



CL MASTER SET

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 May 1985

Dear Phil

The Prime Minister, accompanied by the Minister for Sport and Mr. Shaw, today met Lord Aberdare, Chairman of the Football Trust, and Mr. Tom Wharton, Chairman of the Football Grounds Improvement Trust. Mr. David Teasdale and Mr. Hartley Booth were also present.

The Prime Minister thanked Lord Aberdare and Mr. Wharton for everything the Football Trust and the Football Grounds Improvement Trust had already done to combat hooliganism and to improve ground safety. The Bradford tragedy had added a fresh importance and urgency to their work, and to the meeting, and the Prime Minister hoped the Trusts would play a major part in securing the changes which were now called for. There was much to be done, both in following up the action the football authorities had agreed to take after their meeting with the Prime Minister on 1 April, and, now, following the Home Secretary's statement on Monday.

The following points were made in discussion:

- (i) The income of the Football Trust, from the Pools Promoters Association, was some £7 million a year. 54% of this was passed to the Football Grounds Improvement Trust. The FGIT could use its resources only on ground improvements for the 92 clubs within the League. Most of their expenditure was on designated clubs in Divisions 1 and 2. The Trusts felt that, before the Bradford disaster, their resources were broadly sufficient to meet the programme of action agreed by the Government and the football authorities to counter hooliganism.
  - (ii) The £3.3 million surplus held by the FGIT in 1984 had now been paid out, through increasing from 60% to 75% the proportion of club costs the Trust was prepared to meet. Mr. Wharton believed much of the extra resources had in practice gone towards securing ground
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improvements, but it was not possible to be sure. The level of uncommitted funds now held by the Trusts was low.

- (iii) The 92 League clubs received £5½ million a year for providing their fixture lists to the pools promoters. This sum was distributed evenly between clubs, irrespective of need. The clubs also received some £3½ million a year from the sale of TV rights, which was distributed on the same basis.
- (iv) The FGIT took account of attendance at clubs before determining its allocation of funds. They would not assist clubs to provide more facilities than their average attendances required. Clubs whose financial situation threatened their survival would find it difficult to pay their share of the cost of improvement work.
- (v) The Football Trust dealt mainly with matters such as encouraging the use of closed circuit TV and with encouraging the sport at grass roots level. The apportionment of funds between the FT and the FGIT could be adjusted if necessary.
- (vi) In the interim period before all the 3rd and 4th Division clubs could be designated, it was important that all clubs should be encouraged to follow the guidelines set out in the Green Code. Proper arrangements to permit quick evacuation of grounds was the key safety point. Clubs had to remember that they had a legal responsibility to all those using their grounds.
- (vii) The Chief Fire Officers were now inspecting sports stadia in their areas in accordance with the Home Secretary's Parliamentary statement and would be reporting to their respective local authorities. But these would not be the only improvements to be made and FGIT could instruct independent surveyors to produce estimates of the overall costs of bringing the Division 3 and 4 grounds up to standard.
- (viii) The Minister for Sport was chairing a working group, which would involve the Home Office and include representatives from the Football Trusts, the PPA, the Sports Council and the football authorities. It would consider urgently the costs of the work required to bring all League grounds up to standard. With the FA's help, it would also assess the resources which the game as a whole had available for this purpose.

- (ix) Combating hooliganism had to be looked at in conjunction with crowd safety. The Prime Minister attached the highest importance to developing wider CCTV coverage. She emphasised the importance of the Police obtaining proper evidence so that appropriate charges could be made to stick.
- (x) Mr. Wharton said that he was particularly worried about safety at the Windsor Road ground in Belfast.

The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, thanked Lord Aberdare and Mr. Wharton for a very constructive meeting. She welcomed the determination with which the Trusts were setting about their work. The problems of safety and hooliganism needed to be tackled together. The Prime Minister hoped the Trusts, the Associations and the pools promoters would continue voluntarily to meet their own proper responsibilities. The Government would be prepared to consider extra financial assistance, to meet the particular difficulties faced by the clubs after the Bradford fire, if it could be demonstrated that any such support was necessary and would be properly directed towards ground improvement work required for safety reasons. She identified the following points for further action:

- (a) The FGIT would carry out an appraisal of the costs of bringing all League clubs up to the required safety standard. Mr. Wharton would instruct surveyors immediately to prepare estimates of costs which would be passed on to Minister for Sport's Working Party as they became available.
- (b) The Football Trust would consider whether its allocation to the FGIT struck the right balance.
- (c) A working group, under the Chairmanship of the Minister for Sport, would meet urgently to assess the scale and nature of the work necessary to ensure the safety of football grounds and the financial resources available to carry out the work.
- (d) The DOE would follow up with the Northern Ireland Office the specific point raised by Mr. Wharton about the Windsor Park ground in Belfast.

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Ballard (Department of the Environment), Hugh Taylor and Jon Sibson (Home Office).

*Le*  
*Mark Addison*

(Mark Addison)

Phil Dykins, Esq.,  
Department of the Environment.

## BRADFORD CITY FIRE - DISASTER FUND

I understand that such a fund has been set up by the Mayor of Bradford; and the British Public always contributes so generously to such funds. In the past the Government has made money available to such funds (eg Aberfan, York Minster) and the position is now being considered.