

ANNUAL REPORT 2007



THE INDEPENDENT **FOOTBALL** COMMISSION

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THE INDEPENDENT **FOOTBALL** COMMISSION

Annual Report 2007

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Chairman's Report

This is the sixth Annual Report of the Independent Football Commission (IFC) and the pages which follow give a flavour of the wide range of issues and topics covered by the Commission during 2007. In many ways 2007 has been an important watershed in the modern development of English football. The year was marked by the adoption of the Burns Reforms by the Football Association (FA), the introduction of new and more stringent regulation of Agents, the introduction of new and league based Community programmes, a significant increase in media revenues coming into English football, especially in the Premier League, much soul searching over the limitations on the development of English youth football and its apparent manifestation in the failure of England to qualify for the 2008 European Championships, accompanied by the dismissal of one English manager and the appointment of another from overseas.

One of the main functions of the IFC has been to gather intelligence which will inform the overarching responsibility of the Commission to evaluate the performance of the governing bodies in managing football. As part of our fact-finding this year, we commissioned a survey of fans' opinion on a range of important consumer questions which was conducted at seven football grounds on match days. The results make very interesting reading and are fully discussed in Chapter Two along with some very useful tabulations and diagrammatic representation of the results of the survey. One of the interesting things to emerge is that English fans have now become largely inured to the previously sensitive issue of kick-off times. English fans now appear to have accepted that the price that has to be paid for the large subvention to English football provided by TV companies is that they will have a significant influence over when matches are scheduled. There was indeed one Saturday in October 2007 when, partly as a result of European games but also partly to fit in with TV schedules, there was only one Premier League game played on Saturday afternoon at 3 o'clock. Fans were much more jaundiced about ticket prices and there appears to be a continuing concern that the audience for English football has to pay a higher and higher price, which in turn squeezes out many people who cannot afford to pay inflated prices and also runs the risk of losing the next generation of younger fans who are becoming simply TV supporters.

During the year the clamour for some resolution of the contentious issue of standing appeared to grow ever louder. The IFC does not necessarily advocate a return to standing, even in its attenuated form within specially designed enclosures, but it has observed in its many visits to football matches during the year that the implementation of seating regulations is patchy and inconsistent. The IFC has every sympathy with those Safety Officers, Stewards and Police Officers who have to manage this situation on a week-by-week basis and the Commission is well aware that difficult and sensitive judgements have to be made in preventing people from standing or enforcing the requirements to remain seated with the associated risk of sometimes provoking challenges

to public order. Our Chapter Four reviews the current thinking and it is to be hoped that there will be some clear guidance given by the three football authorities in the absence of a change in legislation by Government.

In recent years we have sought to have a consistent structure in our Annual Report so that readers may compare one year with another and measure changes that have taken place. There are familiar chapters on Finance and Governance, Diversity and Equal Opportunities, Community Work, Child Protection and Charters. We have again continued the practice of holding Football Forum meetings across the country. They were very well attended and have been an important and valuable source of information for the Commission. The discussions at those three Forums have strongly influenced what the IFC has to say this year.

In the first chapter we review the important changes which have been made in the Governance structure at the FA following the implementation of the Burns Reforms. Much is to be expected of the various features, including the appointment of an Independent Chair, the establishment of a Football Regulatory Authority (FRA), important and significant changes in the composition and structure of the Board and its delegated committee and the broadening of representation in the FA Council. In the normal course of affairs, this would have been a major topic of enquiry, monitoring and review during 2008, but the Commission itself will complete its work in the spring of 2008 and will not, therefore, be able to take this important monitoring role forward. The football authorities, who created the IFC in the first place, have now decided that the IFC experiment has run its course and something different is required. So this sixth Annual Report will be our last. Altogether we have in our six years of existence produced 10 published reports (six Annual Reports and four specialist reports) and I believe those reports, together with the related discussions with the authorities and the wider football family, have made an important contribution to the development of a reform agenda over those years.

The decision to establish the IFC was announced by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, in October 2000. In dialogue with the football authorities the Government had decided to opt for a self-regulation model as against the statutory regulation model supported by many groups at the time. The two suggestions both statutory and non-statutory arose out of the fourth report of the Football Task Force which was originally established in 1997. At the time there were many concerns about the way English football was governed and, in particular, its perceived lack of transparency and accountability. The establishment of the IFC was an attempt to demonstrate improved transparency and accountability and to create an independent scrutiny body which could evaluate how well the football authorities were doing in governing the game. The appointment of myself as Chairman in the summer of 2001 was followed by the appointment of the Commissioners later that year and the IFC began its work in January 2002. Since then there have been few issues of importance to English football on which the IFC has not commented. Indeed, already, without the present report, the IFC has made 100 recommendations in the first five Annual Reports, together with a further 50 in our specialist reports (***Euro 2004, Self-Regulation, Child Protection, The Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions***). Our reports, together with the recommendations they contain have, I hope, assisted the Governing Bodies in moving forward and addressing many of the concerns which existed at the time the IFC was established. Across a wide range of matters the IFC has made what I believe have been sensible and progressive suggestions. The issues addressed include better financial management, the introduction of a fit and proper persons test, more effective and transparent Governance arrangements particularly at the FA, equal opportunity, diversity and anti-racist initiatives, broadly based Community programmes, the adoption of better targeted regulations for Child Protection, the development in an iterative way of the whole charter process to make it more customer friendly and the streamlining of the complaints process. In all of these the IFC has had important things to say and has contributed to a current situation which is markedly different from that which existed at the time the IFC was created.

Indeed, it might be argued that, because of the valuable work of the IFC, the authorities have moved so far along the path of reform that such a scrutiny and audit body is no longer required. The Commission itself does not share that view. However, it has to respect the decision of the authorities that they now require a different approach, since so many of the topics within the IFC's remit are now being addressed in a different manner or the concerns that underlay the creation of the IFC are now being addressed more effectively.

Since the IFC's inception in the latter part of 2001, I have been supported by no less than 14 Commissioners who represented a diverse range of professional and personal expertise. The Commission has included Members of Parliament and former Government Ministers, those with legal and financial expertise, two ex-professional footballers, experts in complaints resolution and sports administration and those with media and stakeholder experience. We all shared a passionate interest in the game and all agreed to become involved in the hope that we might add value and be a force for good in the game. I warmly thank all my fellow Commissioners and I trust that they believe that their participation within the IFC has been a valuable and important one. The Commission itself has been loyally and most efficiently served by our small and dedicated professional staff based in Teesside and I record my personal thanks and that of the Commission for their sterling work and their contribution to the life and times of an important initiative in English football.

It is to be hoped that the IFC website will remain in being, so that in future the 10 IFC published reports may continue to be available for download by individual readers. This is an important legacy of the work of the IFC which should not be lost. I also finally wish to thank all those supporters, both individual and groups, the authorities themselves, the football clubs and a large number of organisations who make a contribution to football, for their courtesy and support over the years. We could not have delivered on our remit without the co-operation of the broad base of the football stakeholding family.



Professor Derek Fraser
Chairman



Executive Summary

CHAPTER 1 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

1

The main development within football governance during 2007 was the final adoption by the Football Association (FA) of the main elements of the Burns Report. Of closest interest to the Independent Football Commission (IFC) has been the establishment of a semi-autonomous Football Regulatory Authority (FRA) that will cover some of the areas previously overseen by the Commission. This point is considered.

In terms of finance, there is general agreement that football is more financially stable than ever before, but during 2007 and early in 2008, the worry of administration again reared its head. The IFC looks at whether the situation is deteriorating.

The issue of Agents is also considered.

CHAPTER 2 TICKETING AND MATCH SCHEDULING

2

This was one of two special pieces of work undertaken by the IFC in 2007, the other being 'Safe Standing'. The IFC receives more complaints about the rescheduling of games, than any other topic. Fans complain that games are being moved, resulting in them losing deposits on hotel rooms and advance bookings on discounted flights and train tickets. With all of this in mind, the IFC decided to commission a special survey of fans. Over 1,000 fans were questioned and the results give some surprising indications.

CHAPTER 3 DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

3

This area of football has seen huge changes in recent years. The IFC feels that many of the issues are now approaching a crossroads and that decisions need to be made about the direction in which they go. The football authorities continue to support various organisations but the IFC questions whether the time has come to put this topic under the microscope and consider new ideas. One particular piece of research offers some radical thoughts.

CHAPTER 4 SAFE STANDING

4

Few issues provoke such polarised opinions. This ranges from supporters campaigning for a return to terraced areas at football stadia, to various organisations and bodies insisting that there will never be a return to standing. In between all of this, there is the confused state of clubs deciding whether to ignore fans standing in the seating areas, whether clubs should take action and eject fans that persistently stand, whether it is the duty of the fans to act responsibly, or whether fans should be allowed the right to choose. Invariably, stuck in the middle of all of this, are stewards who face a thankless task or police who have been drafted in as a result of fans becoming aggressive against stewards who are trying to do their job.

CHAPTER 5 COMMUNITY

5

The IFC has again witnessed some magnificent community work going on within football. All of the football authorities are working hard in this area. One of the main developments was the closure of the official Football in the Community (FitC) scheme. The IFC looks at the impact of this and considers whether clubs and their in-house initiatives have suffered or if the time had come when the clubs were sufficiently competent that they could go on their own. Another development has been the setting-up of Foundations at many clubs to administer the funding of community schemes.

CHAPTER

6

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The IFC published a ground-breaking Report in 2005 which is used by the football authorities as a benchmark for Child Protection policies. In this chapter, there is a look at the latest developments across all levels of football in England with regard to this sensitive topic. The IFC looks at how the football authorities are safeguarding children in football, whether they are involved in clubs at the top of the Premier League or at grassroots levels. There is an update on the FA's Child Protection Unit together with an update on how new policies are settling-in.

CHAPTER

7

CHARTERS

The IFC has been at the forefront of ensuring that Charters are more streamlined, accessible and relevant. If fans have a problem, it is unlikely that their immediate thought would be to reach for their Club's Charter. This is a shame because the Charter explains what the club should be doing for them and what will or should happen if something goes wrong. All three of the football authorities have improved their own Charters beyond recognition over the past few years, and so too have the clubs. In this chapter, we look at the latest developments.

CHAPTER

8

IFC FOOTBALL FORUMS AND THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

In 2006, the IFC launched a series of Football Forums. Clubs and football-related organisations were invited to attend and talk to the IFC about matters that they considered important. They were also given the chance to quiz IFC officials. However, the key objective was for the IFC to hear from people who are involved in the day-to-day running of football. Such was the success of the 2006 Football Forums that it was decided to repeat the process in 2007. The response was excellent, with almost double the number of participants. As in the previous year, the issues raised were wide-ranging and varying, and the IFC once again found the comments made to be extremely valuable and enlightening. In this chapter, there is a resumé of the topics discussed. There is also a look at the variety of issues that were submitted to the IFC and how they were resolved.

CHAPTER

9

REVIEW OF IFC RECOMMENDATIONS 2002 - 2006

Since the IFC was launched in 2002, it has produced a series of Annual Reports and Special Reports. This chapter looks back at the main recommendations made in those Reports and considers what has happened since.

ANNEXES

A-G

ANNEXES A - G

This section of the Report gives details of meetings, visits, consultations and matches attended by the IFC. There are details of all the issues and complaints dealt with by the IFC, plus a full run-down of questions used in the 2007 IFC Fans Survey. There is also a useful reminder of IFC Publications. The final Annex is devoted to examples of the adverts placed by the IFC in match-day programmes at football clubs across the Leagues.



The Independent Football Commission

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

Professor Derek Fraser, Chairman

Until his retirement, Professor Fraser was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Teesside, a post he held for over 10 years. In February 2005, he was appointed Chair of Standards Verification UK. Other external experience includes Board membership of ONE North East, Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council, and Chairmanship of the Department for Education and Skills Steering Group on Graduate Apprenticeships. He has been watching football since 1947 and his first love was Birmingham City. Career and location moves have brought affinity to both Leeds United and Middlesbrough. His best football moment was being at Wembley to see England win the World Cup in 1966.

Alan Watson, Deputy Chair

Alan Watson is a self-confessed 'football nut' and has a life long affiliation with Newcastle United. He has been active in grassroots football through a long playing career, coaching, refereeing and running youth teams. Until his retirement in 2003, he was Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman, in recognition of which he received a CBE. He has extensive experience in customer care, codes of conduct and complaints resolution.

Clive Betts MP, Commissioner

Clive Betts has been a Member of Parliament since 1992. He was a Government Whip from 1997-2001. He is Treasurer of the Parliamentary All Party Football Group and Chairman of the All Party Football Team. He is a lifelong Sheffield Wednesday supporter and is particularly interested in financial transparency in the game, and in the rights of football supporters and their involvement in the game.

Brian Lomax, Commissioner

Brian Lomax is the chair of Supporters Direct, where he served as Managing Director over a four-year period. He had previously worked in the Probation Service and as Chief Executive of a charitable Housing Trust. In 1992 he was a founder member and first Chairman at Northampton Town, the first Supporters' Trust, subsequently becoming the first democratically elected Director to serve on the Board of an English football club. Both posts were held for seven years. He retains affection for his home-town team, Altrincham, but his loyalties as a supporter rest primarily with Northampton.

Nicola Waldman, Commissioner

Nicola Waldman was previously a partner at Central London law firm Cumberland Ellis where she was a member of the Executive Board and Head of the Private Client Department. She is now working as a locum. As a football addict, she is happy watching most football matches but her heart belongs to the Gunners. Her best football moment (so far) was the final whistle of the 2004-05 season, when Arsenal completed an undefeated campaign in the Premier League.

Joslyn Hoyte-Smith, Commissioner

Joslyn Hoyte Smith is an accomplished athlete with Olympic and Commonwealth medals in the 4 x 400m relay and the 400 metres. Previous roles include Lecturer in Sports Studies and Education, Drug-Free Sport Co-ordinator for UK Athletics, and Performance Manager for the British Paralympics Association. Her current roles keep alive her drive and passion to stay involved in sport as a Services Manager for the English Institute of Sport. Joslyn has supported Chelsea from her school days and also follows her local team Sheffield United.

Andy Worthington MBE, Commissioner

Andy Worthington was on Manchester United's books and played semi-professional football in England and Scotland. After a period of teaching and working for the Scottish Sports Council in Edinburgh, he began a career in Local Government with Lothian Regional Council before moving to Harrogate Borough Council as Chief Recreation Officer. He has been Director of Leisure Services and Tourism for the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Advisor to the Local Government Association on Sport, Leisure and Tourism issues, Chair of the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association, Chief Executive of the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management and chaired the National Coaching Task Force on whose recommendation the Government agreed to radically overhaul the preparation and employment of coaches throughout the country in 2002. He is now Chair of the North West Regional Sports Board and a Board member of Sport England.

IFC staff**Graham Courtney, Company Secretary and Chief Officer**

Graham leads the IFC staff based at offices in Stockton-on-Tees. After leaving Durham University he joined Independent Radio as a Sports Reporter, becoming News and Sports Editor of two radio stations in North East England. In 1996 Kevin Keegan appointed him as Press Officer of Newcastle United Football Club. He was a founder member of the Football Press Officers Association. After working with Kenny Dalglish and Ruud Gullit, he worked in PR and returned to freelance journalism covering football for national and regional TV and radio. He joined the IFC in 2005.

Claire Risker, Office Manager

Alison Bone, PA and Administration Officer

Karen Ramrekha, Part-time Administration Officer

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**HOME
SUPPORTERS**



2007 Recommendations

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

1. The IFC recommends that in the medium term, the size of the FA Council is reduced, while maintaining the new representation which has been granted. **PAGE 14**
2. The IFC recommends that the Football Association (FA) implement a rigorous process of self-evaluation, in the absence of the external scrutiny that the IFC would have afforded. **PAGE 14**

DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

1. The IFC recommends that thought should be given to studying whether the FA's hugely successful approach to homophobia, can be integrated into other areas of diversity and equal opportunity. The idea of every club having a dedicated Liaison Officer for different facets of this topic could prove extremely useful. **PAGE 46**
2. The IFC recommends that the authorities look to consider direct financial funding of the National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS). NADS produces a huge amount of goodwill amongst what rates as football's most loyal supporters and would benefit from any amount of funding to further the impressive work that is currently being undertaken by a small committee made up almost entirely from volunteers. They have a terrific network of members around the country and, with some additional help, could improve the football experience for disabled supporters. **PAGE 47**
3. The IFC recommends that research is done to study whether the issue of racism and how football clubs approach it, can be more effectively tackled. The IFC is aware that many clubs are looking for a new direction in this area. Currently, many clubs have a single week of racism awareness, and little else. Some feel the anti-racism messages given out by football clubs and other organisations seem to make the game appear tainted and racist, having a counter-productive effect. **PAGE 48**
4. The IFC recommends that the agencies involved in monitoring such things as racism, disability inclusion etc, allow the football clubs, football authorities and closely related bodies such as the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), League Managers Association (LMA), Football Foundation etc, to have some breathing space. **PAGE 50**
5. The IFC recommends that when the football authorities and other stakeholders are asked to attend meetings to update Government departments and exterior official bodies on what they have been doing, that they are given some guidance on what is required. **PAGE 50**
6. The IFC recommends that the departments within the authorities that put all of these ideas and schemes together are given some additional help. They have been a victim of their own success. They are being stretched to breaking point. If help is not given, then either the level of service will reduce, or the flow of new initiatives will grind to a halt. As is the way of human nature, this would then leave clubs and football authorities open to criticism. **PAGE 50**

SAFE STANDING

1. The IFC recommends that if a club is going to take action against visiting fans, it is only fair to let those fans know in advance what that action is and why it is taking place. **PAGE 53**
2. The IFC recommends that the policy of reducing seat allocations is reviewed. It does not stop fans standing and financially affects both the home and away clubs. If allocations are reduced, then the home club, assuming it has done everything possible to encourage fans to sit, should be compensated in some way. It simply isn't fair that one club should be penalised by the actions of another club's fans. **PAGE 53**
3. The IFC recommends that action is taken to resolve a ludicrous situation where football clubs are obliged to enforce a seating rule but plainly either cannot or refuse to bother. This is leaving clubs, stewards and local authorities in a situation where no-one seems to know what to do. **PAGE 58**

CHILD PROTECTION – SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS


1. The IFC recommends that all football clubs actively participate in Child Protection and Safeguarding Children workshops, conferences and seminars provided by their leagues. Those clubs that perhaps take a half-hearted attitude towards this topic should take a close look at themselves and not be blasé, thinking it does not affect them. **PAGE 66**
2. The IFC recommends progress on the issue of minors attending football matches. Whilst the IFC applauds the attempts of the football authorities to interest the next generation of football fans in the game, the IFC recommends that they provide guidelines on the minimum age of children attending football matches unaccompanied by an adult, as well as safe adult:child ratios. This should ease problems encountered by stewards, ticket office staff and turnstile operators. **PAGE 68**
3. The IFC recommends further progress in the exchanging of information between the football authorities. It would be useful to ensure that as many procedures as possible were quickly put into place to ensure that the current workload is dealt with before new regulations arrive. **PAGE 69**
4. The IFC recommends that CRB checks are carried out on football club staff at all levels and that the club ensures the employees do not commence work until the relevant documentation is in place. **PAGE 70**

CHARTERS

1. The IFC recommends that a Charter should be placed on every club's website so that it is easily accessible to all fans who wish to view it. **PAGE 73**
2. The IFC recommends that the Football League should ensure that all of their member clubs submit promises for each season in the time allocated, to support this good idea. **PAGE 73**
3. The IFC recommends that the FA and Premier League provide a clear link on their website to allow fans swift access to contact details rather than having to search for them. The longer a complainant has to search, the more exasperated they are likely to become. **PAGE 75**
4. The IFC recommends that all clubs in both the Premier League and Football League place an article in their match-day programmes throughout the season to inform fans on how they can complain if they are dissatisfied. Obviously, with the IFC ceasing to operate by spring 2008, the details should refer to the newly formed Independent Football Ombudsman service. **PAGE 77**

IFC FOOTBALL FORUMS AND THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

1. The IFC recommends that, as the Commission will cease to exist in 2008, an independent body is appointed to pick up the mantle of Football Forums. The information gleaned from meetings attended by club representatives and other people linked to and involved with football, has proved to be extremely useful. It would be a shame to cut off this valuable flow of information. **PAGE 86**
2. The IFC recommends that the resolution of complaints needs to be quickened. The IFC has been involved in several cases where a flow of letters and e-mails has dragged on between a complainant, club and the relevant football authority. By the time it reaches the IFC, the whole case has become entrenched. The IFC managed to resolve one case within 24 hours via a series of telephone calls. **PAGE 86**
3. The IFC recommends that all clubs have a nominated complaints contact who should ensure that all complaints received are dealt with appropriately and in accordance with the Club Charter. **PAGE 86**



In recent years, the IFC has commented that there was growing evidence that football was becoming better managed financially with more financial expertise within the clubs. This still remains true, but during 2007, the spectre of administration loomed larger than in the recent past.

