

**At a meeting of the SUNDERLAND STADIUM OF LIGHT SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP held in the STADIUM OF LIGHT on WEDNESDAY, 20<sup>th</sup> JUNE, 2012 at 10.00 a.m.**

**Present:-**

**Sunderland City Council:**

K. Scott - Development Manager (in the Chair)  
P. Baxter - Principal Chartered Building Control Surveyor  
G. Fisher - Technician  
D. Noon - Principal Governance Services Officer

**Sunderland AFC:**

P. Weir - Safety Officer  
P. Weymes - Facilities Manager

**Supporters Association:**

S. Simpson

**British Transport Police:**

S. Davies - Sergeant  
G. Wayne - Sergeant

**Northumbria Police:**

M. Hobson - Sergeant

**Sports Grounds Safety Authority:**

S. Storey - Inspector

**St. John Ambulance:**

J. Purvis

**North East Ambulance Service:**

P. Stoddart

## **Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service:**

G. Yates

### **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Sue Storey and Sgt Wayne who were attending their first meeting of the SAG

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Paula Kadiri and Robert Dobson.

#### **2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2012**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Group held on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

#### **3. Matters Arising**

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman, Mr Weir advised that he had broached with the stewards, Sgt Davies' idea to develop fans liaisons among those who were regular rail travellers. To date there had been no response however he would raise the issue again.

#### **4. General Safety Certificate for 2012/2013**

The Chairman advised that he was moving towards Certification aligned to risk based operations management and away from prescription. He asked that he be advised of any updates required before renewal of the current certificate.

Mr Weymes advised that all the clubs documentation and procedures lying behind the Safety Certificate had been produced in the style of a manual and were available electronically on the Club's computer systems.

#### **5. Fixtures For 2012/13**

Consideration was given to the fixture list for 2012/13. It was noted that yet again Sunderland would have a home fixture on boxing day. This would be the 11<sup>th</sup> occasion this had happened over the last 12 seasons.

Mr Simpson referred to the fact there would be at least 6 fixtures during December, a time of the year when money was scarce for many supporters.

## **6. Standing in Seated Areas – Match V Manchester United.**

The Chairman advised that the clubs had been innovative in their approach to the problem however ultimately it had not proved successful with the vast majority of the Manchester Utd fans standing for the duration of the match.

In response to an enquiry from Ms Storey about the approach taken, the SAG was advised that following an initial meeting of the Council's Regulatory Committee which had agreed a limit of 1700 visiting supporters, a number of meetings and exchanges of correspondence had taken place between Sunderland and Manchester United football clubs which had resulted in a revised safety management plan for the fixture being produced by the Club.

The plan detailed the close collaboration between the Clubs particularly in respect of tighter levels of control at point of sale of tickets to visiting fans. In previous games the allocation of tickets to visiting Manchester United fans was by way of a lottery involving around 30000 applicants.

The revised safety management plan intended that priority was given to a "loyalty pot" within the Manchester United fan database. It was argued that the "loyalty pot" status was cherished by those fans and as a result it was felt that the selling of a significant proportion of tickets to that group would attract a more compliant crowd than in the past. To reinforce the message a letter was issued by Manchester United at point of sale to remind loyalty pot members of the consequences of not observing ground regulations and safety certificate requirements which would include the removal of loyalty pot membership status.

Tickets to the loyalty pot group were located in the lower tier. By placing loyalty pot members within those "front of house" seats it was expected that not only would they be compliant and sit in the seats provided, but also that their actions would have a positive impact upon those fans behind them. An additional resource of up to 100 Manchester United stewards was put at the Clubs disposal to assist in the match day operation. Sunderland also refined its ticket selling policy to allow for rows of seats to be kept vacant within the visiting allocation to allow for access by stewards and police into the heart of the crowd if necessary and the removal from sale of all end of row seats which would help to prevent aisles becoming blocked if fans did stand during the match.

Mr. Weir contended that plan had achieved a modicum of success in that aisles had not become blocked however most fans had stood. The Chairman stated that the SAG and the Club should not just give up on the issue. It would need to continue to be innovative and engage with visiting clubs in striving to find a solution.

## **7. Relocation of Visiting Supporters**

Peter Weymes briefed the Group on progress to relocate visiting fans to the North Stand Upper. In response to an enquiry from Ms Storey the Chairman advised that the depth of field of visiting fans would be lessened but have a

wider lateral spread over the seating deck than the narrower deeper block currently utilised in the South Stand, however the raking of the seating deck would be steeper. With regard to access for visiting coaches they would be driven directly to the rear of the North Stand for visiting supporters to alight at the turnstiles. A number of options were being considered for those occasions where 40 plus coaches were expected (only 4 or 5 games per season) including the possibility of parking coaches in the yellow car park with supporters escorted to the North Stand.

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman, Mr Simpson stated that he had spoken to many supporters about the matter and was not aware of any complaints. There were supporters in the Blacks Cats Bar who felt that they had ended up with better seats having been decanted from the North Stand Upper to the seats directly in front of the bar. Mr Weir advised that the Club had consulted and engaged with supporters from the earliest possible stage in the relocation process.

In response to an enquiry from Mr Purvis, Mr Weymes advised that the Family Area was to be located in the South East corner of the Stadium. Mr Purvis asked if it would be possible to look at the North Stand Upper in respect of the location of the first aid post and Mr Weymes replied that they could do this immediately following the meeting.

#### **8. Update on Works to the Wicketsheaf Gyatory.**

The Chairman advised that works were currently being undertaken in the Portobello Lane area which would have no effect on the concerts. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> July test running of the gyatory without lights would begin. Also from that date, on the route travelling from Wearmouth Bridge along North Bridge Street, the right hand turn into Roker Avenue would be closed.

With this in mind, Mr Weymes advised that he would ask people attending the Sunderland University Graduation ceremonies to access the Stadium via Wessington Way.

#### **9. Stadium Accident Reporting**

Mr Weir advised that there had been 15 incidents of which only 2 had required a hospital visit. Mr Purvis confirmed that there were no trends, with the incidents being general in nature.

#### **10. Sports Grounds Safety Authority Issues**

Ms Storey advised that the Authority had carried out a lot of work for UEFA with regard to the European Championships. This included providing training for the safety officers at venues in Poland and the Ukraine together with the provision of match inspections at the tournament. The Sports Grounds Safety Authority were also assisting in preparations for the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics in addition to providing information on best practice to Motor

Sports, Rugby, cricket and Horse Racing authorities. The Authority was looking to develop a disability access audit and clarification on the Green Guide.

## **11. Any Other Business**

### **(i) Digital Screens**

Mr Weymes advised that the Club was planning to install digital screens at both ends of the Stadium to replace the existing scoreboards. It was hoped these would be in place for the first home game of the season although this couldn't be guaranteed.

### **(ii) Time of Future Meetings**

In order to assist members who had to travel some distance to attend meetings and avoid the need for an overnight stay, it was agreed that future meetings of the SAG would start at 10.30am.

### **(iii) Peter Weymes**

The Chairman informed the SAG that Peter was celebrating his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday today and on behalf of the Group offered him best wishes and many happy returns.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held at the Stadium on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2012 at 10.30 a.m. followed by a Table Top exercise.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

(Signed) K. SCOTT,  
Chairman.