

REGULATORY AND APPEALS COMMITTEE

21 JULY 2008

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

ANNUAL REVIEW OF GENERAL SAFETY CERTIFICATE: NOTTS COUNTY FOOTBALL CLUB

1 SUMMARY

This report deals with the annual review of the General Safety Certificate for the Meadow Lane Stadium, home to Notts County Football Club for the forthcoming 2008/2009 football season.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:-

- (1) The Committee reviews the General Safety Certificate for the Meadow Lane Stadium to:-
 - (a) Permit a maximum capacity of 19,588 spectators at events other than football matches as detailed in Appendix 1 Table 1;
 - (b) Reflect the deviations to the 4th edition of the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Green Guide) as listed in Appendix 2;
 - (c) Replace 'Notts County FC' with 'Peter Dennis' as the Holder of the General Safety Certificate.
 - (d) Reflect the relocation of visiting and home supporters within the stadium for football matches.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Stadium comprises 4 stands equipped with seating for spectators; the Kop, Jimmy Sirrel, Pavis and Family Stands. Each stand being divided into blocks. For the season 2008/2009, Notts County FC will play in Football League 2 and in appropriate cup competitions. In addition, the stadium will continue to be used to stage Nottingham Rugby Club matches.
- 3.2 The use of Police and Football Clubs' intelligence (including use of factors such as who the visiting Club is, form of the team and position in the League), allows the prediction of anticipated numbers of supporters likely to attend matches.
- 3.3 In relation to the 2007/2008 football season the main activities concerned with safety at the club were as follows:-

- (a) In December 2007 installation of a new CCTV system was completed at the Club as per recommendations from the review of the General Safety Certificate in July 2007. This new system offers excellent picture quality and has increased coverage of public areas.
- (b) Toward the end of the 2007/08 season, the Club relocated visiting and home supporters within the Stadium. This was a breach of the General Safety Certificate as no application was made for these changes. However, public safety was not put at increased risk because the Club made use of reliable intelligence regarding number of spectators (visiting and home) expected and worked with the Police to ensure public order.
- (c) There have been changes to Notts County FC's Board of Directors and the Chief Executive has recently left. Peter Dennis is a Director of the Club and has recently been appointed Company Secretary for Notts County FC; he also has responsibility for health and safety at the Stadium. Mr Dennis has put himself forward to be the named Holder for the General Safety Certificate. He has reported to the Board on 27 June 2008 to ensure that all members are fully aware of the legal and procedural requirements regarding ground safety and he has the full support of the Board to oversee all matters relating to ground and public safety.
- (d) Three meetings of the Safety Advisory Group were held on 18 September 2007, 20 March 2008 and 8 July 2008. These meetings are chaired by the Team Leader Health and Safety, Community and Culture and were attended by Notts County FC Safety Officer, Stadium Manager and Safety Adviser, Notts County FC Supporters' Club Representative, Nottinghamshire Police, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue, East Midlands Ambulance Service, the Football Licensing Authority and the City Council's Building Control Service.
- (e) Two match day inspections were undertaken by the Team Leader Health and Safety on 29 September 2007 against Chesterfield attended by 5757 spectators including 1576 visiting supporters, and on 29 March 2008 against Mansfield Town attended by 10,027 spectators including 3317 visiting supporters.
- (f) Training of stewards to NVQ Level 2 has continued throughout the season for new and existing stewards in accordance with National guidelines. Many stewards who work at Notts County FC also work at Nottingham Forest FC and/or Trent Bridge Cricket Ground. The club has worked effectively with these other organisations to update its training records and share details of steward training. Telford College are appointed by Notts County FC to deliver steward training and assessment to meet guidelines. Records of steward training are routinely updated in paper and electronic format. All stewards at Notts County FC are within the training programme; 65 stewards have completed

NVQ Level 2, 40 are part way through training and 11 have signed up for the 2008/09 training programme. The Safety Officer has achieved NVQ Level 4 in Event and Safety Management.

(g) A total of 108,837 spectators attended first team home League matches during the season. The average attendance at those matches was 4732 with 10,027 against Mansfield Town on 29 March 2008 being the highest, and 3421 against Darlington on 12 February 2008 being the lowest League attendance.

3.4 All recognised deviations to the recommendations of the 4th edition of the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Green Guide) are detailed in Appendix 2. It is recommended that the Committee accept these deviations as they are not considered by the Safety Advisory Group to be of significance so as to jeopardise safety of spectators. A new edition of the Green Guide was published in June 2008. Changes introduced by this Guide will be addressed by Notts County FC and members of the Safety Advisory Group during 2008/09 and reported to Regulatory and Appeals Committee in 2009.