I. Finance & Governance



New Governance arrangements at the Football Association

Undoubtedly, the main governance development during 2007 was the final adoption by the Football Association (FA) of the main elements of the Burns Report. In last year's IFC Annual Report, we commented favourably on the thorough manner in which the FA had approached the consideration of the far-reaching changes which had been recommended. However, we considered that the FA should be strongly encouraged to move quickly to progress the reforms. Although the FA indicated towards the end of 2006 that they favoured implementing the Burns changes, it was in fact, not until 29 May 2007 that the full Council adopted the reforms by a vote of something like 4-1 in favour. The FA itself believes the adoption of these reforms would make it *"a more modern, effective and representative governing body for English football with streamlined decision-making processes"*.

Although the procedural votes were complex, in the event, the main elements of the Burns changes were indeed adopted. These will provide for a newly constituted FA Board with five members each from the professional and national game section of the football family and includes both the Chairman and Chief Executive who will, from the Summer of 2008, have voting rights. The appointment of an independent Chairman was one of the main points in the Burns recommendations and a selection process was conducted during the latter part of 2007 which has led to the appointment of Lord David Triesman. Much is to be expected of the independent Chair, who it is anticipated, will give the FA Board and Council greater credibility. The split between the Professional Game Board and the National Game Board is an important development and each of these will have powers delegated from the main Board and any profits and surpluses within the FA budget will be split 50-50 between them.

One of the criticisms of the FA and its historic constitution has been that its Council is unrepresentative of football as it is in the 21st Century. In particular, it reflects elements of representation which are arcane. Lord Burns' proposal in this regard was not to dismiss any representative from the current Council, which already had 92 members, but to add new representation and then in the longer term, reduce the size of the Council to a more manageable number. So the short term effects of the broadening representation of the Council is to take it above the 100 mark and this will still pose challenges in procedure to allow the new representatives to influence the future agenda at the FA. The new representatives include nominees from the lower levels of the pyramid, the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), the League Managers Association (LMA), the Football Supporters Federation (FSF), the Referees' Association, disability groups and race equality groups. The IFC welcomes this decision to broaden the scope of the representation on the FA Council, but it has to be said that a Council of over 100 members is a very large body and

the IFC would recommend that in the medium term the size of the Council is reduced, while maintaining the new representation which has been granted.

Of closest interest to the IFC itself has been the establishment of a semi-autonomous Football Regulatory Authority (FRA). The FRA will cover some of the areas which had previously been overseen by the IFC itself. Indeed, the name given to the members of the FRA are "Commissioners" as in the case of the IFC. The FRA members comprise four from the National Game, two from the Professional Game, two Council Members appointed by the FA Appointments Panel and four non-Council Members with an expectation that they will include some with financial and legal expertise. For example, the previous Chair of the Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) is a Member of the new FRA. There is to be a separate judicial panel which will oversee Commissions and Appeal Boards, mainly relating to on-field and off-field disciplinary matters.

Had the IFC been continuing its work, it would certainly have wished to monitor the FRA activities in some detail and the overall impact of the changes on the governance of the game.

The IFC recommends that the FA itself should implement a rigorous process of self-evaluation, in the absence of the external scrutiny that the IFC would have provided.

Of course, these matters, particularly the influence of the new independent Chair, will be scrutinised publicly by the media and other interested parties.

Financial Matters

In recent years, the IFC, along with several specialist financial commentators, has commented on the growing evidence that football was becoming better managed financially with more financial expertise within the clubs. This still remains true, but during 2007, the spectre of administration loomed larger than in the recent past. There was the spectacular financial disaster of Leeds United Football Club, which went into administration immediately before the end of the 2006-07 season, knowing that they were to be relegated from the Championship. Leeds United suffered the normal 10 point penalty, but the complications in the way in which the club exited from administration, which did not conform to normal Football League practice, led to a further penalty of 15 points at the start of the 2007-08 campaign in League 1. Leeds United is seeking to have this decision rescinded. The IFC has received extensive numbers of complaints from supporters who felt the club had been unfairly treated. In particular, it was alleged by many that Leeds United had been punished twice for the same offence. At the time of writing, the club has not yet been able to achieve an independent appeal which they are seeking and this matter may ultimately become subject to a judicial review. As the matter is subjudice it is not within the IFC's remit.

Luton Town Football Club also went into administration towards the end of 2007 and were penalised 10 points immediately which put them into the relegation zone of League 1. 2008 got off to a bad start because only a matter of weeks after Luton Town's problems, the same fate was suffered by AFC Bournemouth with reported debts of £4 million. Several other clubs, including Coventry City, Swindon Town and Rotherham United also faced the threat of administration; only the first two narrowly managed to avoid it. All this suggests that the financial problems facing football clubs which had led to a previous spate of administrations, largely due to the collapse of ITV Digital, are re-emerging and are a real threat to a significant number of clubs.

What has emerged from IFC club visits and from the comments made at the IFC Football Forums is that there are still severe financial challenges facing clubs. For the majority of English clubs, basic financial survival is still a key challenge on the basis of simply "balancing the books" or "making ends meet". There remains the paradox that football as a whole, and especially at the very top level within the Premier League, is in overtly strong financial health, particularly with increased subventions from television and overseas media rights. However, especially lower down the football pyramid, the constraints of relatively low attendances (which clearly limit income from match days) means that clubs have limited resources with which to strengthen their playing squads and so make progress on the playing field and within the football pyramid.

The IFC has picked up growing interest in maximising the income generation by not so much exploiting fans, but through encouraging fans to increase their spending on match days. So, for example, several clubs have improved their retail and catering offering, such that there will be more reason for supporters to spend a longer period at the ground on a match day and so increase their spending accordingly. Even at the very top of the Premier League where, for example, foreign owners have raised significant loans in order to buy clubs, there has been a systematic attempt to "sweat the assets". In one significant case which has led to protests from fans, Manchester United football Club has insisted that season ticket holders automatically buy tickets for all Cup competitions whether or not it is their intention to attend. This has been quoted as an example of a foreign owner needing to increase revenue in order to meet heavy interest payments on debts.

Interestingly enough, it is not only at the very lowest levels that this financial challenge is visible. In their annual survey of Football Club Finance Directors, PKF (UK) LLP¹ reports that four out of five clubs in the Championship predict that they will not make a pre-tax profit in their next accounting period. Clearly, the huge financial bonus in getting promotion to the Premier League is tempting many clubs to over-spend in the hope that they will achieve a return by promotion. But, of course, the logistics are that only three clubs per season will be promoted and, as we have seen in previous seasons, there is a high chance that one or more of the promoted clubs will be immediately relegated, so only achieving a temporary financial bonus from promotion. The parachute payments do however, yield some advantage and it has been argued by some that this has a distorting effect on the Championship as well as on the Premier League.

Undoubtedly, the main financial challenge experienced by all clubs, including those at the very top, is the question of players' salaries. PKF (UK) LLP report in a headline that clubs "struggle unsuccessfully to contain player costs". It was noticeable that, although the Football League Salary Management Protocol (sometimes referred to as wage-capping) had not filtered much above League 2 and some League 1 clubs, a Championship Club Chairman and a senior member of both the FA and the Football League argued recently that salary control through a fixed maximum percentage of salary costs should be introduced in the Championship and perhaps even into the Premier League. In a highly publicised intervention, the new Minister for Sport, Gerry Sutcliffe MP, commented critically on the high level of salaries with particular reference to the top Premier League clubs with salaries at £5-£6 million per annum now increasingly common. Though the Minister retracted some of the detail of his comments, he felt that he had raised an important generic issue about players' salaries which continue to be a concern and appear to escalate evermore with the consequent problem of balancing the books and combining ambition with a degree of financial responsibility within each club.

Whether true or not, there is a perception amongst the wider football supporting public that in some way agents have contributed, often unhelpfully, to this escalation of player costs through the increase in salaries, but what has happened in the past 12 months regarding agents? Outwardly, not a lot. The report by Lord Stevens, commissioned by the Premier League to study transfer dealings and, by implication, the influence of agents, more or less disappeared without trace, although there are continued rumblings in the background. Complaints and threats from agents themselves have largely evaporated. The Football League continues to operate an open and clear policy and the FA has announced various updates to Agents' Regulations.

It would appear, if nothing else, that everyone is now more aware that dealings are going to be under closer scrutiny and that there is, theoretically, a reduced chance of any 'dodgy dealings' going on. Time will no doubt tell whether this is merely a hiccup or that eventually things will revert to their previous levels.

The FA has been busy and in July 2007, they issued new regulations that, in practice, came into operation for the January 2008 transfer window. The main changes were to forbid dual representation in the same transaction, to require all agents, whether UK based or not, to be registered with the FA, to require players to pay their agents' fees and to require players to have a written representation contract with their agents. The FA appears to be trying their hardest to resolve this tricky issue. They should be congratulated for making a good start. There will, no doubt, be further tinkering around the edges in future years, but the latest rulings are a huge step forward. The Premier League and Football League have both voiced their support and there has been backing from the Sports Minister. It has been a tricky path for the FA, but as they say in their documents², "The Association's task in drafting the regulations necessarily involves the balancing of conflicting interests as well as the consideration of the issues that The Association faces as the regulator of this area". The agents have, not surprisingly, undertaken some sabre rattling but, to date, nothing has happened. The FA is no doubt confident that legally, it has itself covered. Some of the agents the IFC spoke to thought otherwise but, at the time of going to print, nothing has come to fruition in terms of legal action. With the demise of the IFC, there will be no independent body to monitor whether or not the new regulations have been a success.





2. Ticketing & Match Day Scheduling

It leaves fans in a tricky situation; they are, after all, customers and whereas customers of supermarkets or car dealerships can take their business elsewhere, the football fan generally cannot. The true football supporter will continue to support his or her team, no matter what. It is to be hoped that this blind loyalty is not taken for granted.

On 11 December 1986, if you were a football supporter, your whole life was about to be transformed. That date was when the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) awarded the franchise for direct broadcasting by satellite services across the UK to the British Satellite Broadcasting company. February 1989 saw another landmark; the launch of Sky Television. Within 18 months, the two companies had merged to form BSkyB. A new powerhouse of television broadcasting was born and for followers of live or TV sport, nothing would be the same again.

Until that point, football supporters who religiously followed their team home and away, were almost guaranteed to be occupied every Saturday with the game kicking off at 3.00pm. Fans who bought a season ticket were safe in the knowledge that, as long as they kept their diary clear for alternate Saturdays, plus the occasional midweek fixture and national holidays, they would be assured of seeing their team in action for the entire campaign.

How things have changed. If you were a supporter of Middlesbrough Football Club in the 2005-06 season, the first time you would have attended the Riverside Stadium at 3.00pm on a Saturday, was on New Year's Eve. Half the season had gone. Of course, there were various reasons behind this lack of 'usual' kick-offs. Middlesbrough had an excellent run in the UEFA Cup, reaching the final. They also made it to the semi-finals of the FA Cup. However, several games were moved due to requests from Sky TV. All of this compounded things, leaving Middlesbrough fans in a situation where they needed to ensure that their arrangements were extremely flexible.

There has been an occasion when only a single game in the Premier League kicked off at 3.00pm on a Saturday. The rest were played on the Sunday with one reserved for Monday night. This was caused by the demands of TV and the effect of England having its full complement of teams in European competitions, which meant that teams involved in Thursday night matches had their Premier League games delayed until the Sunday.

It should also be recognised that the rescheduling of fixtures is now commonplace, especially in the Premier League. It would be difficult to substantiate an argument from any fan who had bought a season ticket in the expectation of seeing every home game on a Saturday afternoon. Followers of clubs in lower divisions of the Football League

may be fortunate enough to have this, but if your team plays in the Premier League or Championship, or is doing well in League One, League Two or the Conference, then you can expect varying degrees of disruption. It is also hard to see how the situation will change in the future.

It leaves fans in a tricky situation; they are, after all, customers and whereas customers of supermarkets or car dealerships can take their business elsewhere, the football fan generally cannot. The true football supporter will continue to support his or her team, no matter what. It is to be hoped that this blind loyalty is not taken for granted by the clubs and/or the TV companies with the assumption that the fan will continue to turn up and pay for tickets and merchandise or TV subscriptions, irrespective of whatever is thrown at them.

The games featured on TV generally include the top sides across England, although Sky does have a policy of ensuring that every club in the Premiership and Championship gets a minimum level of coverage over the course of a season. They announce which matches are to be covered at various stages of the season with the first batch being announced shortly after the new league fixtures have been published. On occasions, depending on how the title race is going, later amendments can be made to the fixture list towards the end of the season.

This provides the armchair viewer with a stunning array of games. Some may not be especially attractive as the TV companies have the obligation to cover all Premier League teams. Without doubt though, many of the games are key fixtures and the majority make for excellent viewing, whether or not you are a supporter of either team. It has also led to an army of fans who support a team purely because of the TV coverage. They do not attend the games in person, but they now follow their team from their front room or local bar. These fans regularly buy club merchandise and are equally enthusiastic as those who manage to go to the stadium.

What about the fans who want to attend home and away games? What about those fans who make full use of booking train and aeroplane tickets months in advance in order to get favourable fares, only to find that the game is changed and that they cannot get a refund? Is it reasonable to expect a game that would be convenient at 3.00pm on a Saturday, to be moved to 8.00pm on a Monday? It might not affect the home supporters too much, but certainly affects the travelling fans who may have expected to be home in time for the TV highlights on a Saturday evening, but are now faced with climbing into bed in the early hours of Tuesday morning with the hope of only a few hours sleep before setting off for work.

And what about the input from the leagues? The Premier League was set up in February 1992 which more or less coincided with the boom in satellite TV coverage of football. Without doubt, much of the stunning success of the Premier League has been down to its exposure worldwide. The amount of revenue being generated by the TV deals continues to grow. The latest deal finalised by the Premier League easily eclipses everything that has gone before. Viewing figures continue to grow both in the UK and abroad, with certain markets like the Far East for example showing staggering levels of interest in English football and the Premier League in particular. In short, English football has captured the worldwide imagination, and it would appear that everyone wants to buy into it. There is no doubting that, in general, football at the top level in England is in an extremely healthy state.

Although the person who buys a viewing package and spends all of his or her time watching football purely on television is putting money back into the sport, it cannot be denied that football as a spectacle needs a live audience to create a good atmosphere at the stadium. Playing a game of football in front of thousands of empty seats makes for a flat experience and fails to lift the occasion. Supporters prefer to have a full stadium; the players are bound to be encouraged by having a large crowd to cheer them on and, of course the clubs want to sell as many seats as possible purely from a financial point of view. So, should we be concerned by the level of football coverage on television? Does this affect the crowd attendance? Does it deter people from buying season tickets? Can anything be done to avoid awkward journeys, and do fans have a right to claim compensation for the loss of monies paid out on rail and flight tickets?

There is a suspicion amongst football supporters that whenever a game is moved from a 3.00pm Saturday kick-off to either lunchtime or teatime on the same day, or 1.30pm or 4.00pm on a Sunday, or even to a Monday evening, that the overall attendance figure drops. This is generally assumed to be a result of fans either deciding not to spend money on a ticket and preferring to watch the game at home or down at the local pub, or that they were simply unable to change their arrangements. There is also an assumption that clubs would rather take the money given to them by the TV companies than worry about losing a few fans. Some fans who fail to turn up will be season ticket holders in any case, so their seat money is already in the club's bank.

It should be emphasised at this point that the IFC is not criticising the TV companies. Although a lot of match switching is related to the TV schedules, this is not the sole reason why fans have to make alternative arrangements. Generally, the coverage of football has been a benefit to the game and without doubt the Premier League would certainly not be the driving force it now is, without the influence of TV. The

Football League and FA are also heavily involved in arranging TV deals and the Blue Square Conference League is seeing match coverage increase. A weekday evening or weekend afternoon, rarely passes during the football season without at least one league or cup match being made available for the armchair and pub viewer.

The football landscape is changing. For those people who enjoy watching their football on TV, the situation has never been so rosy. However, it must be emphasised that at the IFC office, the topics of ticketing and match scheduling account for 75% of all complaints, letters and e-mails received from fans. With this in mind, the IFC decided to investigate whether the incidence of match rescheduling is increasing and whether this is having an adverse effect on attendances at football stadia. It was also decided to look at whether the price of tickets was deterring fans from attending games. Over 1,000 supporters from seven different clubs were interviewed as part of the IFC's 2007 Fans' Survey.

This survey is the second piece of work commissioned by the IFC to look at these two issues, although the first, in 2003³, looked only at the effects of match rescheduling. So, for the purpose of this, we shall consider match rescheduling first and then move on to the question of tickets later. We shall compare the results from the 2003 IFC Survey with how fans felt in 2007. With this in mind, it was important to see



whether any of the 'constants' had changed. Had the overall number of games being televised changed? Was there an increased tendency for rescheduling? What was the difference in the ticket price between 2003 and 2007? Was there a change in the reasons for rescheduling; for example, were more games affected by adverse weather? Had the football authorities changed any rules? All of these factors can affect attendance at football grounds. The biggest factor, of course, is the performance of the team. Although the new research carried out by the IFC looked at a cross-section of clubs from the top two divisions, it was logical to revisit some of those clubs whose fans were surveyed in 2003. The football clubs chosen were Newcastle United, Tottenham Hotspur and Millwall. During the four years since the last research was carried out, the fortunes of all five clubs in the 2003 survey had varied so we decided to add four other clubs and leave out Sheffield United and Aston Villa. We added Chelsea and Blackburn Rovers from the Premier League, and Watford and Wolverhampton Wanderers from the Championship, giving a total of seven clubs for the 2007 IFC

survey. This provided a good mix of clubs from across the country and included those that had been involved in additional fixtures or where TV schedules had affected their fixture list. European games, domestic cup ties, play-offs and league commitments meant all seven clubs had been busy.

In the 2003 survey, fans were questioned about how they were affected by the switching of games. There were several aims of this research. The IFC wanted to know:-

- what was the perceived frequency of matches being rescheduled?
- if matches were rescheduled, what was the level of inconvenience?
- did people incur additional expense whenever a game was changed?
- what did people see as the main causes of match rescheduling?
- did the moving of games alter people's attitude or behaviour towards football?
- what sort of attitude did fans have towards the football authorities?

1,151 supporters from Newcastle United, Aston Villa, Tottenham Hotspur, Sheffield United and Millwall were interviewed. They were asked how often, if at all, the date or time of a match they would have liked to have attended in the 2002-03 season, had been rescheduled. More than 60% said they had never been affected. Of those fans that had been affected by rescheduled matches, over half said they had been able to change their plans and attend the re-arranged games. Of the remaining fans, only a handful had been seriously affected.

There seems to be a general assumption that the switching of games is a huge inconvenience to the general football supporter. The 2003 research did not support this claim. Almost 80% of the fans questioned, said it was no inconvenience at all. Of those remaining fans who had felt affected by the game moving, the majority said their main problem was due to work or other commitments at the time.

