



Your Ref:
Our Ref: CMS192565/sr/28

Rt Hon David Lidington MP
victoria.blane@parliament.uk

24 November 2011

Dear David,

Thank you for your e-mail of 24 November requesting advice on the Government's position on the Safe Standing Bill, following representations from your constituent Mr Keith Blagborough of 1 Allen Drive, Walters Ash, HP14 4SS..

The current Government position is that it supports the recommendations made in the Taylor Report after the Hillsborough disaster, including that stadia in the top two divisions (clubs in the Premiership and Championship) should be all-seater. It is critical that any debate about this issue is done against the backdrop of the Hillsborough disaster and does not add to the burden of those affected by the tragedy.

It is important to note that the case for maintaining the all-seated requirement is not just about safety but also public order and customer care. As well as all grounds in the Premier League now being all-seater (under the conditions laid down in the FLA's licence) many of the clubs in Leagues 1 and 2 (3rd and 4th tiers of English football) are also all-seater. This indicates that a number of clubs are content to provide all-seater accommodation even when not legally required, as it not only provides a safe, comfortable environment but enables the clubs to control the crowd and deal with issues of public disorder, including coin throwing and abusive behaviour, swiftly and effectively.

I understand those that have to manage or license/certify stadia generally hold the view that the introduction of all-seated stadia has helped to improve crowd management and crowd behaviour, and that it also gives supporters better facilities to enjoy football matches. However, we realise that some supporters miss the tradition, character and history of some of our former grounds.

I also recognise that no-one is suggesting we return to the arrangements that were in place fifteen or twenty years ago and we welcome constructive debate about the issues. Before any change in the legislation, there would have to be a very clear demand, as well as very



improving
the quality
of life for all

clear evidence that any such change meets stringent safety standards. It could not happen unless the football authorities, those charged with stadium safety, and the police all indicated their support. At this time, however, there is not an appetite from the police or safety authorities for any change and as such continue to support the existing policy.

Thank you, again, for writing, with all my very best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Robertson'.

HUGH ROBERTSON MP
Minister for Sport and the Olympics