3.5 The Club and their contractors are currently completing inspections of various structures, equipment and services in order to comply with requirement H.2.1 of the General Safety Certificate requiring the annual submission of satisfactory certificates for a range of items. All certificates and documents will be submitted as agreed by the Club to the City Council before the commencement of fixtures at the ground.

3.6 Review of the General Safety Certificate is supported by representatives of the Emergency Services and the Football Licensing Authority who are members of the Safety Advisory Group.

4 PROPOSALS

4.1 It is proposed that Peter Dennis, Company Secretary Notts County FC be the named Holder of the General Safety Certificate with effect from this Review.

4.2 It is proposed to relocate visiting and home supporters for football matches from the start of the 2008/09 football season. At the suggestion of the Club, this would result in a slightly reduced capacity (270 seats) to the Jimmy Sirrel stand (see appendix 1 Table 2). The full proposals are:-

(a) To relocate the visiting supporters from the Kop Stand to an extended X block in the Jimmy Sirrel stand, making provision for 2024 visiting supporters (see appendix 1 table 2)

(b) Home supporters would use the remainder of the Jimmy Sirrel Stand and the Kop, Pavis and Family Stands.

(c) A 'sterile' area would be created using proprietary 'Tildernet' netting to prevent use of seats between visiting and home supporters and allow for adequate segregation of opposing

supporters. This would decrease the capacity of the Jimmy Sirrel stand by 270 seats (see appendix 1 Table 2).

- (d) In the event that intelligence predicts more than 1000 visiting supporters are likely to attend, Notts County FC will designate the match 'all ticket for visiting supporters' and have a management plan in place to cover this.
- (e) In the event that more than 2024 visiting supporters are expected or, with regard to cup matches which may involve a major club, and attract a much larger visiting support, the whole of the Jimmy Sirrel stand (5505 seats) would be made available for visitors.

4.3 In formulating these proposals, Notts County has undertaken to complete the following:

- (a) Creation of 'sterile' area as outlined above to segregate supporters in the Jimmy Sirrel stand.
- (b) Relocation and upgrade of the segregation gate in the concourse to the rear of the Jimmy Sirrel stand.
- (c) Re-designation of turnstiles to ensure adequate segregation of supporters.
- (d) Adjustment to the automatic turnstile monitoring system to monitor capacities of each area of the stadium.
- (e) Provision of new sanitary accommodation with wheelchair access within the concourse to serve visiting supporters in the extended X Block in the Jimmy Sirrel stand.
- (f) Extension to the tea (refreshment) bar serving X Block to ensure its sufficiency for visiting supporters.
- (g) With the relocation of the gate in the Jimmy Sirrel stand concourse outlined above, to install 2 additional CCTV cameras to ensure adequate monitoring of the concourse.
- (h) With the works in the Jimmy Sirrel stand concourse outlined above, additional smoke detector units will be installed in the concourse and new sanitary accommodation.
- (i) Building Regulation Approval will be obtained by the Club for all relevant alterations.

4.4 Members of the Safety Advisory Group were consulted on the potential changes and their comments, observations and requirements have been built into the proposal. In particular the Building Control Officer has worked with the Club to ensure that access and egress for the public will be adequate; the Police have worked with the Club to ensure satisfactory arrangements for segregation of supporters.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 requires the Council to issue a safety certificate for a designated sports ground in its area containing such terms and conditions as it feels necessary or expedient to secure reasonable safety at that sports ground. The terms and conditions may require alterations or additions to the sports ground and the certificate must contain certain matters such as a plan, capacities, means of access and exit etc.
- 6.2 The certificate may be amended or replaced by the Council if it feels that it is appropriate. The Council is under a statutory duty to inspect the ground periodically and to act in accordance with Guidance given by the Secretary of State (the Green Guide). The Green Guide does not attempt to provide a universal standard for existing grounds and deviations from it are acceptable provided that they are both necessary and reasonable. The Guidance does however require that any deviations from it should be listed in the safety certificate together with the reasons why those deviations are acceptable. The proposals outlined in the recommendations therefore appear to be within the Council's powers.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

The Stadium provides access and facilities to enable spectators with disabilities to be accommodated safely. It has been a number of years since the Club last undertook a Disability Audit following which they acted upon the findings. A further audit will take place during 2008/09 having regard to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and good practice and the Club propose to act on the findings.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS

The management of safety and crowds at Notts County FC is central to the General Safety Certificate and includes reducing the likelihood of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

9 VALUE FOR MONEY

None

10 List of background papers other than published works or those disclosing confidential or exempt information

General Safety Certificate: Notts County FC

Safety Advisory Group minutes:-

18/09/07, 20/03/08, 08/08/08

Match Day Inspection Reports:-

29/09/07, 29/03/08

Correspondence from Notts County FC dated 30 May and 5 July 2008 regarding proposals to relocate visiting football supporters at the Meadow Lane Stadium.