The IFC is regularly contacted by disgruntled fans who are losing money on things like rail or flight tickets booked in advance. In many cases, there is limited or zero refund on such tickets that, in effect, become worthless if a game is rescheduled. It could therefore be assumed that this is a major issue for football supporters. However, the 2003 research did not support this. Almost 90% of fans said they had never been affected by things like additional travel expenses, losing a deposit, loss of money due to missing work, or having to fund accommodation.

The majority of fans assumed games were rescheduled due to TV coverage but most accepted that the switching of games would now be a way of life for the average football fan. Only a tiny percentage felt

increased negativity towards football because of rescheduling. However, the vast majority of fans felt that there should be some sort of recompense for fans affected by games being moved. Another way to reduce the impact would be to provide greater notice. This was something mentioned by 70% of those fans questioned.

The overriding factors from this IFC research in 2003 were that football supporters weren't unduly affected by match rescheduling, either personally or financially, and it certainly did not reduce their enthusiasm for the game.

Before considering the latest IFC research it is worth mentioning various other surveys. One of the most recent was a survey undertaken by the BBC's Football Focus programme⁴. Amongst the questions, supporters were asked whether they objected to fixtures being moved from the traditional Saturday 3.00pm kick-off. Almost two thirds of those polled said they did not object⁵. Another question that also related to the latest IFC research, asked about the amount of football being shown on television. Over half of those surveyed (57%) felt that the balance was just about right, while a not insignificant number of people (27%) considered there was



too much football on TV⁶. The one question that gave the most resounding reply however, was reserved for ticket prices. When the question 'Are ticket prices too expensive?' was asked, the response was a hefty 85% of people saying 'yes'⁷. It would be easy to say that fans were almost guaranteed to say that prices were too high, but the figure of 85% certainly lends some weight to the argument that a lot of people can no longer afford to go to watch football on a regular basis. Although it has no real bearing in this IFC research, it is interesting to note that in the BBC survey 78% of people felt that the amount of money now found in football, was spoiling the game.

Both the Premier League and Football League regularly survey their fans in an effort to discover latest trends and try to anticipate any movements within the fan base. They should be applauded for doing this. Richard Scudamore, Chief Executive of the Premier League says in the foreword to his organisation's research:-

[4] BBC Football Focus, Fan Survey 2007. Results were based on an NOP survey of 1055 people aged over 16 and interested in football.

[5] 62% said no, 32% said yes, and 6% didn't know.

[6] 13% felt there was too little and 3% didn't know.

[7] 8% said no, and 7% didn't know.

"Fans are of course central to the growth and development of the competition and it is clearly vital that we maintain the dialogue... with all those who love their clubs and support the game."

In the latest Premier League survey⁸, one interesting question was 'What prevents you from attending more home or away league matches?' The highest response was similar to that of the BBC Football Focus poll, with an average of 44% of fans citing the price of a ticket as being the main reason for not attending. Work and family commitments are ranked second and third. Close to the bottom of the list however, comes television. For example, only 17% would not bother with a home game if it was being televised live; only 5% would prefer to watch TV highlights as opposed to going to the match in person.

Not surprisingly, one of the highest percentages (42%) was reserved for fans who would like to go to away games, but found the travel too expensive. A similar figure applied to those fans that could not go to away games purely because tickets weren't available. However, it would appear that if a game was being televised either live or via a highlights programme, that would not be a reason for the majority of fans to miss going along to the match in person. Other reasons such as ticket price, ticket availability and the expense of getting there were more likely to see a fan turn their back on seeing a game. In a nutshell, if the ticket and the money are available, they would prefer to go to the game rather than watch it on television.

Of course, an interesting flip-side to the argument that televised games may discourage people to go along, is the fact that if someone watches a game on TV and enjoys it, they may decide to go along and pay to watch the next game at the stadium. According to the Premier League National Fan Survey this is the reason why 13% of non-season ticket holders went to see a game in the first place. As you would expect, the top percentages were reserved for reasons such as it being the local club or parental influence, but the fact that television provides football with an advertising opportunity should not be overlooked. The 'being there' influence is considerable. Of all the fans surveyed, 91% said that the best reason for going to see a match in person was to watch the team play live.

Worldwide, the TV viewing figures for the Premier League are staggering. According to their latest figures⁹ 2.934 billion people watched the Premier League last season.

As mentioned earlier, 1986 saw the start of a revolution in television in the UK when satellite TV was born. The arrival in 1989 of Sky TV saw the revolution gain pace. The coverage of football by Sky may have a few detractors, but the general feeling within the game and amongst supporters, is that it has been a huge benefit. The Premier League devotes a chapter of its National Fan Survey to the topic of 'Football and TV' looking at the way Premier League supporters consume their football

via the small screen. More and more fans have satellite or Freeview TV in their homes. The popularity of cable TV has seen a slight decline, but the biggest reduction has been in the number of supporters without access to any of those TV platforms. In the space of 5 years, the number of supporters' households without satellite, Freeview or cable TV has dropped from 28% to only 5%. It can be safely assumed that some of the 5% probably make do with a wander to the local pub to watch the game with their mates over a pint. Consequently, the vast majority of Premier League fans now have the choice of watching televised Premier League matches.

The National Fan Survey says that 54% of Premier League fans only watch TV when their own club is being shown. 37% will watch any Premier League game. It shouldn't come as any surprise to see that the bigger, more successful clubs have the most viewers who watch only their club. No doubt this is partly due to the stadia having insufficient tickets to meet demand and that supporting the club via TV is the only other option. This group of fans should not be underestimated because, although they might never go to the stadium in person, they are loyal fans all the same and will generally buy club merchandise.

As for the amount of football on television, the Premier League National Fan Survey is roughly in line with that carried out by BBC Football Focus with around 50% of fans feeling that the coverage was about right. The Premier League and the TV companies are probably pleased that the National Fan Survey suggests fewer people now think that there is too much football on TV. Sunday tea-time kick-offs are still the most popular time for viewers watching live games. Monday evening is least popular. The most resounding figure is that 67% of all the Premier League fans surveyed felt 3.00pm Saturday kick-offs should remain a TV-free zone, although the figure has fallen slightly from last year's 71%.

The Football League also surveys their fans. Their 2008 survey is currently underway, but the 2006 survey saw over 43,000 fans respond via an on-line poll¹⁰. This is a terrific response by the fans, for which they should be congratulated. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, football fans are a loyal bunch and, despite sometimes having to put up with poor entertainment and lack-lustre service, they remain loyal. The Football League Supporters Survey 2006 showed that only a tiny minority (3%) of the 43,000 fans described themselves as 'casual fans'. 80% fell into the keen, very keen or fanatic category. The average Football League fan attended 15 home and 6 away games per season, travelling to the game in a car with adult friends.

One of the interesting sections of the report looks at why some football fans do not attend live games. The biggest percentage was down to geography; they lived too far away from the stadium. However, the next biggest percentage (31%) was reserved for ticket prices. People found it too expensive to attend games. Things like the quality of football (5%) or the team's performance (4%) were less significant, supporting the theory that, even if the team is playing badly, most true fans will still turn up to watch a match.

[8] The Premier League National Fan Survey, 2006 – 07 Season
[9] Premier League Annual Report 2006-07

An important figure in relation to match rescheduling was that only 5% didn't attend because of the timing of matches.

When the same group of people were asked what would encourage them to attend a live match, the biggest response (33%) was reserved for reduced ticket prices.

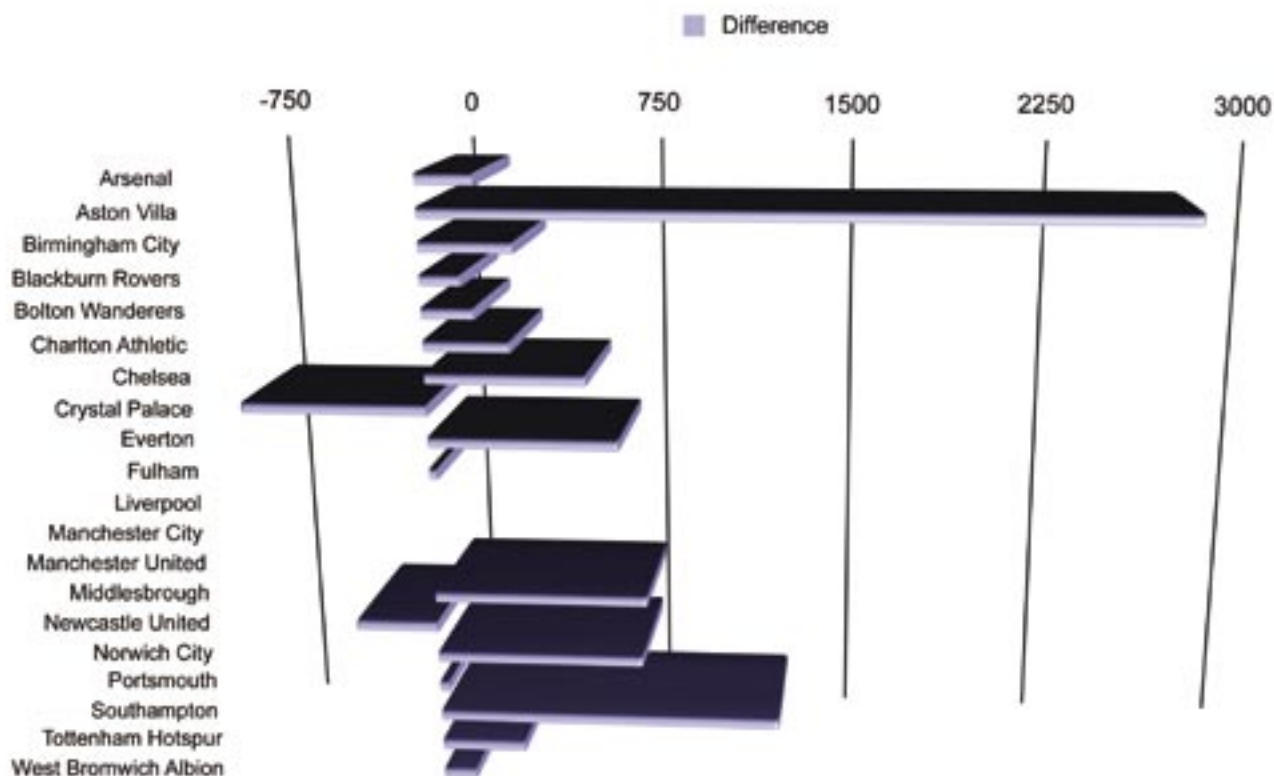
And so to the 2007 IFC study into ticketing and match scheduling, and the IFC Fans' Survey.

To see whether there was any major difference between the match attendance when two teams met on a Saturday at 3.00pm without the live TV cameras present, and an afternoon or evening when the game was being televised, the IFC looked at match day figures for the past three seasons. Match attendance at a particular fixture, and comparing it from season to season is, of course, fraught with complications and variables. It can be affected by a whole raft of outside influences apart from the game being rescheduled. For example, the Football League has raised concerns about the seemingly never-ending increase in the number of midweek European games. These matches, including some of the very early qualification ties, are generally covered by at least one TV network. If a fan is left with a choice of attending his or her local stadium for a game that may not be too exciting or staying at home to watch a European game for free, they may decide to ignore the local game, particularly if the weather made the trip to the stadium rather uninviting.

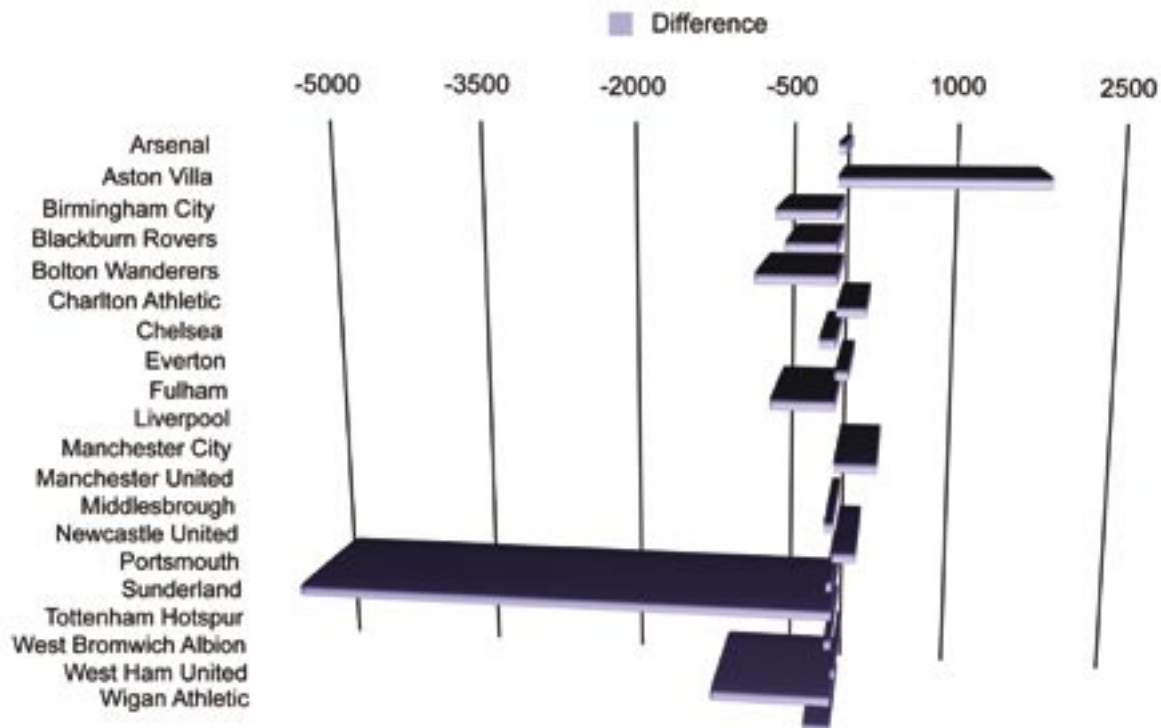
The IFC looked at the differences in attendance figures whenever a Premier League match was moved from its original Saturday 3.00pm kick-off. Although there were one or two glaring variances, it certainly was not a significant difference and the overall trend suggests that fans do not leave in droves if the game fails to take place at the traditional 3.00pm on a Saturday.

The loss of fans at Sunderland Football Club coincided with their relegation season (2005–06) when the club struggled to gain points and ended up with a record low total for the Premier League. Middlesbrough fans should be congratulated for staying faithful to their team in the 2005–06 season despite the number of games being switched. It should also be pointed out that, as the following three charts show, some clubs saw their attendances rise if games were moved.

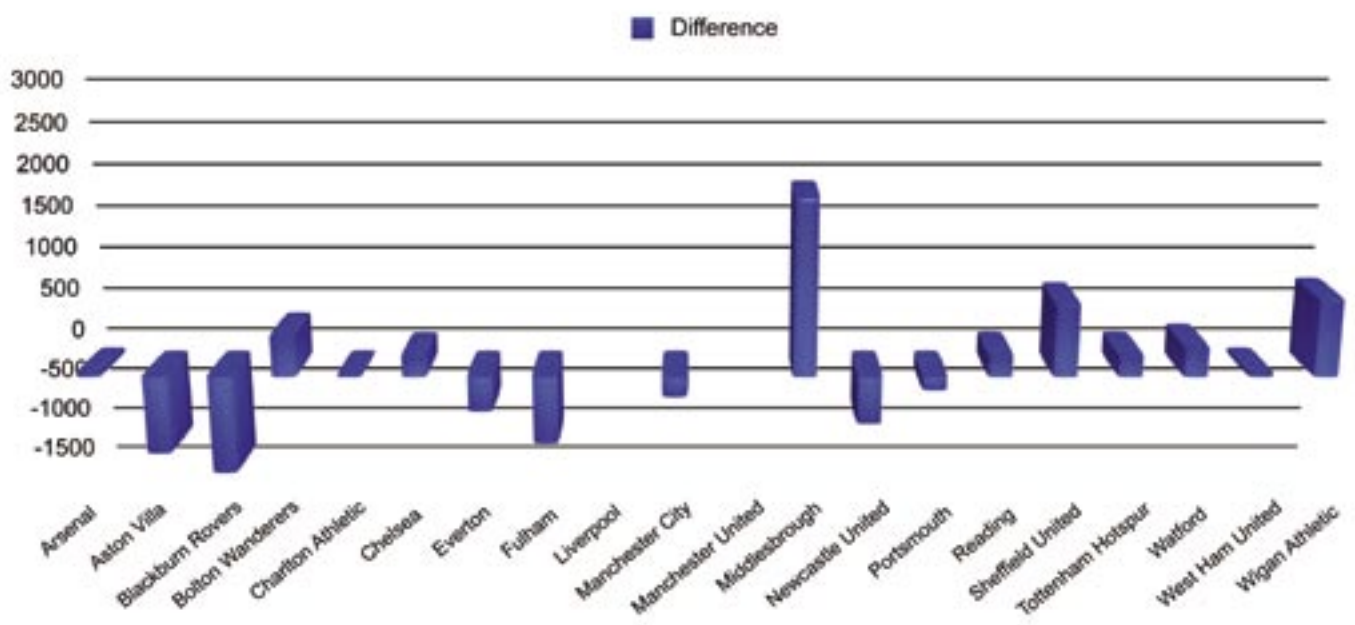
Attendance difference for rearranged matches 2004-05



