judiciary to highlight and understand the current statistics where there are successful prosecutions. It may be that further work could be done through contact by your department with the Crown Office so that individual Procurator Fiscal Deputies are encouraged to enjoin Sheriffs/Judges to impose FBOs in appropriate cases. It has been pleasing to note that Police Scotland and the Judicial Institute have restarted a programme whereby Sheriffs attend SPFL matches and are given access to the match day operations of clubs. Such a legislative change would, in a football context, undoubtedly lead to a significant reduction in the extent and seriousness of offending at football matches in Scotland.

A further and linked suggestion would be legislative change to allow our clubs to seek civil FBOs. This is something that they cannot do under existing law. As you will know, the SPFL has been campaigning in the context of the forthcoming Government proposals on hate crime in Scotland to amend the existing law so that Clubs are permitted to initiate 'Civil' banning order applications in the civil courts. At present, only the Chief Constable may bring such applications and any Club would require to meet and achieve all the legal and practical hurdles that Police Scotland meet when making such applications. However, the fact remains, in Scotland there is only a fraction of the numbers of FBO applications that are made in England. In these circumstances, we respectfully request that you consider making an early change in the law on this subject.

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Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
Scottish Government

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Given our respective congested diaries, I suggest that we seek to identify a date, in the next couple of months, for us to meet to review the above. The SPFL remains an enthusiastic and determined partner with the Scottish Government to further reduce Unacceptable Conduct at SPFL matches and to help you tackle sectarianism in Scottish society.

We look forward to working with you and members of your office to achieve this.

Yours sincerely

Neil Doncaster  
Chief Executive



Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing  
St Andrews House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

26<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Mr FitzPatrick

I am writing as Chair of Scottish football's Joint Response Group ("JRG"), in response to the Scottish Government's decision to reject plans for a pilot event for supporters at this Sunday's Celtic v Motherwell match.

The Scottish FA and SRU have worked together on our proposals for a Return to Training and a Return to Playing matches without supporters. Our joint proposals for the return of our sports have been approved by the Scottish Government.

The First Minister announced a return for fans to matches with effect from 14 September. Pilot events this weekend were proposed to pave the way for that to meet the expectations of supporters and the wider general public.

I should be obliged if you will confirm that the pilot event for Scottish rugby this weekend will suffice as a single pilot for fans in stadia, applicable to both rugby and football. It is important that both sports are treated equally both in relation to the return of fans and other matters as we have been since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic.

I look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

Rod Petrie  
President

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**Patron / Her Majesty The Queen**



**From:** [redacted]@gov.scot  
**Sent:** 12 November 2020 16:04  
**To:** [redacted]@scottishfa.co.uk  
**Cc:** [redacted]@scottishfa.co.uk  
**Subject:** RE: Elite Athlete Exemption

No problem – if I ever get a minute I will try and pull together a guidance document on what is and isn't covered

I'm pleased to say this is covered. Domestic elite sportspersons can attend elite training overseas in a non-exempt country, and be exempt on return to Scotland. This is on the basis that you will be continuing activities as an elite sportsperson operating under the relevant resumption of performance sport guidance on return to Scotland. All will need written evidence from the Governing Body confirming that they are an elite sportsperson who is travelling abroad to participate in training for an elite event, and that you will be continuing activities as a sportsperson on return to Scotland.

Many thanks  
[redacted]

[redacted]  
Head of Active Scot | Scottish Government | Area 3J North | Victoria Quay | Edinburgh | EH8 8QZ  
0131 2 [redacted] [redacted]@gov.scot

**From:** [redacted]@scottishfса.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 12 November 2020 14:01  
**To:** [redacted]@gov.scot > **Cc:**  
[redacted]@scottishfса.co.uk>  
**Subject:** FW: Elite Athlete Exemption

Good afternoon [redacted]

**Apologies for yet another query, however I have received the request below from Celtic FC in connection with quarantine exemption for their team following a proposed winter training camp overseas.**

I would be grateful for your thoughts on this request and whether or not we would be able to provide exemption to the players under these circumstances.

Many thanks.

[redacted]

**From:** [redacted]@celticfc.co.uk  
**Sent:** 12 November 2020 12:42  
**To:** [redacted]@scottishfa.co.uk  
**Subject:** Elite Athlete Exemption

Dear [redacted]

Further to our conversation I have been asked by club executive and football management to seek elite athlete exemption for a winter training camp in Turkey.

We would like to undertake a warm weather training break during the first week of January 2021 in order to set the team up for the numerous club and international fixtures our players will have during the second half of the season.

Whilst recognising the heightened Covid-19 related risks associated with international travel we will ensure that suitably robust control measures, comparable to those applied when we compete in European competition matches, will be in place. It is also recognised that current projections by government appointed experts indicate that the state of the virus in the UK could be at a very elevated level at this time of the year. Therefore, moving our playing squad and immediate support staff to a bio-protected bubble environment within a market that is projected to have a much lower prevalence of the virus is considered to be a positive and appropriate risk mitigation measure.

The training camp would be between league fixtures and limited to a maximum period of 6 days. Given the difficulties around the continually changing travel corridor exemption list and the inability to plan ahead on this list with any degree of certainty, it is intended to rely upon the availability of the entire stadium exemption provisions set out in our legislation to be able to do this.

As noted the camp will be run using the exact set of bio-protected bubble protocols currently in place for European competition namely private club charter flight, private transfers, restricted areas within hotels, private dining areas and a hotel complex will be selected that has strict COVID-19 protocols in place.

Like European matches, only those who have received negative results from RT-PCR tests and who are approved by the Club will travel and our regular club PCR testing programme will be continued during the winter break period.

The information above is to provide you with an awareness and understanding of our intentions. As you would expect, detailed operational plans for our winter training camp are still being finalised. However, please be assured that our arrangements would be carefully planned and delivered in continued compliance with established protocols and fully reflective of our own internal safety and risk management programmes.

We trust that the above provides a sufficient level of detail at this stage for your awareness and to enable the SFA to support this key programme for our club and our players. If you need more information or wish to discuss this further please contact myself by email or phone [REDACTED]

Kind regards

[redacted]  
Head of Medical Services  
Celtic FC  
Celtic Way, Lannoxtown, G66 7LR  
Direct Tel 44 [0]1386 [redacted]

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For more information please visit <http://urlis.ma/anyone.net/v1/7me/wkW5A-00070Q-66A>?st=7e1b682&ct=c8d4MCVRX9ChP94NqndBuctr242RhuXVlyrRvLM/m3m/96ectqHA7omHVZP\_-weeds/orOy/czC289nEdc/FBSSEODnGes\_CHvt0AE\_7jkyPhd3t-rGrIk-07r7v7o2zU8B8R8DfQyGAVMDm0n7ztaAMTAw8uJCRd7tR0BQ1CpXlq3M71Dq5AH7w service.

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