

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP

Date 20th Jan 2023

Time 10am

Location Hillsborough Stadium

Meeting called by	Sheffield City Council
Type of meeting	Safety Advisory Group
Premises / Event	Sheffield Wednesday FC, Hillsborough Stadium
Note taker	[REDACTED] – Sheffield City Council
Chair	[REDACTED] – Sheffield City Council
Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [REDACTED] – Sheffield Wednesday FC [REDACTED] – Sheffield Wednesday FC [REDACTED] – Sheffield Wednesday FC [REDACTED] – Sheffield Wednesday FC [REDACTED] – Sports Grounds Safety Authority [REDACTED] – Yorkshire Ambulance Service [REDACTED] – South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue [REDACTED] – South Yorkshire Police [REDACTED] – South Yorkshire Police [REDACTED] – South Yorkshire Police [REDACTED] – Sheffield City Council Building Control [REDACTED] – Sheffield City Council Building Control [REDACTED] – Sheffield City Council [REDACTED] – Sheffield City Council Highways [REDACTED] – Sheffield City Council Health Protection Service [REDACTED] – Sheffield City Council Health Protection Service
Apologies	

Item 1 – Introduction by the Chair

Discussion	<p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, ran through housekeeping arrangement. Delegates introduced themselves and their roles in turn.</p> <p>The Chair then explained the reason for calling the meeting was to discuss concerns raised following the recent Sheffield Wednesday v Newcastle United fixture held at Hillsborough Stadium on Saturday 7th January during which a journalist had posted an image of supporters gathered around the tunnel area of the Leppings Lane end.</p>	
Conclusions		
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline

Item 2 – Terms of Reference

Discussion	<p>A review of the fixture and associated matchday operations has been carried out. The review was conducted by Sheffield City Council as the certifying authority, with cooperation from Sheffield Wednesday who are ultimately responsible for safety in the stadium.</p> <p>The process benefitted from the oversight of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority.</p> <p>The Chair wished to place on record the Councils appreciation for the assistance of both Sheffield Wednesday and the SGSA in this matter.</p>		
Conclusion			
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline	

Item 3 – Initial Concerns

Discussion	<p>A photograph and report posted on social media by a journalist showing fans congregated around the tunnel on the Leppings Lane Lower Stand purported to show fans in distress and a lack of stewarding. The image was taken 9 minutes before kick off.</p>		
Conclusion			
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline	

Item 4 – Review Process

Discussion	<p>Sheffield City Council carried out a review into the concerns. Various documents and records were scrutinized including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matchday stewarding records and;• Matchday event log and;• Matchday CCTV and;• Matchday ticketing records and;• Matchday medical records and;• Accounts from Newcastle United supporters (via the Newcastle United Supporters Trust) and;• Social media channels. <p>In addition, capacity calculations were rechecked onsite, alongside a walk through of the supporter journey in entering the stadium.</p>		
Conclusion			
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline	

Item 5 - Evidence from Matchday Records		
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reports of distress received at any stage in event control • Stewarding numbers in excess of Safety Certificate requirements • No reported injuries relating to overcrowding or similar • No CCTV evidence of fans in distress • 2 police serials inside the stadium – significantly more outside • 1487 fans on Leppings Lane Lower – safety certificate capacity is 1500 with a full holding capacity of 2366 • 3090 fans on Leppings Lane Upper – safety certificate capacity is 3200 and has been historically restricted due to the size of the concourse. Holding capacity of the upper stand is 4194. • 4 turnstiles not used adjacent to control room facility • Front two rows of seats netted off – totalling 320 seats – this includes 97 that are never sold or occupied in memory of the Liverpool fans who lost their lives in 1989 • Three rows of seats in front of disabled viewing area netted off to afford a view of the pitch for supporters in that viewing area when supporters in front engage in persistent standing 	
Conclusion		
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline

Item 6 – Newcastle United Supporters Accounts	
Discussion	<p>Sheffield City Council reached out to the Newcastle United Supporters Trust who gathered accounts of supporter experiences at the fixture. Approximately 50 such accounts were considered and can be summarized as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger concentration of stewards and SIA before the turnstiles but fewer directing fans to the seating decks • The wrong information given to fans as where to access their seats, so for example many were directed to the wrong side of the stand resulting in them needing to pass through an already congested concourse to their seats at the opposite side • ‘Overcrowding’ leading to distress particularly amongst children in the upper concourse and lower tier tunnel • Fans directed through the tunnel, or just finding their way when there are access points on either side of the lower seating deck – lack of direction from stewards • Tickets sold in areas that were netted off so fans either had to try and rip the netting off or sit in someone else’s seats causing overcrowding and in some cases disorder between fans • Reports of overcrowding in the access stairs to the upper tier. • Complaints of lack of catering and toilet facilities (21st century fans attending a ground built from 1913) • No away pub led to fans (probably responsibly) arriving earlier therefore reports of overcrowding in the upper tier concourse as early as 45 mins before KO. • Police and stewards unresponsive to fans asking for information.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fans directed through the wrong turnstiles • Suspicion map on rear of ticket doesn't accurately depict the stand layout <p>It was noted that a further request went to the Newcastle United Supporters Trust asking for any images or footage of the issues described, but none had been received by the date of the meeting.</p>	
Conclusion		
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline

Item 7 – Supporter Journey		
Discussion	<p>The review considered the supporter journey from arriving on the Leppings Lane forecourt, through entering the search lanes, turnstiles and subsequent accessing of the stand and seating area. In light of the concerns raised in the accounts of the Newcastle supporters, the upper portion of the Leppings Lane stand was included in this process. Findings were;</p> <p>Leppings Lane Lower</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate number of turnstiles for the capacity of the stand • Signage directing fans to numbered seats is clear and at an appropriate height • A corrugated fence, (designed to separate home and away fans when the stand is split) is situated behind the turnstiles. A gap in this fence offers a view of the pitch through the central access tunnel <p>Leppings Lane Upper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate number of turnstiles for the capacity of the stand • Upper stand accessed via a pair of staircases which discharge at either end of the upper concourse • Concourse houses catering and toilet blocks, alongside a bookmakers kiosk 	
Conclusions		
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline

Item 8 – Findings / Conclusions

Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neither stand was over capacity• Stewarding numbers appropriate• No injuries reported or incidents recorded in the control room event log• Measurements of stand and capacity checks concur with figures historically accepted by the club and certifying authority• Crowds condensed into small areas on the lower stand, possibly as a result of a lack of pro-active stewarding and a layout not conducive to balanced access to the seating area• CCTV shows the upper concourse to be extremely busy and estimated to be over the Green Guide figure of 3.3 persons per square metre by 1715hrs. This would have felt crowded at least for the fans in that area and make traversing the concourse difficult. CCTV or social media did not show any evidence of fans in distress in this area.• The capacity of the upper stand has been historically restricted as a result of the size and layout of its concourse, which measures 295 square metres, giving a capacity of 974 persons at 3.3 persons per square metre. This equates to 30% of the stand certificated capacity. (Green Guide recommends 50% for new build concourses – this stand was built in 1966).	
Conclusions		
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline

Item 9 – Recommendations

Discussion	<p><u>P Factor</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Consider using the 4 turnstiles to the rear of the control room with associated communication and safety management2. Consider removing the corrugated fence behind the Leppings Lane turnstiles3. Improve CCTV coverage in tunnel (now fitted 18/1/2023)4. Consider shutters for both end of the tunnel to close that access as necessary in conjunction with a risk assessment and other safety management (18/1/23 club instructed contractors)5. Consider reducing the size of the toilets in the upper concourse to allow for 395 sq/m area of concourse that would be 40.7% of the current certified upper tier capacity (18/1/23 the club have instructed contractors to assess).6. Consider using a crowd management consultants to advise on safe movement (18/1/23 club advises that Movement Strategies are to visit).7. Certifying authority to review P (and S) factors especially in upper tier given concourse observations.
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	<p><u>S Factor</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deploy a graduated steward approach where the most experienced and communicative stewards are at the away end where the visiting supporters are least familiar with the stadium layout 2. Ensure stewards understand the safest access, exit and emergency exit routes and know the layout of the stand. 3. Stewards to 'take the ground early' so as far as possible get supporters to sit in their designated seat and prevent migration. 4. Ensure there is sufficient supervision. 5. Club to review and learn from ticketing errors in lower tier. 6. Brief staff including control and CCTV operators re the issues identified. 7. Consider task cards for stewards 8. Review SYP knowledge of the stands, entrance, exits, emergency exits and emergency evacuation procedures at all ranks. 	
Conclusions		
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline

Item 10 – Discussion

Discussion	<p>The group generally accepted the findings of the review, together with the recommendations. Some of the recommendations have already been actioned by the club whilst others remain under consideration.</p> <p>Concerns were raised by South Yorkshire Police over the expected role of officers engaged on matchday duties, and a general discussion ensued. It was agreed that the matter would be considered further outside the meeting but general suggestions included the production of a virtual reality / video production of the ground layout for officer training purposes.</p> <p>SCC Building Control raised concerns over the recommendation to close the central tunnel during phase 1, stating that the tunnel is a designated escape route. Again, a general discussion ensued over the need to amend matchday operations to consider these concerns, together with the need for a comprehensive crowd modelling exercise to be carried out.</p> <p>SCC Health Protection commented upon the number of toilets required on the upper concourse, considering the reduction in size of the toilet block to facilitate a greater area for circulation. The club will consult on this matter before finalising any plans in this regard as is the case with any significant alterations to the stadium as per section 8 of the Safety at Sports Grounds Act.</p> <p>The Chair stated that the P and / or S factors would be reviewed in light of the recommendations.</p> <p>The Chair went on to state that should a high profile fixture be expected before any or all of the recommendations could be implemented, the club would be expected to perform its own risk assessment and submit proposals</p>
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	<p>for the management of said fixture, with particular regard to the Leppings Lane end.</p> <p>The club agreed with the high profile risk assessment comment and stated that measures were already being discussed internally in this regard. Initial considerations were to limit the capacity in the Upper West Stand to 2000 and the Lower West to 1000, subject to relevant calculations.</p> <p>The club offered a response to the apparent ticketing errors on the West Stand Lower, in that the actual error was not the selling of incorrect tickets, but staff removing covers on incorrect seats, leaving seats that were actually sold covered. The matchday event log and CCTV images show that this error was recognised and rectified by 1645hrs, some 75 minutes before kick off at a time when relatively few supporters were in the stadium.</p> <p>A general discussion ensued where all parties offered comments in relation to the legacy issues of Hillsborough as an older stadium and its history.</p> <p>The Chair thanked all present for attending at relatively short notice and closed the meeting.</p>	
Conclusions		
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