Attendance difference for rearranged matches 2005-06

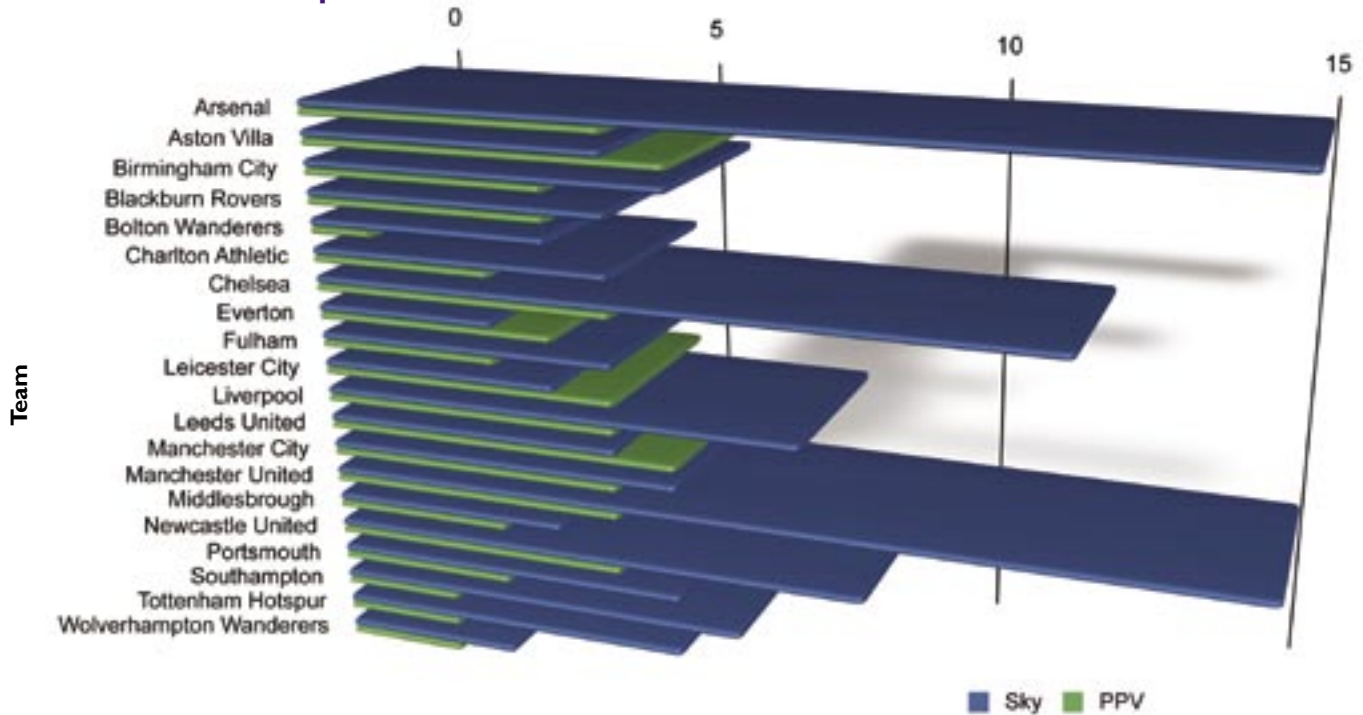


Attendance difference for rearranged matches 2006-07

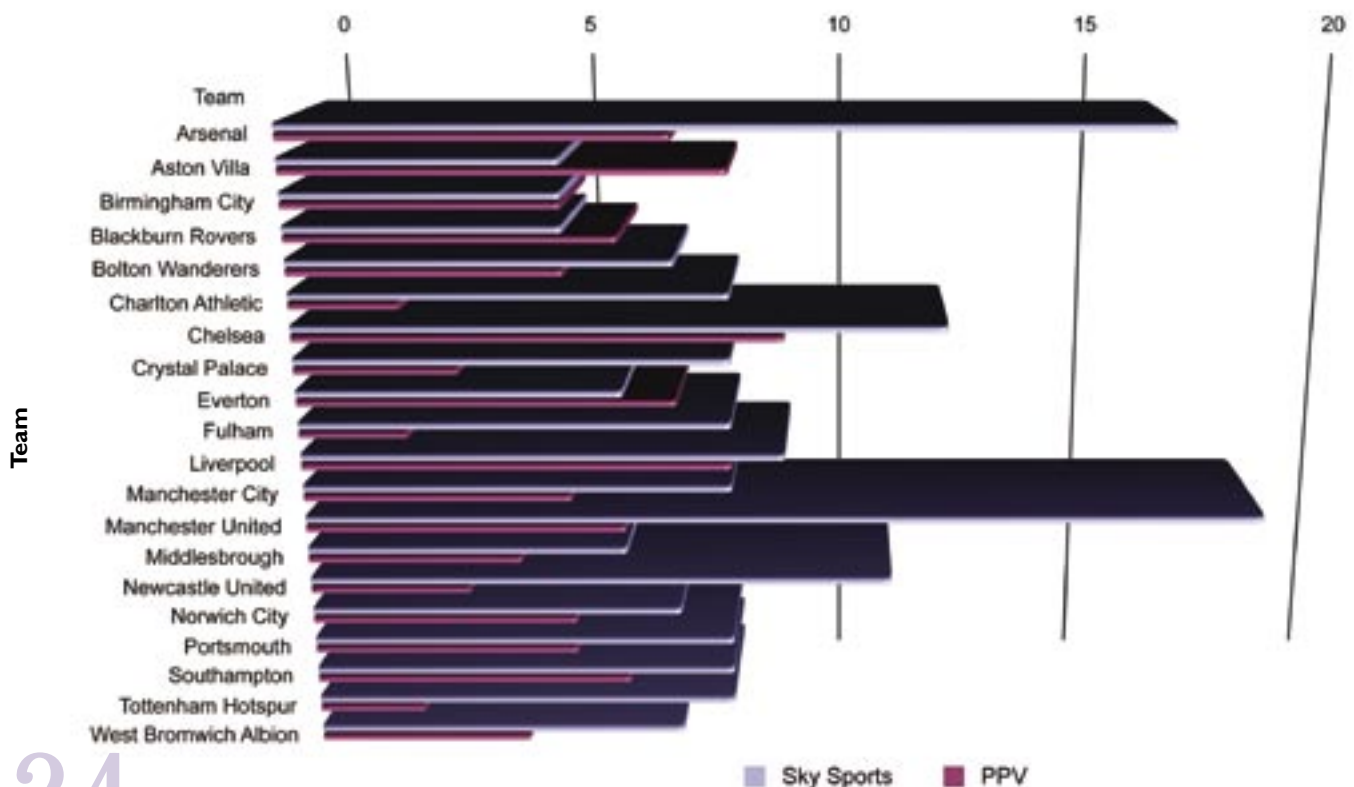


What about the number of games being moved? The IFC compared figures from the four previous seasons. As expected, the number of times a club is featured on TV reflects the success enjoyed by that club. Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur lead the way in terms of TV exposure.

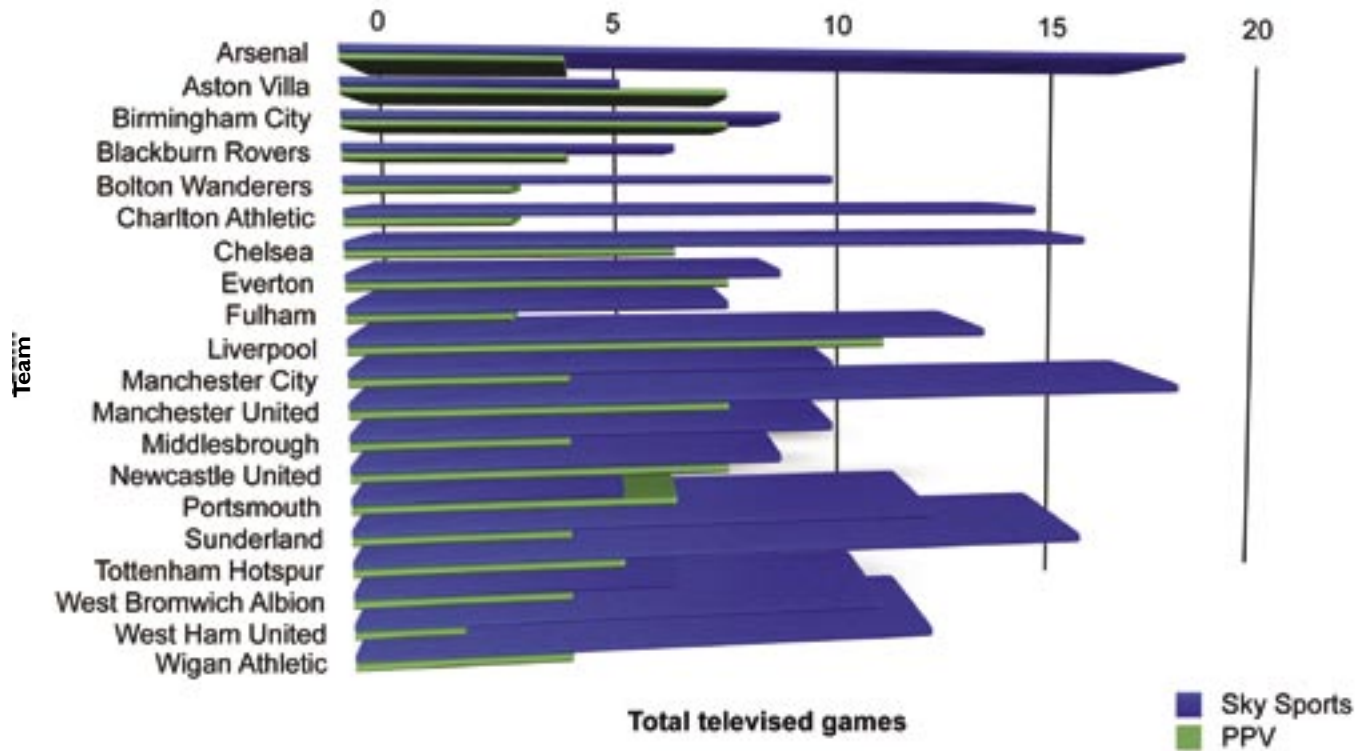
Televised Premiership Matches 2003-04



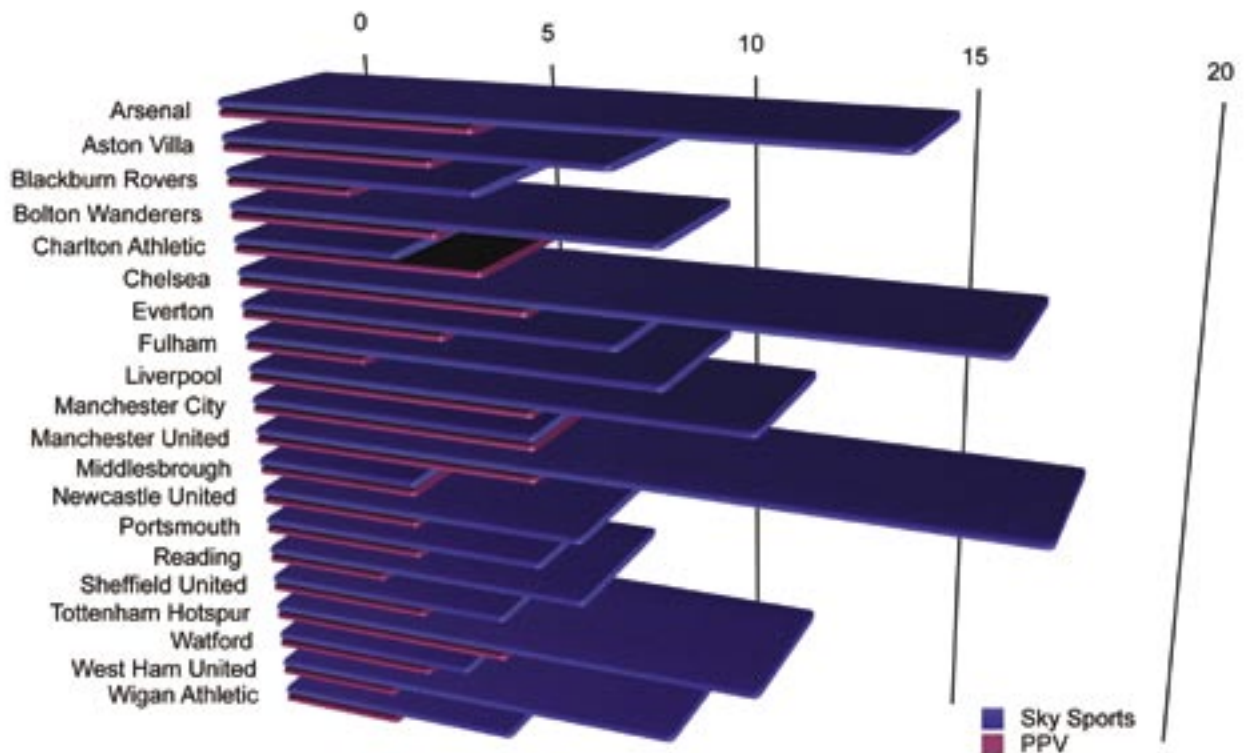
Televised Premier League Matches 2004-05



Televised Premier League Matches 2005-06



Premiership Games on Sky and PPV 2006-07



As mentioned earlier, comparing figures from season to season is notoriously difficult due to the ever-changing football 'landscape'. The relevance of a match in terms of importance for league and cup positions will certainly help the TV companies decide on which games to cover. This can turn an apparently unattractive fixture at the start of the season, to a crucial 'must win' game staged in the final few weeks of the campaign. It would be similarly difficult to compare an attendance figure from say the opening Saturday of the season to that of the weekend prior to Christmas, which is notoriously disappointing in terms of attendance as fans are either forced to indulge in some last minute shopping or are finding funds rather stretched at an expensive time of year when several home games generally occur in quick succession, followed by the 3rd round of the FA Cup.

Another variable is the specific week when the game is played. One particular fixture played in, for example, the 2005-06 season, may have been in the middle of the normal Saturday rotation without any midweek games. In the following season, it may have come after an attractive midweek FA Cup replay or a Thursday night UEFA Cup game, therefore making it expensive for fans to find funding for two games in a short period of time.

Some clubs will have increased the size of their stadium. Others will have moved to a different ground altogether. Although not covered in this report, it would be an interesting exercise to see whether some clubs, having extended their stadium, actually see a reduction in attendance. If a club is doing well and their stadium is generally full with a high percentage of season ticket holders, there is a temptation to assume that by increasing the size of the stadium, the overall attendance will increase with the new seats being filled on a regular basis. However, there must be a crucial figure when fans recognise that there are sufficient seats in the stadium to cope with demand for the majority of fixtures. The main reason for buying a season ticket is to guarantee that you see every home game and theoretically gain preference for

cup matches. There is usually some sort of discount factored into the price of a season ticket that makes it slightly cheaper than paying to watch every game individually, but if it becomes apparent that there are always plenty of seats available, there then becomes less of an incentive to pay out a large sum for a season ticket. Granted, there may be an occasion for some of the key matches and local derbies when the stadium sells out and a fan cannot gain access, but this is probably tempered by them saving money when not going to games against less attractive opposition. Naturally, for some fans nothing less than a season ticket will do because they will always attend every home game, but for the fan that may not be 100% committed, a bigger stadium means there is an option of risking missing a game or two and saving some money.

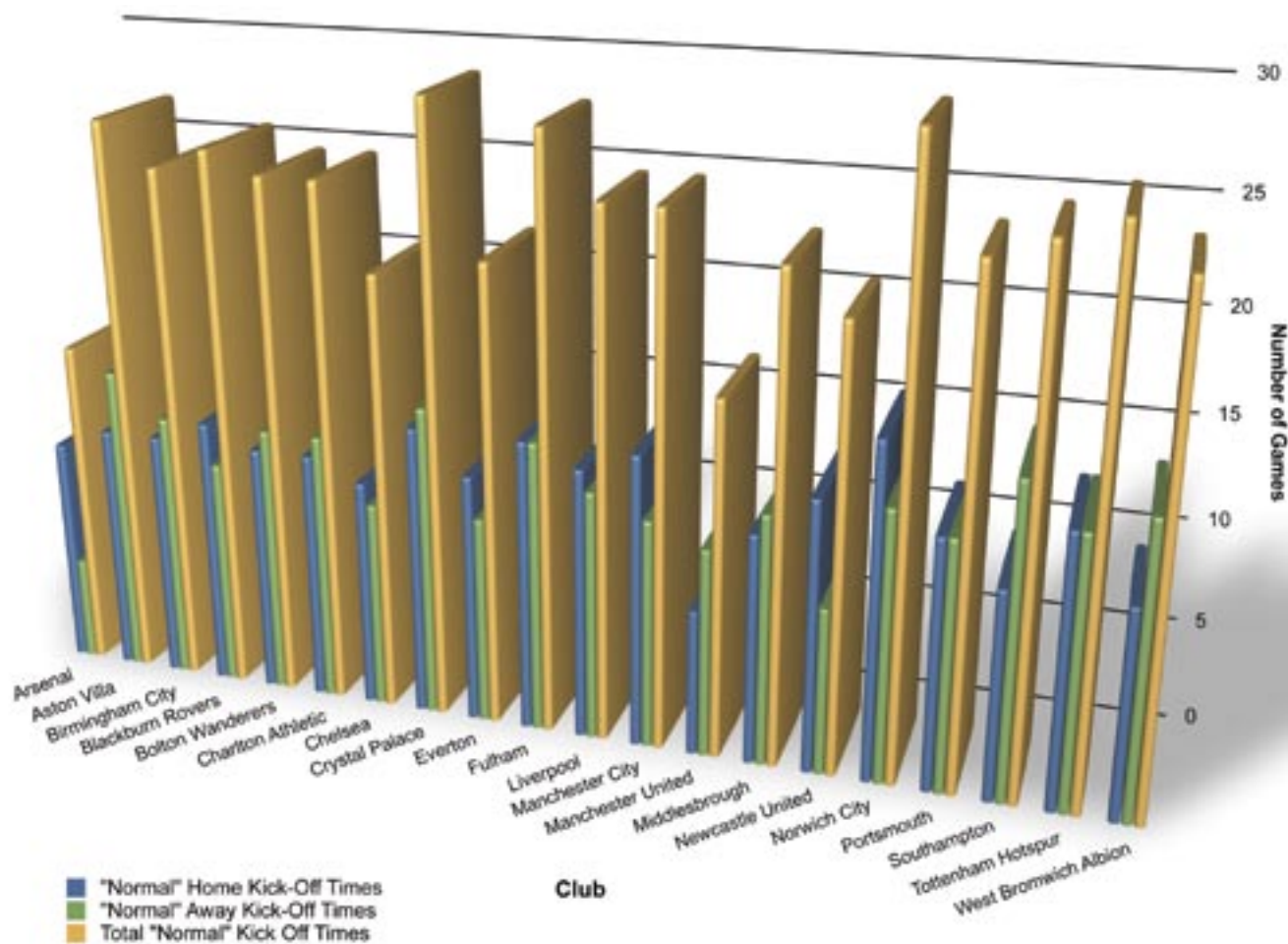
In short, the number of reasons for fans not to go to a game, are numerous and varied. As well as the option to watch games on television, there seems to be a steady increase in the number of reasons why fans may fall out of love with football. Some are no doubt disillusioned by the amount of money earned by players. Others will become disenchanted by what may be perceived as a race to turn clubs into money-making machines rather than looking after the fans. Lurid stories in newspapers don't help either. However, a major factor that influences people attending football matches is the price of a ticket. The 2007-08 season has seen a number of clubs freeze the price of their tickets. In the Premier League, this is being put down to the increased level of income from TV deals. However, there is also a feeling at some clubs that they have squeezed as much as possible out of their fans and that they cannot continue to increase the price of their tickets. Some clubs are in the fortunate position of being able to sell the vast majority of their seats irrespective of performances or the perceived quality of the opposition. For example, it is difficult to compare attendances season on season at clubs like Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, or Newcastle United, because their stadia are invariably full whether the game is being shown live on TV or not.

As mentioned earlier, it would be wrong to label TV companies as the one and only source of reasons as to why games are rescheduled. The police can ask for fixtures to be moved. This is generally when two sides in the vicinity are both due to play at home on the same day. Police resources can be overstretched so one of the games is invariably moved. When the league fixtures are drawn-up at the start of the season, this sort of clash is generally avoided, but in the event of an FA Cup draw, anything can happen. The game can be moved if another major event is scheduled to take place at the same time as the football match. Bad weather can cause games to be postponed or abandoned, although with modern stadia and under soil heating, this is becoming less of a concern. It is generally the area leading up to the stadium that causes problems and can lead to the police recommending that the game is called off. However, there are invariably a handful of games every season called off by the referee due to inclement conditions. International matches can cause games to be called off. The top two divisions generally have blank schedules when

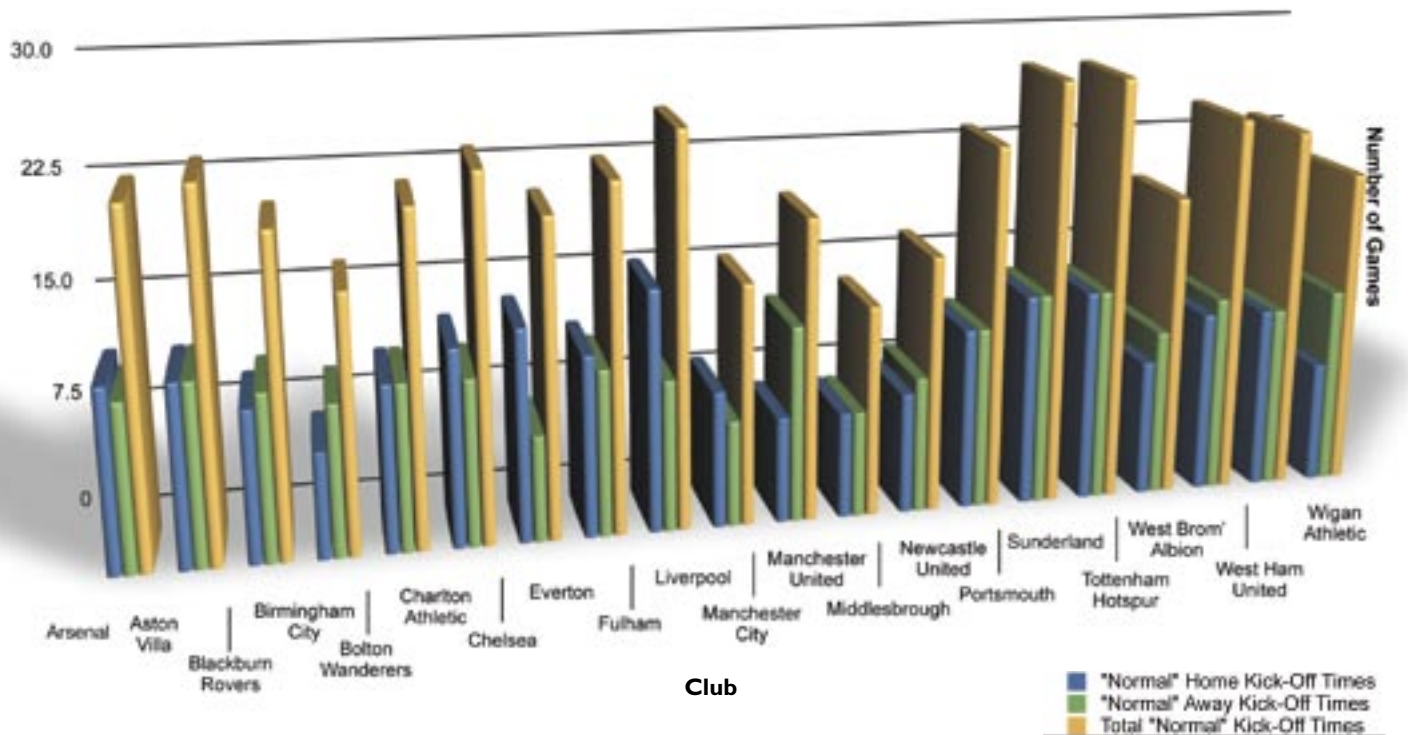
this occurs, but clubs in lower divisions can be affected when several of their players are requested to join national squads, therefore leaving them with a weakened squad. And finally, a fixture can be moved if the two clubs come to a mutual agreement.