11 Published documents referred to in compiling this report

Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds

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NOTTS COUNTY FC

Ground Capacity

Table 1

Stand	Area	Capacities
Jimmy Sirrel		5775
Family	Seating	2139
	Boxes	144
		2283
Kop	Upper Tier	2025
	Lower Tier	3413
		5438
Derek Pavis		6092
Total Ground Capacity		19588

Note: In an emergency evacuation situation only 6092 spectators could be expected to evacuate the Derek Pavis Stand in the specified 8 minutes using the exit routes available. This is 712 less than the capacity limit of the stand. On the 12th January 1999 the club, therefore, agreed not to exceed 6092 spectators as a result of the recalculation exercise for the short-term until the situation can be resolved satisfactorily, this is still the current situation.

Proposed Ground Capacity (football matches only - season 2008/09)

Table 2

Stand	Area		Capacities
Jimmy Sirrel (home and visiting supporters)	X Block (visitors)	2024	5505*
	Y Block (home)	1597	
	Z Block (home)	1884	
Family (home supporters)	Seating	2139	2283
	Boxes	144	
Kop (home supporters)	Upper Tier	2025	5438
	Lower Tier	3413	
Derek Pavis (home supporters)			6092
Total Ground Capacity			19318

Note: * reflects the use of 270 seats from the seating capacity to create a sterile area (Rows A to I seats 87-96 (9 rows), and Rows J to AA (seats 91-100 (18 rows)) between Blocks X and Y of the Jimmy Sirrel stand to ensure segregation of home and visiting supporters.

**DEVIATIONS FROM THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE GREEN GUIDE -
(4TH EDITION)**

Deviations	Green Guide	Remarks
1 Pavis Stand exit from Block D/E 1.90m high	Para 5.5 (a) recommends a minimum headroom of 2m	Critical only under existing structural beam
2 Pavis Stand exit from Directors Box 1.87m high	Para 5.5 (a) recommends a minimum headroom of 2m.	Critical only under existing structural beam
3 The metal constructed upper section of the stair way exiting the Kop stand towards Final Exit Gate D has open risers	Para 7.3 (c) recommends that open risers should not be used on stairways	This stairway is only used as a downward route for exiting and as such the open risers are not a safety consideration
4 Final Exit Gate F and perimeter gates 10 & 17 are not capable of opening opened inwards when used.	Para 9.15 (a) recommends that all exit doors and gates should be capable of open- ing outwards so that crowds can escape in an emergency without obstruction	All three gates are staffed at all times and will be opened by a steward before specta- tors are directed to evacuate along the route. Also when the gates are opened in an inward position they do not create an obstruction.
5 In the Pavis Stand the steps in the radial gangway risers from row D and up are	Para 11.9 (b) recommends the risers of steps in radial	The compensatory factor (handrail) was only required at the higher

	220mm.	gangways should not be more than 190mm and should also be uniform.	levels of the stand as the installation of additional handrails would adversely effect lateral movement in the event of the adjacent vomitory being obstructed
6	All steps within radial gangways of all four stands have both the tread and riser painted a conspicuous yellow.	Para 11.9 (d) recommends that nosings of steps in radial gangways should be clearly identified	Para. 145 of the 3rd edition of the Green Guide required that radial gangways should be painted with a non-slip paint in a conspicuous colour. This the Club did on construction of the stands. To meet the requirements of the 4th edition it is agreed that as the paint-work of the tread sections wear only the nosings, edgings, risers and landings be painted as necessary
Deviations		Green Guide	Remarks
7	Catering outlet roller shutters are not operated by fusible link. Concerns raised regarding the possibility of smoke build up which could ventilate through the exits from the seating above.	Para 15.10 (h) recommends catering outlets containing deep fat fryers or hot food cooking facilities should be separated from other internal areas or spectator accommodation. Where roller shutters are used these should be capable of operating both manually and by fusible link.	Due to the configuration and layout of the catering outlets, fusible links could result in entrapment of staff/spectators and therefore, the compensatory factors currently in place are adequate. Location of food bars are adjacent to open air. In the event of a fire, smoke would vent to fresh air and would not rapidly fill the rear corridor or vent via the vomitories into the stand.