So, how many games do kick-off at 3pm on a Saturday afternoon? The IFC looked at the Premier League fixtures for the last three seasons, taking into account the number of home games that were moved, and the total amount, taking into account away fixtures. Again, as you would expect, it is the most successful teams that attract the most TV interest. Games are moved for many of the reasons mentioned above but principally because the clubs concerned are involved in an attractive fixture or they have been, or are due to be, taking part in European games. The following three graphs show the seasons from 2004 to 2007. In a normal season, there are 38 games for each club in the Premier League. So, for example, in the first graph, 2004-05 season, Chelsea has 21 normal Saturday afternoon 3.00pm kick-offs. 10 of those games were away from home and 11 were at Stamford Bridge. In the following 2005-06 season, it was another 21 games kicking off at 3.00pm on a Saturday, but the difference between home and away games being affected was much greater. And then in the 2006-07 season, the overall figure dropped to 17 unaffected games.

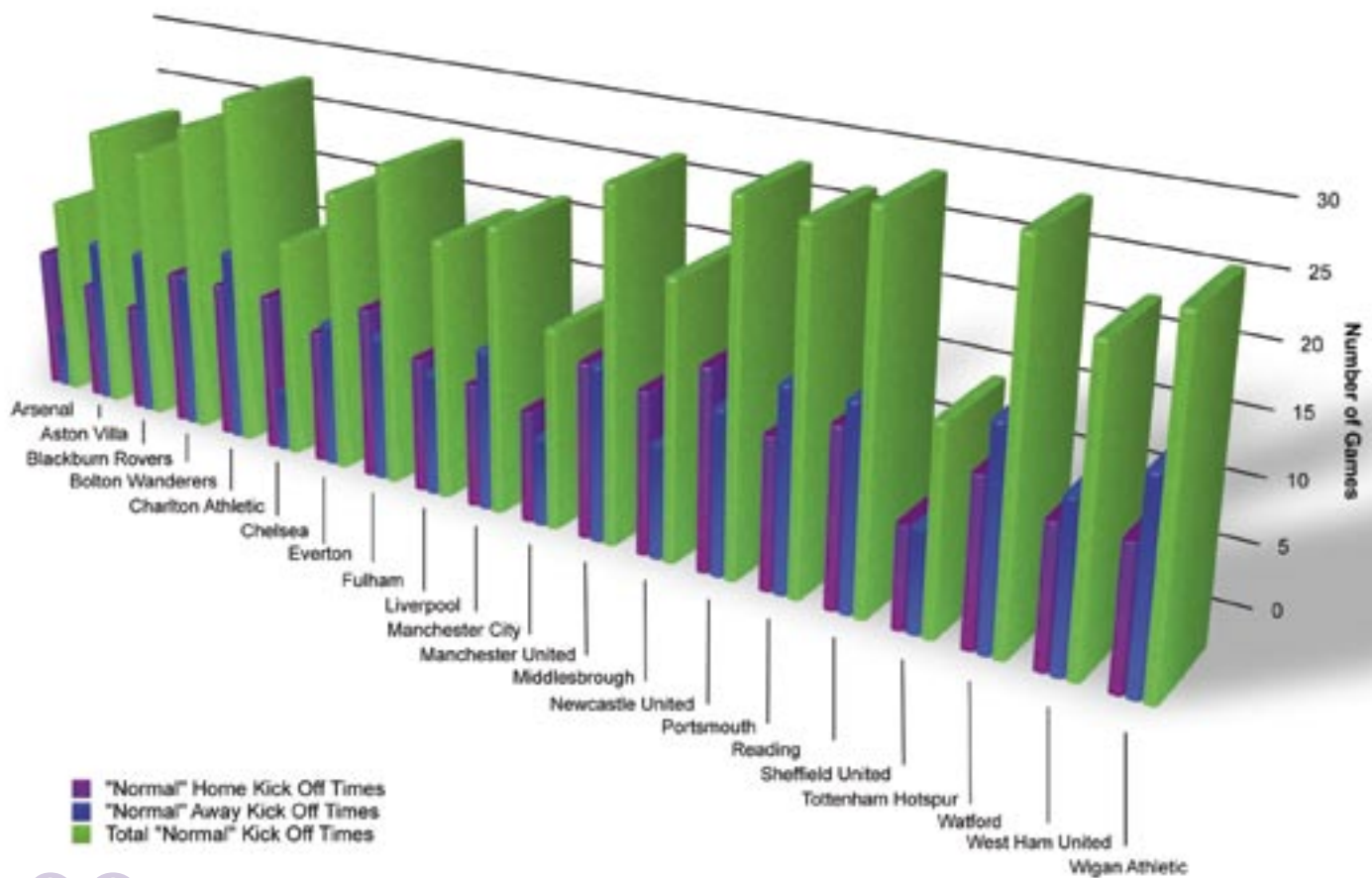
Kick-off times 2004-05



Kick-off times 2005-06



Kick-off times 2006-07

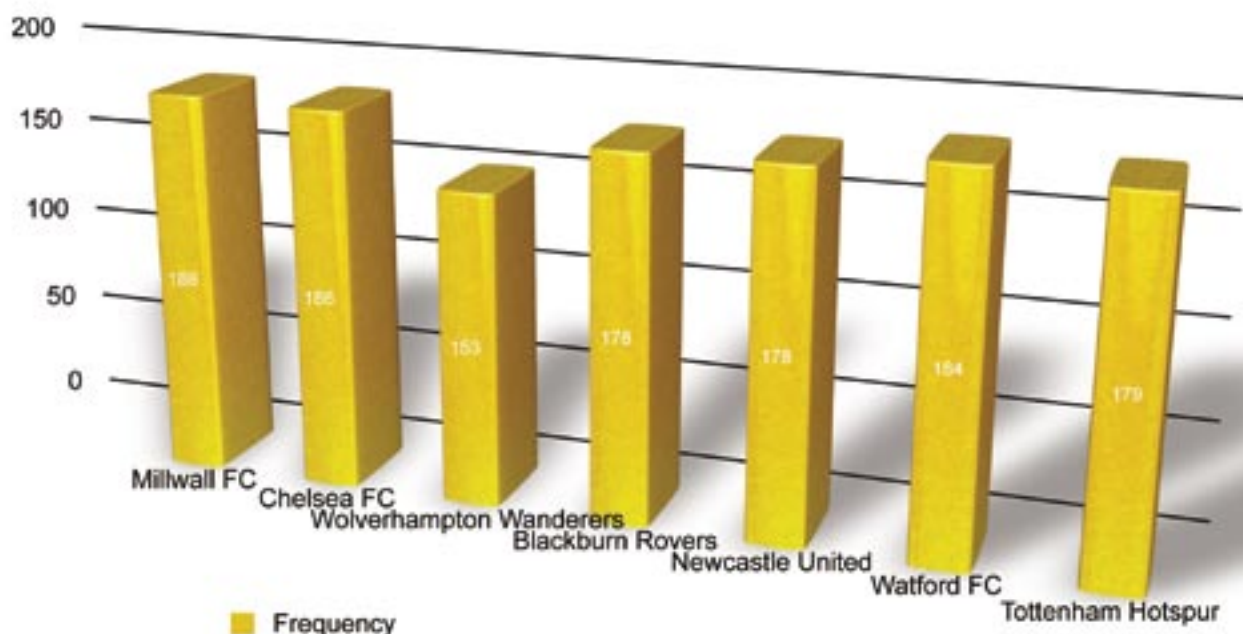


Football supporters now accept that some games will be moved. If they are given plenty of notice and a full explanation as to why the game is being switched, the majority of fans will not be unduly affected in terms of having to change plans or lose money on travel tickets that cannot be altered or cancelled. For some fans however, if the game is not on a Saturday afternoon, they will not be able to attend the rearranged game.

Let's now move on to the **2007 Independent Football Commission Fans' Survey**. This survey looked at two areas; whether games being moved from a traditional 3.00pm

Saturday kick-off would affect attendance, and whether the price of tickets was forcing people to miss games. The IFC utilised the widely respected Customer Service Network (CSN). They carried out a number of interviews with supporters outside a selected number of stadia, namely Tottenham Hotspur, Watford, Newcastle United, Blackburn Rovers, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Chelsea and Millwall. 1,246 interviews were completed and so the results are statistically significant. The graph below shows the number of fans interviewed at each club:-

Football Ground

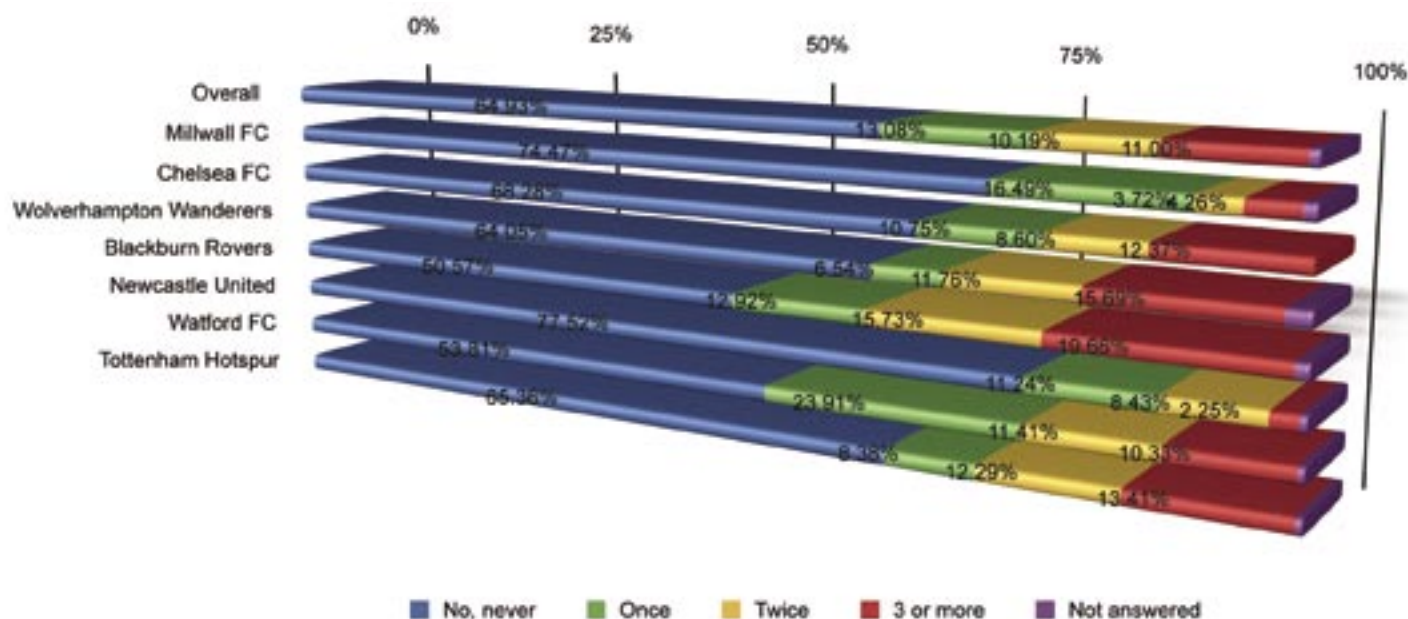


In the section of the IFC survey devoted to match rescheduling, respondents were asked to state what they felt were the main reasons for matches being moved. Television, weather and clashes with European games were seen as the top three reasons. This compares with the study completed in 2003 which also found that television was the biggest driver in match rescheduling. The number of respondents affected by rescheduling was approximately 1 in 3 (34.3%) and of these around 1 in 4 had to miss one or more rescheduled matches (23.9%). A level of inconvenience was experienced by just under half of respondents. The level of inconvenience has increased since 2003 where only 1 in 4 was inconvenienced (25%). Additional expenses, due to rescheduling, increased to 17% of respondents from 14% in 2003. 62.1% of respondents in the 2007 survey claimed travel as being the biggest expense.

The IFC asked the supporters of each club whether any of their games in the 2006–07 season had been rescheduled; if so, how many? It should be pointed out that this response is merely a reflection of what the fans thought had happened and not what really took

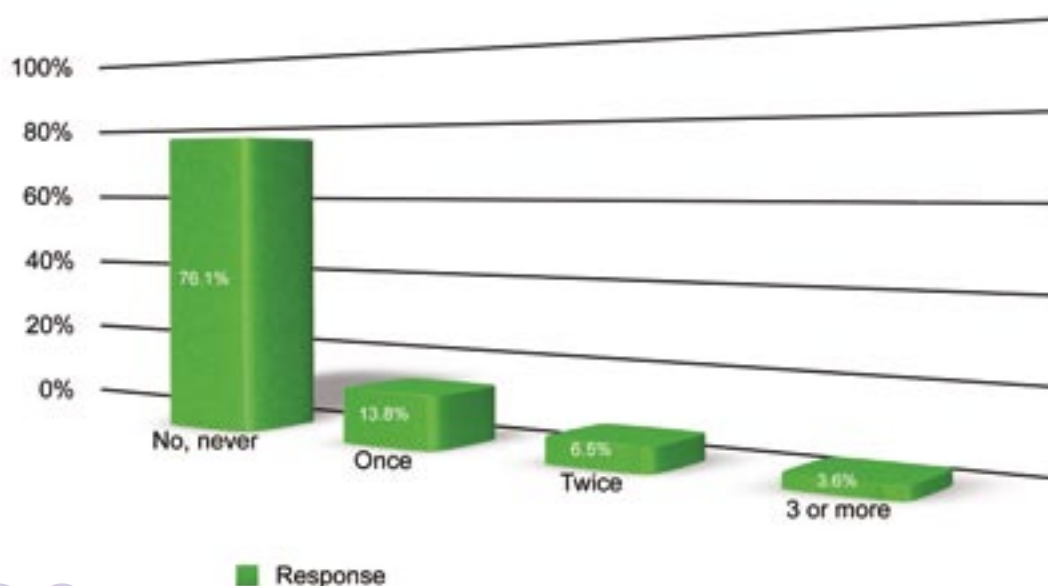
place. According to the responses, a sizeable percentage of Newcastle United fans felt that their games had not been affected (77.5%) whereas just over 50% of Blackburn Rovers fans felt that games had been moved. See graph below.

Q11: Last season, was a game you wanted to attend rescheduled?



If the game had been rescheduled, did it mean that they could not attend? A sizeable majority said that it did not affect their attending the game (76.1%). See following graph.

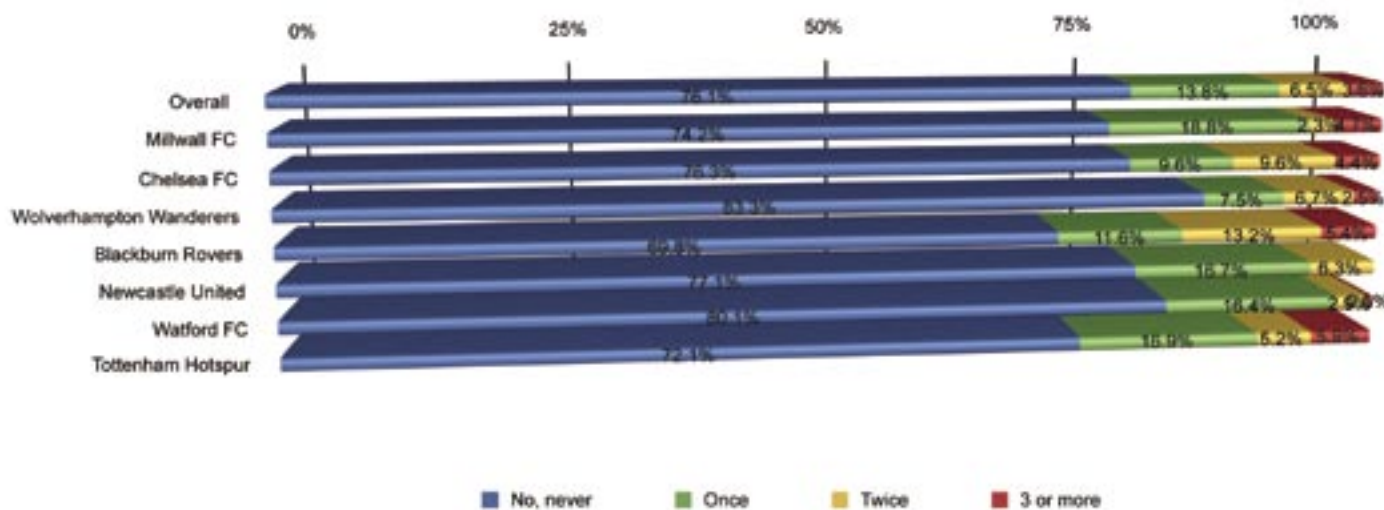
Q12: Did the match being rescheduled mean that you could not attend the match? (Results excluding not answered)



The following graph shows a club-by-club breakdown as to whether fans did or did not attend a rescheduled game. Wolverhampton Wanderers fans were the least affected (83.3%) but, as the graph above shows, most fans still managed

to attend the game, irrespective of when it started. Blackburn Rovers were worst affected by matches being rescheduled, but even then, 69.8% said they had not been affected and could still go along to see the game.

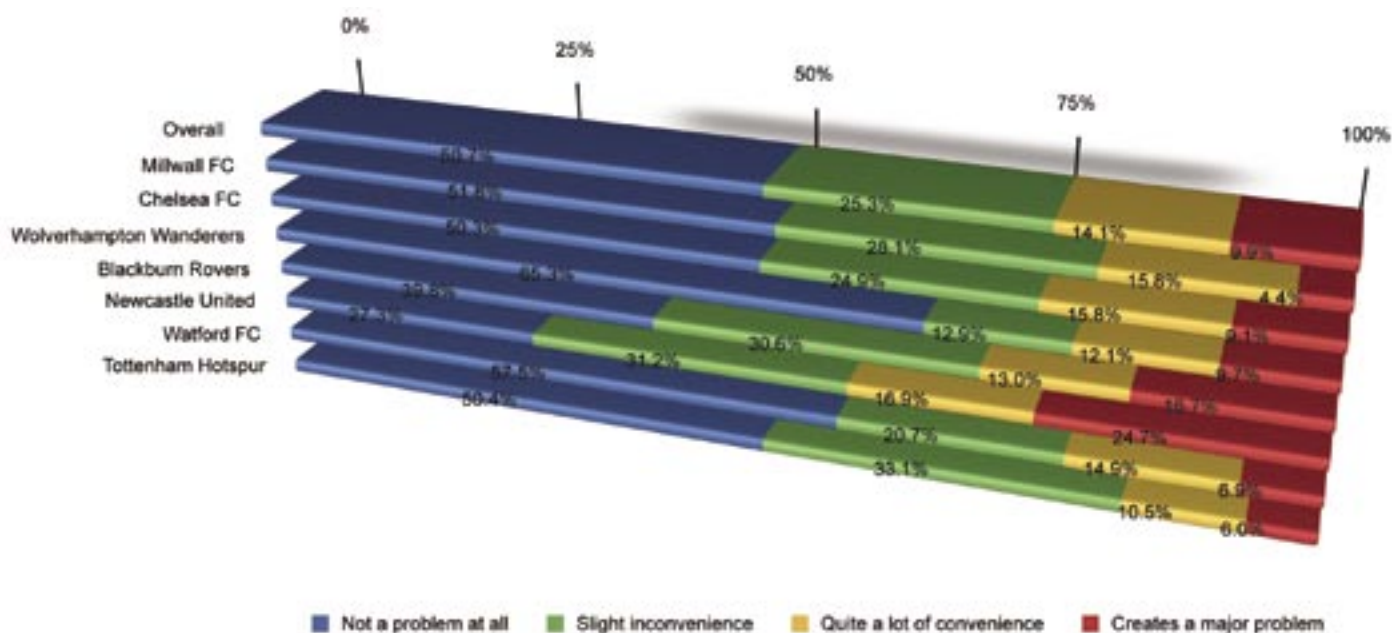
Q12: Did the match being rescheduled mean that you could not attend the match? (Results excluding not answered)



Of course, the genuine fan will move heaven and earth to attend matches, but it can still be an inconvenience which is bound to affect people's perception of the club. The graph below shows how fans felt regarding the level of inconvenience.

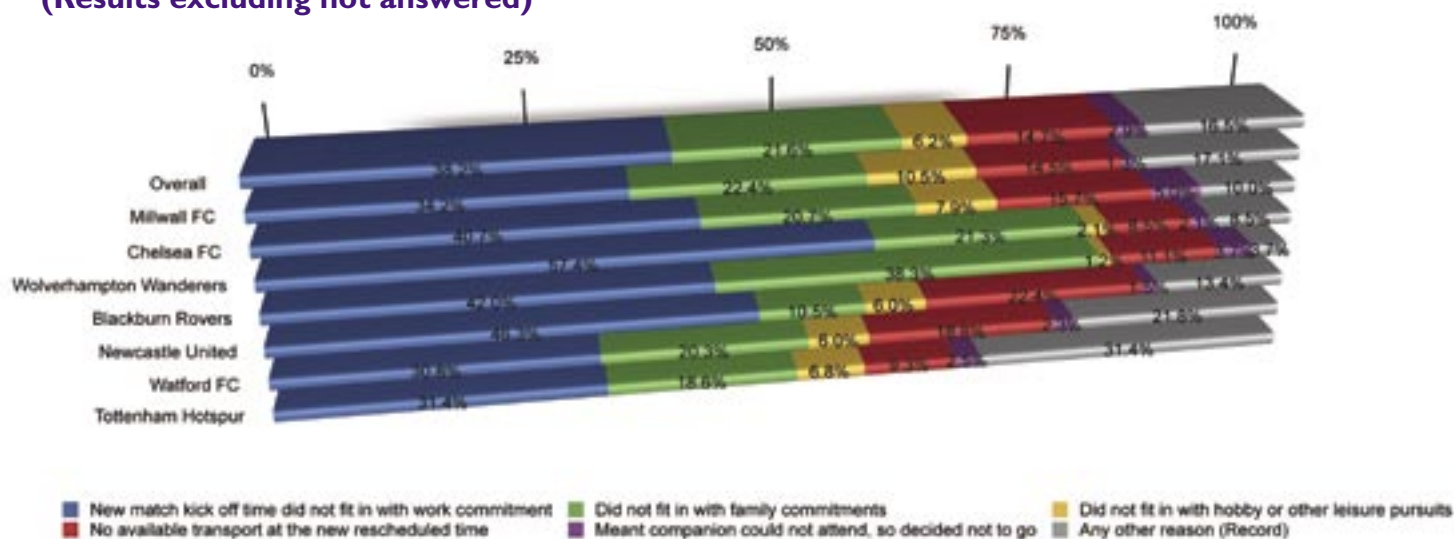
On average, just over half of the fans questioned, said that there had not been any inconvenience. However, 24.7% of Newcastle United fans said that they had had a major problem.

Q13: If a match is rescheduled what was the level of inconvenience? (Results excluding not answered)



And what were the main features of that inconvenience? As the graph below shows, it is a failure to fit in with work commitments which is the biggest inconvenience. On average 38.2% said work was the biggest problem. Blackburn Rovers fans said that family commitments (38.3%) were a big problem for them. Newcastle United fans had problems with transportation (22.4%) not being available when games were moved.

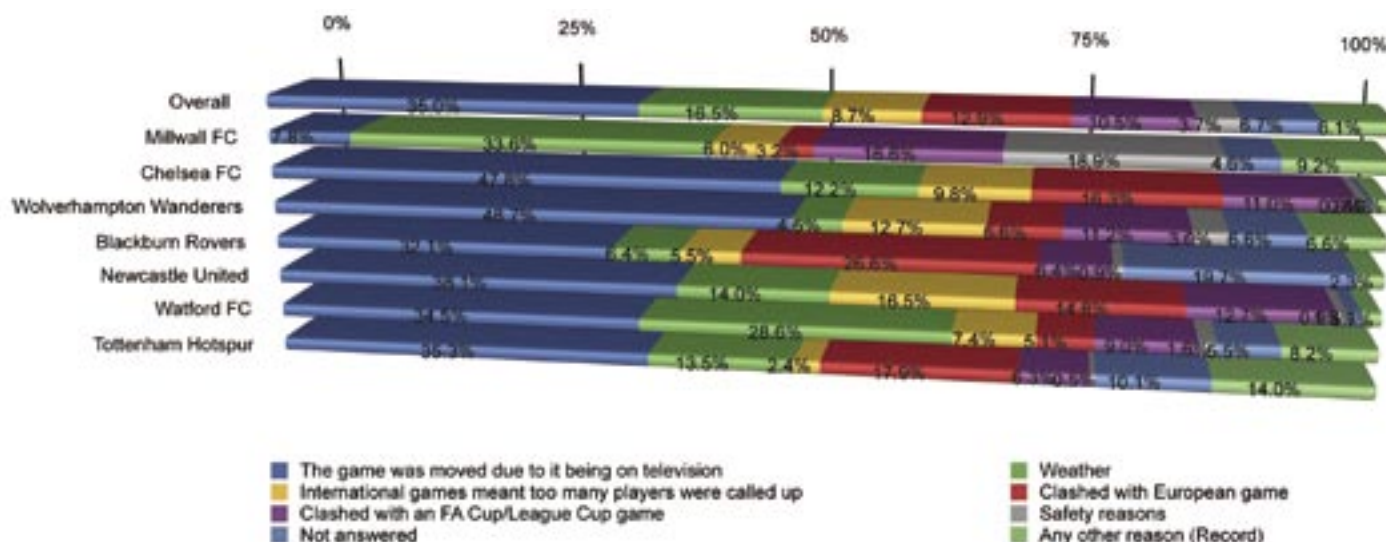
Q14: If you were inconvenienced, what caused the problems? (Results excluding not answered)



The following chart shows what people perceived to have been the reasons for games being switched. The bars show the responses from each club plus an overall average figure, with each colour denoting a reason. The order for the reasons is as follows; the game was

shown on TV (36% average), weather (16.5%), players away on international duty (8.7%), clashed with a European game (12.9%), clashed with domestic cup games (10.5%), safety reasons (8.7%), no answer (6.7%), and any other reason (6.1%).

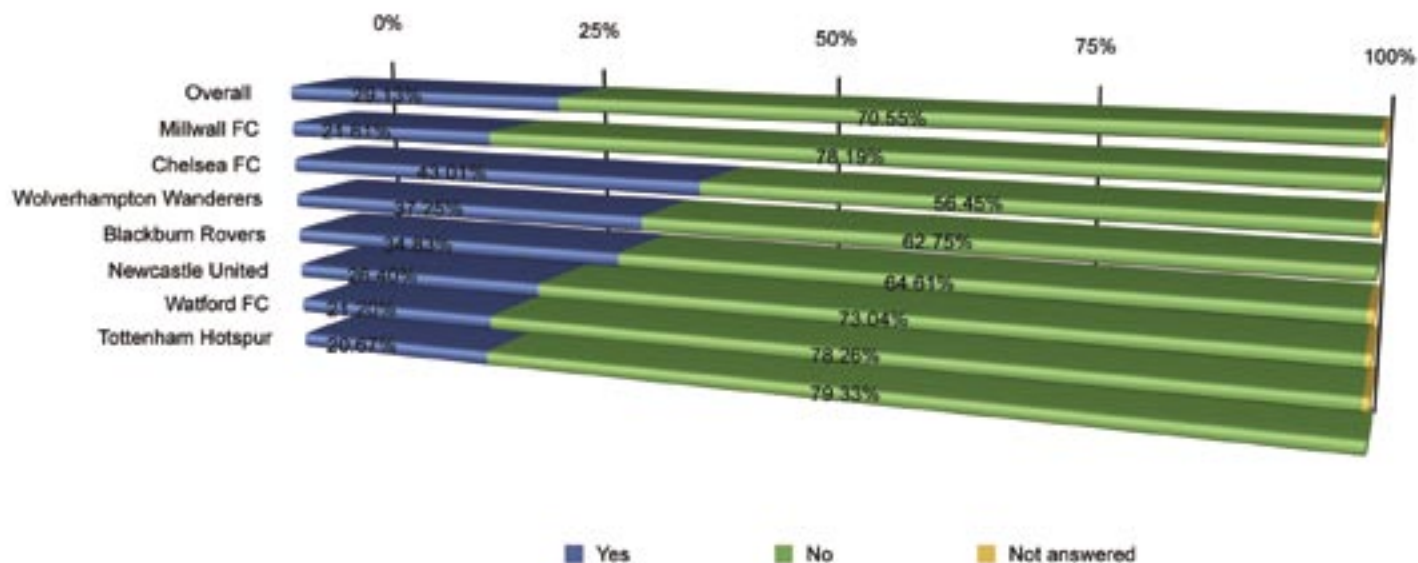
Q17: Which of the following do you think are the main causes of games involving your club being re-arranged? (Results excluding not answered)



Games kick-off at a wide variety of times, so the IFC wondered whether the moving of a game from the traditional 3.00 pm Saturday start to either a different kick-off time on a Saturday, or to a Friday, Sunday or Monday, affected attendance. The

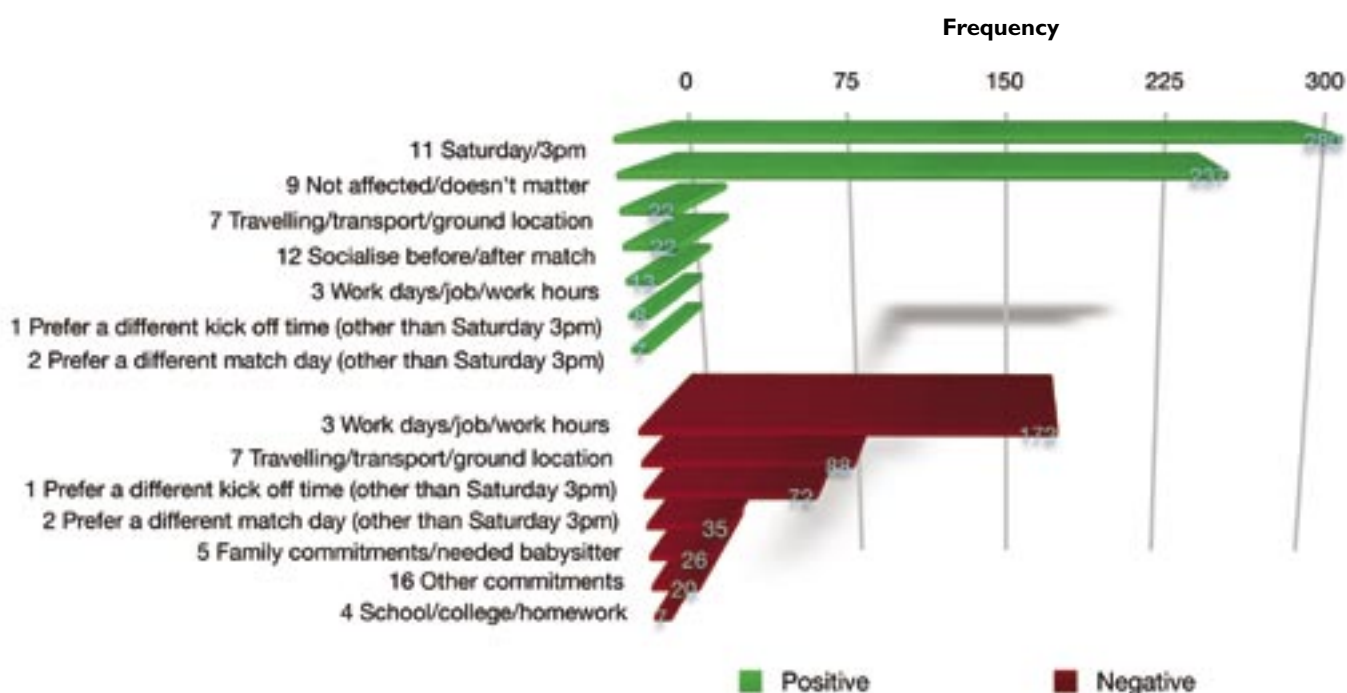
graph below shows the club-by-club breakdown to this question. Just fewer than 30% said it had affected their attendance. Chelsea fans had suffered the most (43%) with Tottenham Hotspur's fans least bothered (20.7%).

Q9: Do kick off times affect your match attendances? In other words, are you more likely to attend at certain times than others? (Results excluding not answered)



The IFC wondered if fans had a preferred kick-off time and what made them decide on that time. The biggest response, 280 of the 1,246 fans surveyed, said the biggest factor that determined which kick-off time they wanted, was that they believed it should be a Saturday 3.00pm kick-off purely because of tradition. However, this was only 43 people more than those who said they weren't bothered at all by kick-off times

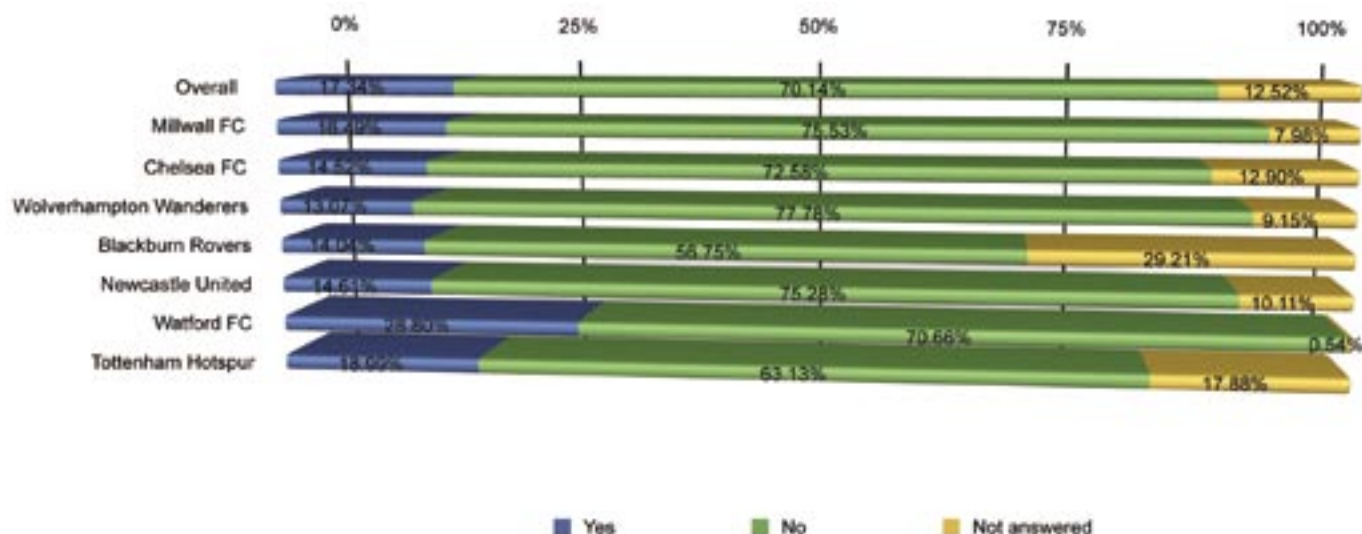
and would attend no matter when the game started. The next two highest responses were that attendance would be affected by the game clashing with work commitments, or for the simple reason that getting to and from the stadium could be tricky if it wasn't on a Saturday afternoon. After those four responses, the other reasons had little relevance. See graph below.



There is a natural assumption that if a game is rescheduled, fans are left out of pocket. Perhaps they cannot get a refund on a train or flight ticket; they may need to book a hotel room if it is an evening game, or they may find themselves having to take some time off work. So, with this in mind, the IFC asked whether a rescheduled game had meant that the supporters had been forced to find some extra cash.

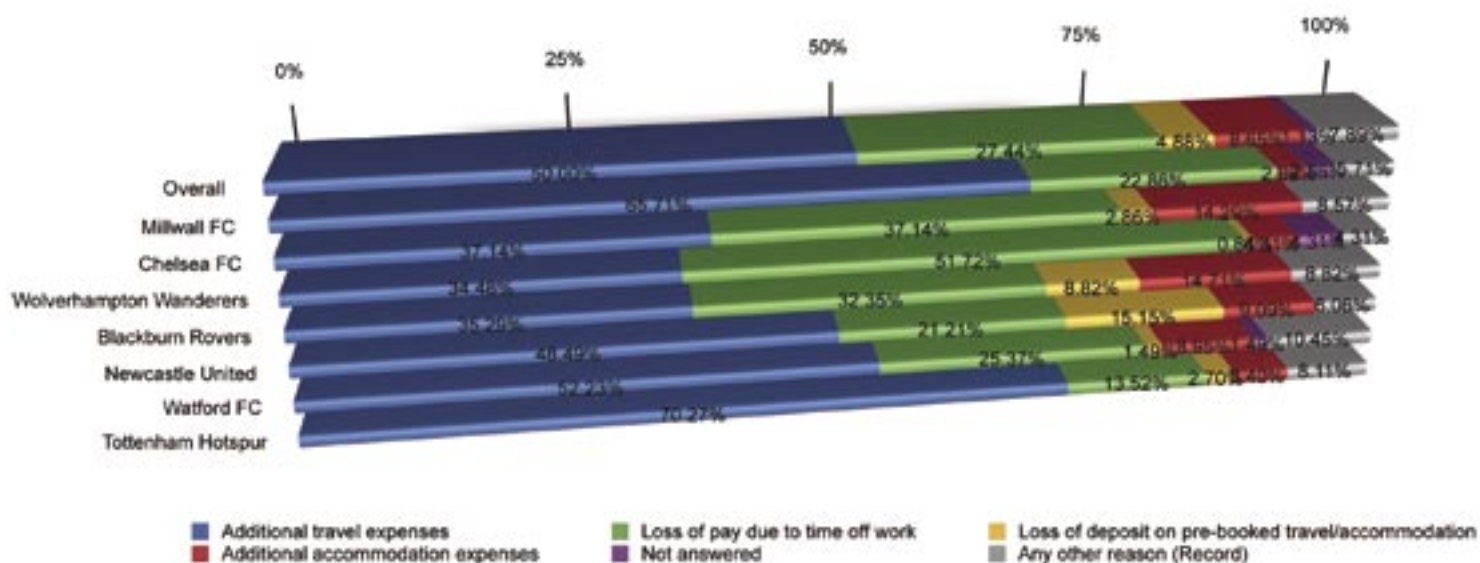
This question was asked to both season and non-season ticket holders. Season ticket holders were the least affected with only 11.6% saying that they had suffered additional expense. However, more than double that figure (24.3%) of non-season ticket holders felt they were out of pocket. See graph below.

Q15: Has rescheduling ever caused you extra expense?



Of those fans who felt that they had been forced to find additional funding, the IFC asked what it was. The following chart shows this club-by-club.

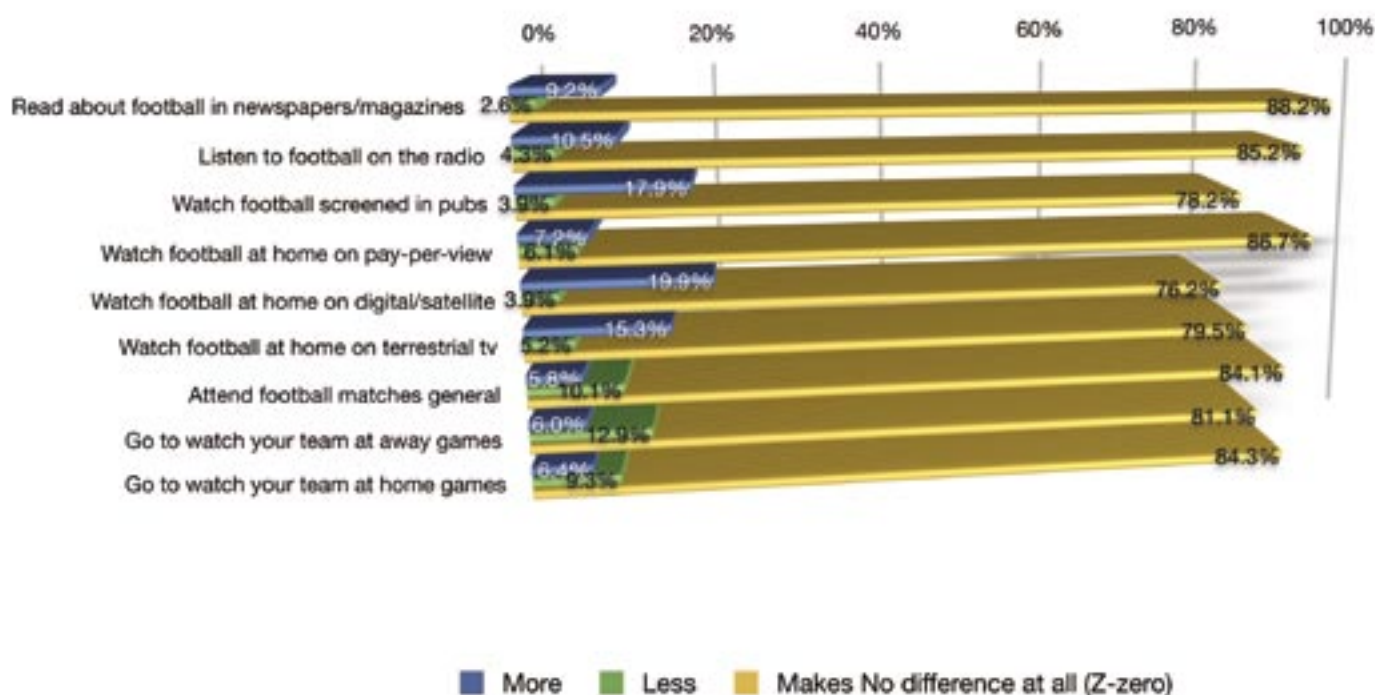
Q16: Has rescheduling ever caused you extra expense? If so what was it?



So, what was the general feeling about match rescheduling. The IFC asked fans if a game being switched made them do something different or whether it made no difference at all. For example, did it make them watch more football at home? Would they listen to it on the radio or would it be a good

excuse to head off to the local pub and watch the game on the screens there? The resounding answer was that it had no affect whatsoever with on average 82% saying that if a game was rescheduled, they would not do anything different. See chart below.

Q18: Does match rescheduling make you...



So, the general conclusion from this section of the IFC research is that of the 1,246 fans spoken to, if a game was moved, irrespective of the reason, the vast majority were not seriously affected and, even if there was some inconvenience, they would still make every effort to go along to the game whenever it was played. It would also appear that although some fans may find they are hit financially when a game is moved, this was only a small minority. For most fans therefore, match rescheduling is now deemed to be a fact of footballing life and it does not have any serious adverse effect on match attendance.

Let's now move on to the ticketing section of the IFC's Fans' Survey of 2007. Ticket prices are something that football fans are obviously concerned about. Football supporters are no different to everyone else; they would rather pay less for a product or service than they currently do. However, football is different. Unlike most products where the customer simply buys something and then goes home, football needs supporters because they are an integral part of the game. It is a case of the product needing the customer as well as the customer needing the product. One cannot 'survive' without the other. Yes, football needs sponsorship, revenue from broadcasting, profits from merchandise etc, but it also needs people in the stands to provide the atmosphere and ensure that a football match is not played in a sterile environment. Any football fan will recognise that a noisy stadium makes for a much better game in terms of the overall enjoyment. This is supported in the Football League's Supporters Survey 2006, where the desire to have a good match atmosphere received more positive responses than anything else when it came to the match day experience. It should also be emphasised that there is a social element to the role a football club plays in the local community.

Richard Caborn MP, former Sports Minister, and new Government ambassador for England's bid for the 2018 World Cup, supported this view during his speech at the Soccerex conference at Wembley Stadium in May 2007:-

"Supporters are the bedrock on which professional sport is built and it is often the celebrations in the stands that make a tournament or championship memorable, as much as what goes on, on the pitch or track. Fans are the beating heart of clubs, leagues and tournaments. Owners, authorities and organisers must never forget it. State-of-the-art facilities are worth nothing if they are empty. I have voiced my opinion on many occasions recently that Premier League teams need to recognise the loyalty of fans from the community the clubs grew out of and reward them with cheaper tickets. Watching sport live must be accessible to the many and not the privileged few who can afford a ticket; and organisers of major events must remember that sport is more than just a business. All I ask is that (football) works together for the good of the game and not just for the good of personal profit".

When it comes to finances, the English Premier League now rates as one of the biggest earners in world sport. The latest deal tied up in mid-2007 means the Premier League will earn around £2.7 billion over the next three years, taking it up to 2010. Sky will pay over £1.3 billion for 92 games per year; Setanta will pay almost £400 million for 46 games per year. Foreign TV rights will pay over £600 million, and Internet and Mobile Phone deals through companies like British Telecom with their BT Vision come to about £400 million. The choice is enormous and very tempting. What does it mean to the Premier League clubs? If you compare the new deal with the old one, Manchester United who won the Premier League title in 2006-07, received over £32 million in broadcast payments while the bottom

team, Watford, had the disappointment of relegation softened by collecting almost £17 million. Under the new terms, the team that finds itself at the bottom of the table is estimated to earn around £30 million while the winners will receive around £50 million. Matches will be screened in 203 different countries. In the 2006-07 season, over £500m^[11] was pumped into the Premier League clubs. That figure includes payments of over £6m to each of the relegated teams benefiting from so-called 'parachute' payments (Birmingham City, Crystal Palace, Norwich City, Southampton, Sunderland and West Bromwich Albion).

When various figures are quoted showing how much the Premier League is earning from broadcast rights and how much it is putting into its clubs, it is easy to assume that ticket revenue is becoming less important to the clubs. PKF, the accountants and business advisors, in their annual survey of football club finance directors,^[12] gave this comment on that matter:-

"Ticket sales continue to be the most important source of revenue for clubs, increasing in importance in every league except the EPL (English Premier League) where income from TV and radio is not only the most significant income stream but, in the wake of the new domestic and international broadcast deals, has also increased in importance since last year. Broadcasting revenue saw the highest percentage growth for 46% of clubs in the EPL and 22% in the Football League Championship".

So, it would appear that for the clubs earning high amounts from the broadcast deals, ticket sales are less important than for those clubs that are not so fortunate. However, to survive, the money still needs to be found for this latter group of clubs and, if the broadcast route is not viable, they will then have to resort to the next most popular source of revenue; tickets. But, as PKF point out, it is only possible to keep asking fans to pay more and more for a limited period:-

"Nearly a third (32%) of all financial directors across all leagues, said that ticket sales generated the largest percentage increase in revenue over the last 12 months. However, this was a fall from 48% of respondents in 2006, and reflects the drop in the rate of increase across all leagues, possibly as a result of fans' resistance to inflation-busting season ticket price hikes".

An important figure that should also be emphasised shows the gap in importance of ticket sales between the top league and everyone else. 23% of Premier League clubs said ticket sales were the most important, compared to 56% in the Football League Championship. There is a similar disparity between how Premier League clubs and Championship clubs view the importance of television money. As PKF say:-

[11] Premier League Annual Report 2006-07

[12] 2007 On the line; between silverware and insolvency



“The marked difference ... between the Premier League and League Championship is one of the most important statistics in the whole survey and the root cause of the decision that Championship clubs have to make; how much are they prepared to risk to win promotion?”

It probably explains why of the four English divisions covered in the PKF Report, it is significant that when the Financial Directors were asked whether they were under any pressure to allow greater spending than they believed the club could afford, 77% working in the Championship said ‘yes’ compared to 31% in the Premier League.

There appears to be less pressure in finding finances too if you represent a Premier League club. Every Championship club featured in the report said it was getting harder to source finance; only 23% of Premier League clubs had the same opinion. And when asked whether it was important to attract significant investment from external investors, 89% of Championship clubs said it was, as opposed to 46% in the Premier League.

If football needed a warning signal when it comes to the price of tickets, it can be found in a survey conducted by Virgin Money.^[13] They compare whether football match tickets represent decent value or, as many fans suspect, they are over-priced. At the beginning of the 2007–08 season Virgin Money interviewed almost 2,500 fans. This allowed them to compile a list of the 20 Premier League clubs and estimate the percentage of fans who intended to go to fewer games at those clubs in the new season. At the top of the list was Middlesbrough Football Club with almost a quarter of their fans saying that they were not going to matches so frequently. Next in the list came Chelsea on 19%, followed by Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur both on 14%. After those four clubs, there is a steady sliding scale down to Blackburn Rovers who can take some sort of comfort by the estimate of only 2% of their fans intending to watch fewer matches. Not one club, not even the newly promoted sides, showed more fans intending to go along to watch more games.

Virgin Money also conducts a survey every three months that looks at the ‘basket’ price of going to watch a football match.^[14] They estimate that since February 2006 the average ‘basket’ price has risen from £77.95 to £95.08, a rise of £17.13 in the space of eighteen months. They admit that this isn’t solely down to ticket prices, but state that ‘the ordinary football fan is up against it this year’.

The Premier League doesn’t reinforce those figures in their own survey which looks at a selection of items, but the totals do not include a match ticket or travelling expenses. They estimate that fans are spending roughly the same on items bought within the stadium. The same applies when looking over the past five years at the amount spent on club merchandise. When taking into account annual inflation, the figures are almost static.

The Times newspaper^[15] comes up with some interesting figures in the area of ticket prices. When considering the period from 2001–2007, they have taken the average price of a ticket in the 2001–02 season and compared it to the 2006–07 season. They also take into account inflation. The 2001–02 average price was £20, as opposed to £31 last season. There was also an increase every season in-between.

‘Even allowing for the fact that the Retail Price Index indicates that £20 six years ago was worth £24 last season, it is a significant increase in the cost of attending matches.’

[13] Virgin Money Football Fans Price Index

[14] The basket price takes into account a match ticket, replica shirt, pint of lager, bacon roll, gallon of petrol, train fare, match programme and a pay-per-view fee.
[15] The Times, 15 February 2008. Article by Bill Edgar

Clubs throughout the country generally have a variety of initiatives to try and encourage fans to come through the turnstiles. Only a handful of clubs are in the lucky position of being close to capacity and therefore not having to work hard at attracting the paying customer. While an obvious solution to attracting fans would be to reduce ticket prices and assume that this will make the games more affordable, the IFC Football Forums held in September 2007, indicated the contrary. Few clubs spoke in support of ticketing schemes. The majority felt that if a fan wanted to watch a game, then he or she would pay the going rate. Some clubs had tried reducing ticket prices for certain matches, but the supposed increase in attendance did not materialise. One club had heavily reduced the price of their season tickets only to find that the uptake was slightly lower than the previous season. Consequently, that particular club not only had a reduced number of season ticket sales, but their overall season ticket revenue also fell. The general feeling was that if the club was playing well, people would go along to watch. If the team was struggling, attendances would fall away but not to a dramatic extent. Again, as shown earlier, football fans are resilient, with the vast majority continuing to support their club, win or lose.

The Premier League National Fan Survey 2006–07 gives a similar response. Although it would be a predictable comment to say that the nation's football supporters are up in arms about ticket prices, the results for those supporters following Premier League clubs do not wholly concur. Of those who responded to the survey, there was a large degree of indifference to ticket prices. The overall percentage showed that most fans felt prices for league matches were neither good nor poor. If anything, the results of this latest survey (there were other Premier League surveys in the four previous seasons, starting in 2002–03) show that fans are slightly happier with the situation. The Football League had a similar result with their 2006 survey of fans¹⁶, showing that overall fans were neither hugely in favour nor against the prices currently being charged for tickets. The one league where the most complaints were to be found was the Championship, presumably because supporters were having to pay more.

The Football League has had great success in targeting youngsters to try and encourage the next generation of football fans to start supporting their local clubs. They instigated the 'Fans of the Future' campaign. Stewart Thomson, Commercial Director for the Football League said:-

"It is clear from the survey's results that ticket pricing is an important issue for supporters. This is something the Football League has recognised with the introduction of 'Fans of the Future'. 'Fans of the Future' aims to encourage young supporters to attend live matches at their local club by offering a range of innovative ticketing initiatives, for example, a 'Kids Go Free' scheme. League clubs have to compete in an extremely crowded leisure market, but by offering young fans this chance to see live football they are giving themselves the opportunity to build a lifelong relationship with the supporters of tomorrow."



The Football League also unearthed data from a previously unreachable set of supporters, namely those who do not currently attend games. This data showed that 51% could be tempted back to stadia to watch live football in the future by either lower ticket prices or better on-field performances. It's obviously a tricky balancing act for the clubs to get the price of a ticket correct. It would no doubt be hugely encouraging to the clubs and the Football League to discover that while some fans may not be going along to games, their interest in football and supporting their local team was still active. While 93% followed their team's fortunes in the media, an impressive 83% took time to visit their club's website on a regular basis. 78% also watched their team on TV whenever possible.

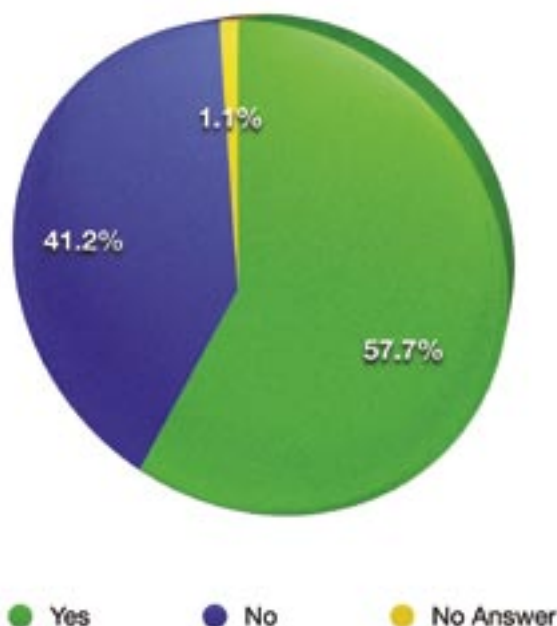
As you would expect, the Premier League survey shows a wide variation of satisfaction amongst the fans of its twenty clubs when it came to ticket prices. If you were a Charlton Athletic fan, the vast majority thought that the cost of watching their club was reasonable. Only 3% grumbled about the price. At the other end of the scale, if you were a supporter buying tickets to watch Chelsea almost half felt that prices were either poor or very poor.

In another example of how price sensitive football attendance is, the Football League Supporters Survey 2006 asked what would encourage fans to watch football. A third of those asked said reduced ticket prices.

In the 2007 IFC Survey, results showed that season ticket holders are not more likely to attend rescheduled matches than non season ticket holders, despite having prepaid without the benefit of a refund. However, match rescheduling was found to be more inconvenient and expensive for season ticket holders, who cite additional travel expenses as being the main additional cost.

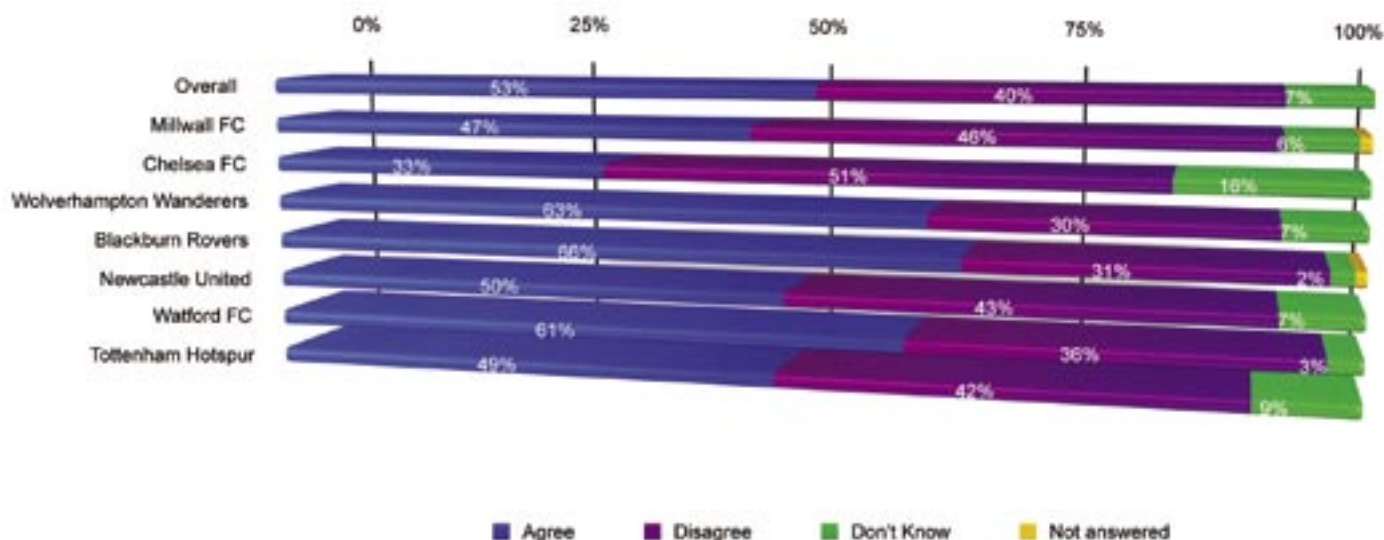
The fact that only just over half of respondents agree that match tickets are fair is indicative as to why other sports are seen as better value for money, with approximately 1 in 4 respondents stating that the cost of a ticket affects their willingness to attend matches.

Q5: Compared to other sports or leisure activities, do you think that tickets to football matches are value for money?



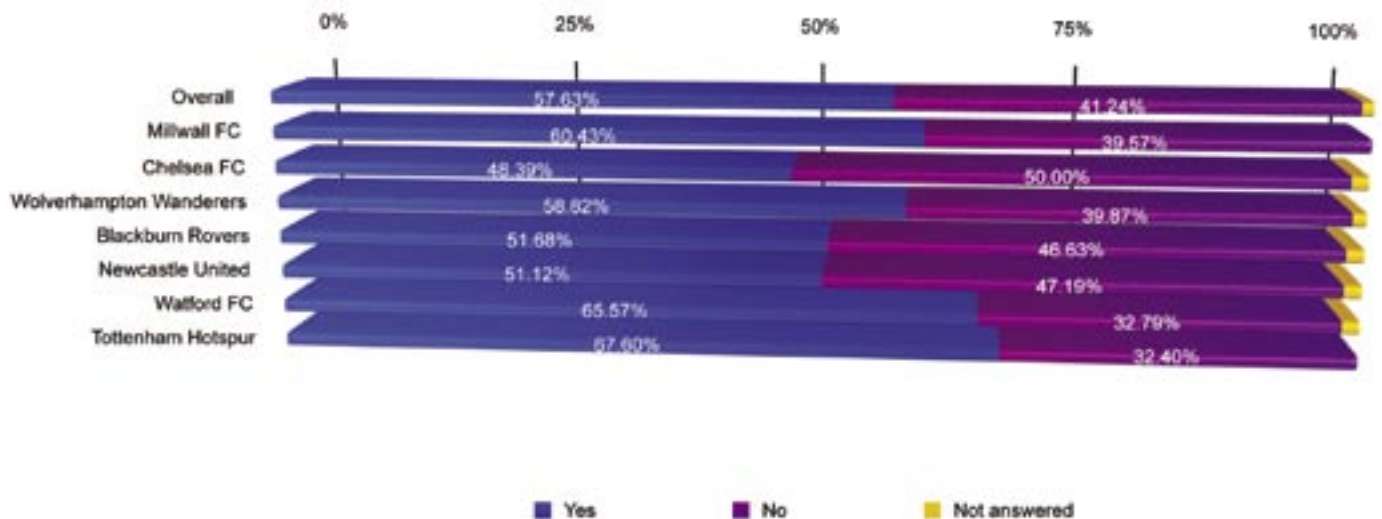
Of the seven clubs included in the 2007 IFC survey, the top two who agree that ticket prices are fair are Blackburn Rovers (66.3%) and Wolverhampton Wanderers (62.7%). The top two clubs who disagree with this are Chelsea (51.1%) and Millwall Football Club (46.3%).

Q2: Do you feel that ticket prices are fair?



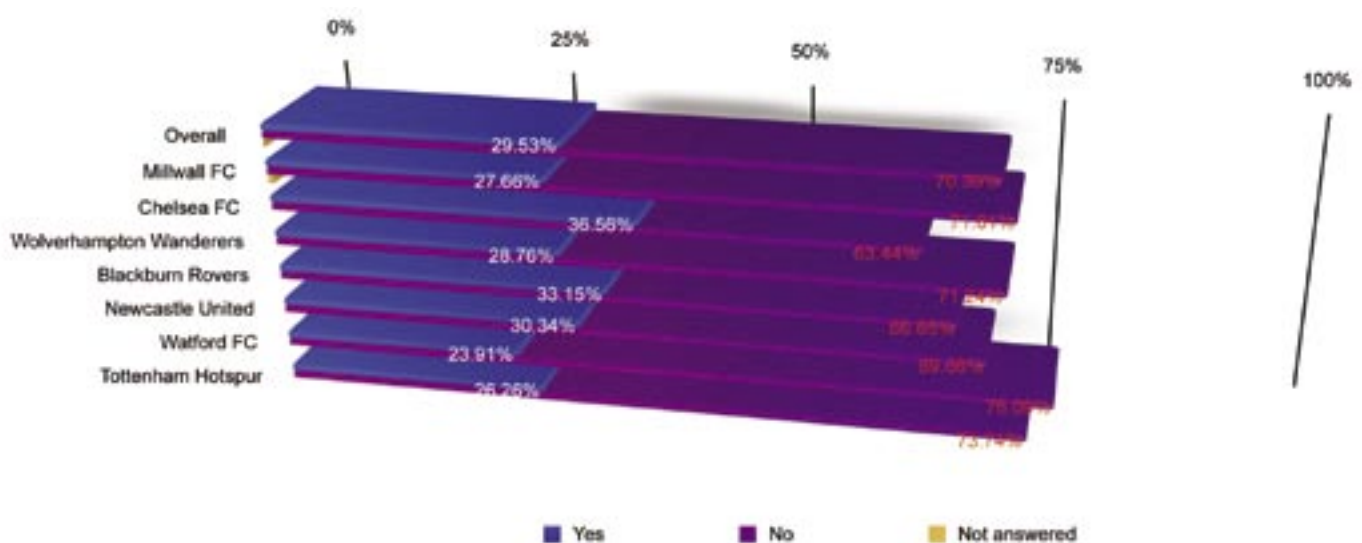
In comparison to other sports and leisure activities the top two clubs who agree that football matches are good value are Watford (65.6%) and Tottenham Hotspur (67.6%). Chelsea and Newcastle United are the top two teams that disagree. See graph below.

Q5: Compared to other sports or leisure activities, do you think that tickets to football matches are value for money?



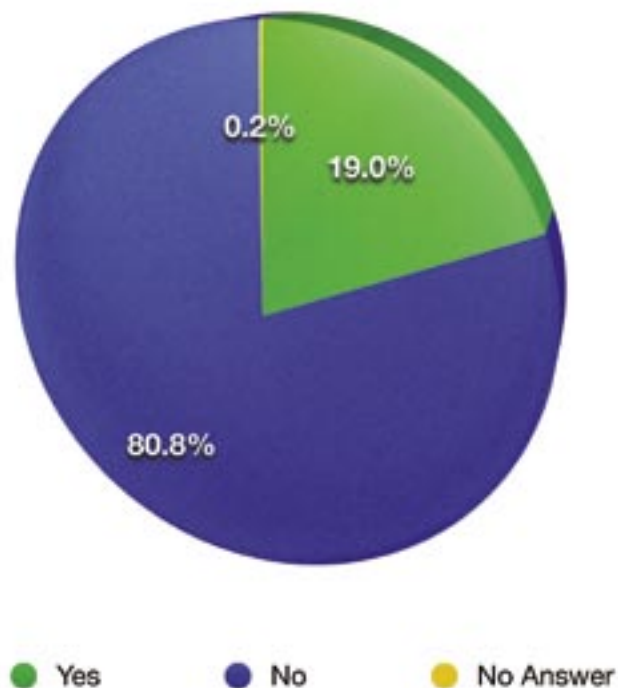
When asked whether the price of a ticket had affected their attendance at matches, 36.6% of respondents from Chelsea said it had. Blackburn Rovers, despite being one of the top two clubs agreeing that ticket prices are fair, are the second most likely club to be affected by lower attendance figures due to pricing. See graph below:

Q6: Has the cost of a match ticket affected your attendance?



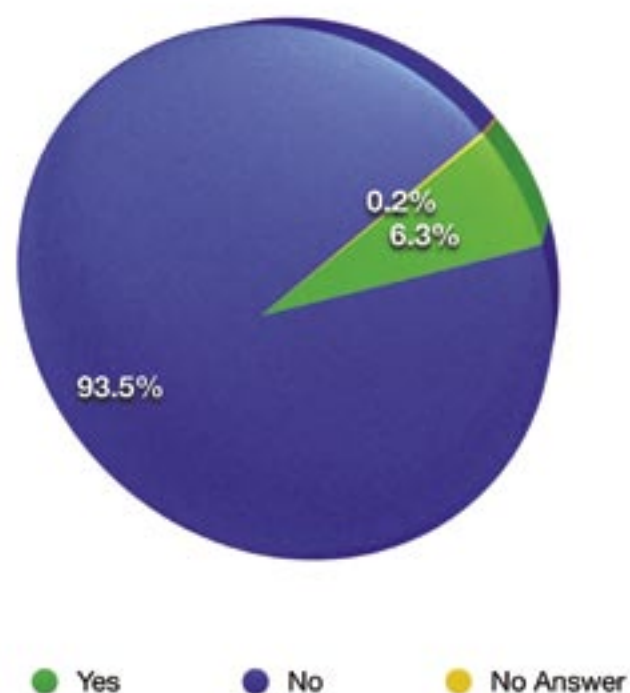
The good news for football clubs, as the IFC survey suggests, is that any increase in TV coverage should not see a drastic reduction in the number of fans attending games. As the pie chart below shows, over 80% of fans said that they would still buy a season ticket even if their team was, or is, regularly featured on television.

Q7: If your team is/was featured regularly on TV, would it affect your decision on whether to buy a season ticket?



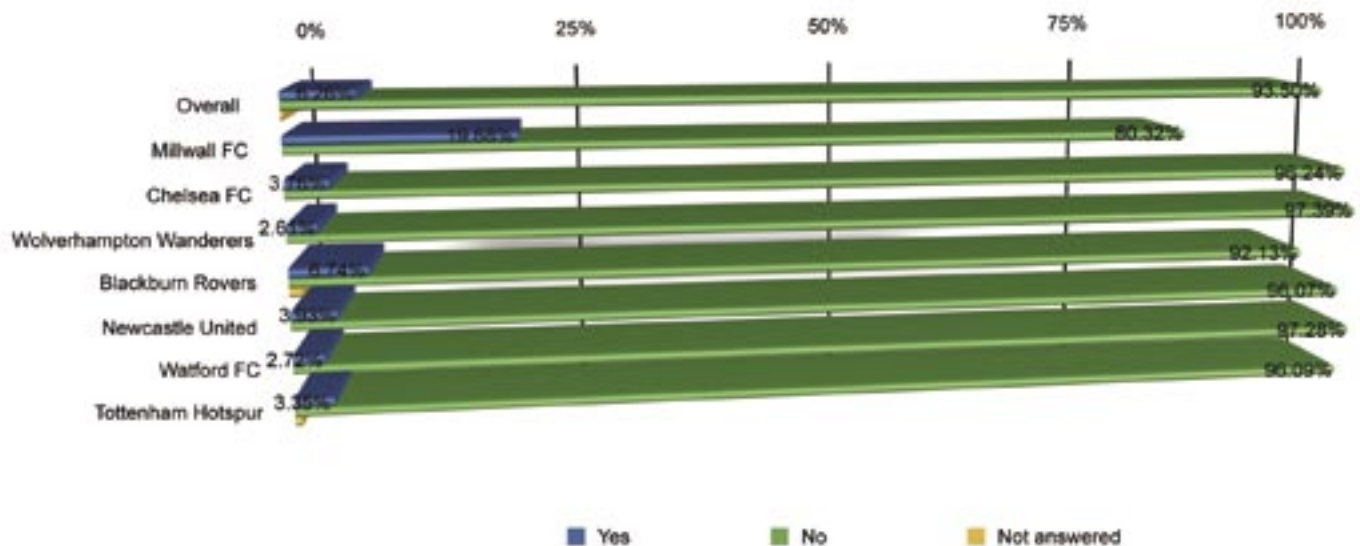
There was even less support for the suggestion that television coverage could in any way influence the club the fans actually supported. It would appear that football fans are extremely loyal to their club. Over 93% said television would have no influence on them.

Q8: Has television influenced which club you support?



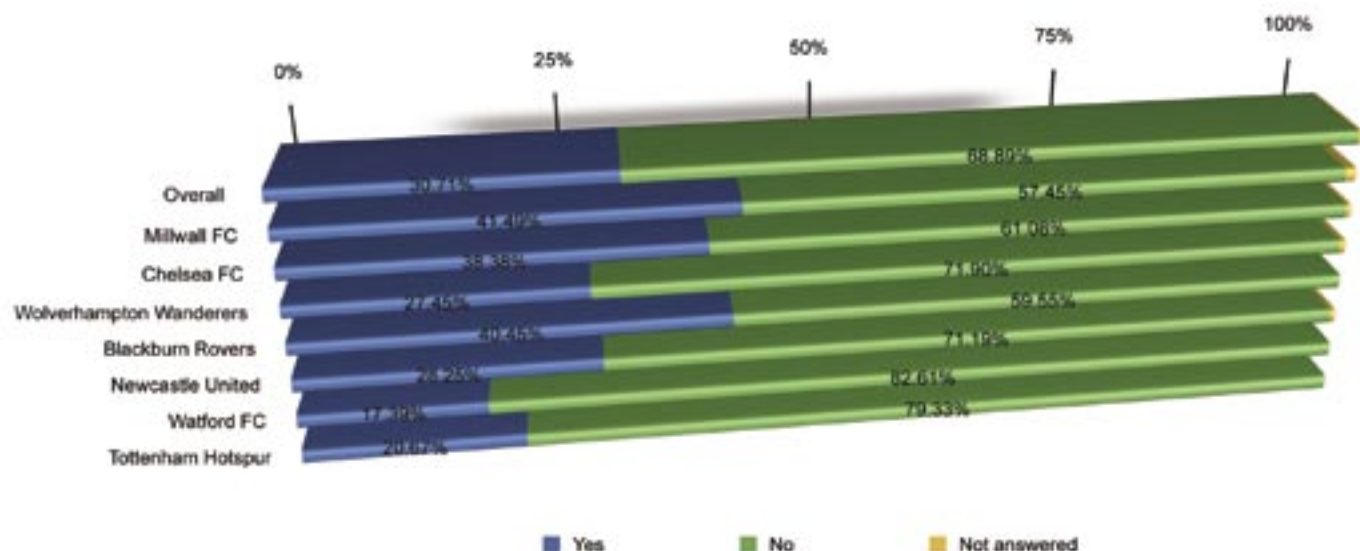
The graph below shows the response on a club-by-club breakdown. Millwall fans (almost 20% of them) seem to be the main club in the IFC survey to have gained fans from their appearances on television.

Q8: Has television influenced which club you support?



Lastly, the IFC wondered whether games were becoming more predictable. As the graph below shows, around 40% of Blackburn Rovers, Chelsea and Millwall fans thought that was the case.

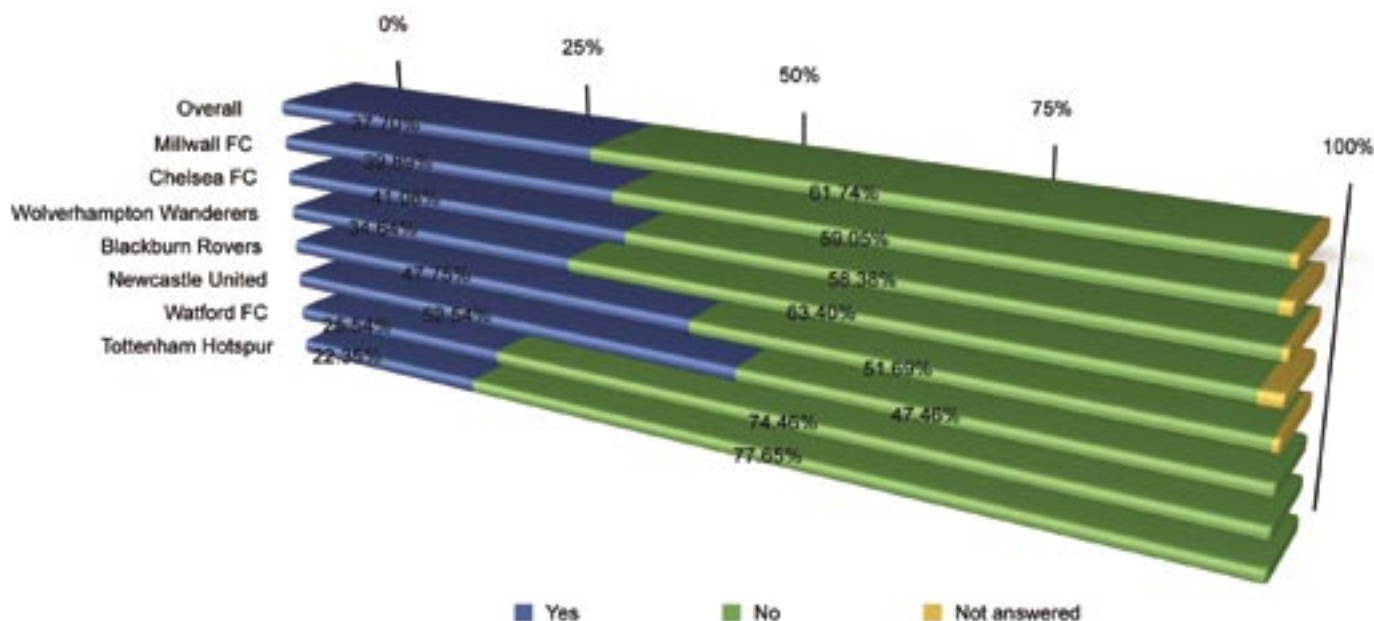
Q19: Do you think matches are becoming more predictable?



As a follow-up to whether matches were becoming more predictable, the IFC asked the fans whether there was a lack of competition within the leagues and that promotion and relegation was now becoming more routine than in previous seasons. Almost 40% agreed with this

statement. Newcastle United fans gave the highest agreement, with 52.5% feeling that promotion and relegation was becoming easier to predict.

Q20: Do you think there is a lack of competition/unpredictability for promotion/relegation issues? (In other words, do you feel that you can now predict which clubs will go up and which will go down)?



It is interesting to note that in The Times newspaper article mentioned earlier regarding ticket prices, they also looked at levels of entertainment and competitiveness in the Premier League. In terms of entertainment, between the 2001-02 season and 2006-07 season, the number of shots and goals had fallen. The long-ball game was increasing. When looking at levels of competition, they compared the difference in points between 1st and 2nd in the table (the title race), the gap between the Champions and 5th place (European Champions League places), and the difference between first and last. In each case there had been an increase in the size of the gap and they predicated the trend to continue. It is understandable therefore to find that the article is entitled, 'Supporters left short-changed by dominance of the rich clubs'.

So, in conclusion to the ticketing section of the IFC 2007 Survey:

- Approximately 6 in 10 respondents agreed that ticket prices are fair, although around 1 in 4 felt that the cost of a match ticket has affected their attendance.
- Over half of the people surveyed felt that going to a football match represented decent value for money. However, when compared to the 2003 survey, the perceived value for money in ticket prices is decreasing. This may impact upon future attendances with fans perhaps thinking that enough is enough.
- Overall, there is some dissatisfaction amongst fans about the rescheduling of games and the price of match tickets, but the levels are not alarming. The issue of rescheduling can certainly be regarded as being only a minor threat, with most fans now accepting that games will be moved. Most seem resigned to this and say that it would not seriously affect their intention to go to a game.
- The rescheduling issue does not appear to be getting any worse. 64.9% of people in the 2007 survey said that they had not had a game rescheduled in the previous season. This compares favourably with the 2003 study which gave a figure of 63%.
- It should be noted though, that the number of people forced to miss a game has increased. In 2003 the figure was 15%. In the latest IFC survey, the number of people forced to miss a game because of rescheduling, has risen to 23.9%.
- For many people, the newly arranged game did not fit in with their work commitments but it would appear that even if people are unable to attend a rescheduled game, it should not affect their long-term support of the club. Very few of the respondents said that their non-appearance at a game would result in them watching more football on television or going to the pub to view the game instead.
- Travel arrangements continue to be a slight cause for concern whenever a game is rearranged but again, the survey results do not suggest that this would harm the long-term support at a club.

It was clear from various meetings that IFC officers had with fans groups and clubs, that other factors should also be mentioned. One of the main grumbles, which was highlighted by one of the IFC survey questions, is that matches and leagues are becoming too predictable. A football match is an event; there is not much point in turning up to watch a non-event.

Some fans are also disgruntled by the foreign influence on the field. We are increasingly watching an international game being played in this country. There would appear to be an argument amongst certain sections of fans for a quota of home based players to be featured in every team.

And the image of football can be a turn-off to some fans. Multi-millionaire players, who often find themselves splashed across rather unsavoury stories in newspapers, will deter some fans from watching football. They become disillusioned.

However, the 2007 IFC Survey plus other surveys mentioned in this chapter, show that overall the football fan and the game of football in general, are resilient beasts and that as long as both parties work in close harmony, then there is no reason why all parties can continue to flourish and grow stronger.

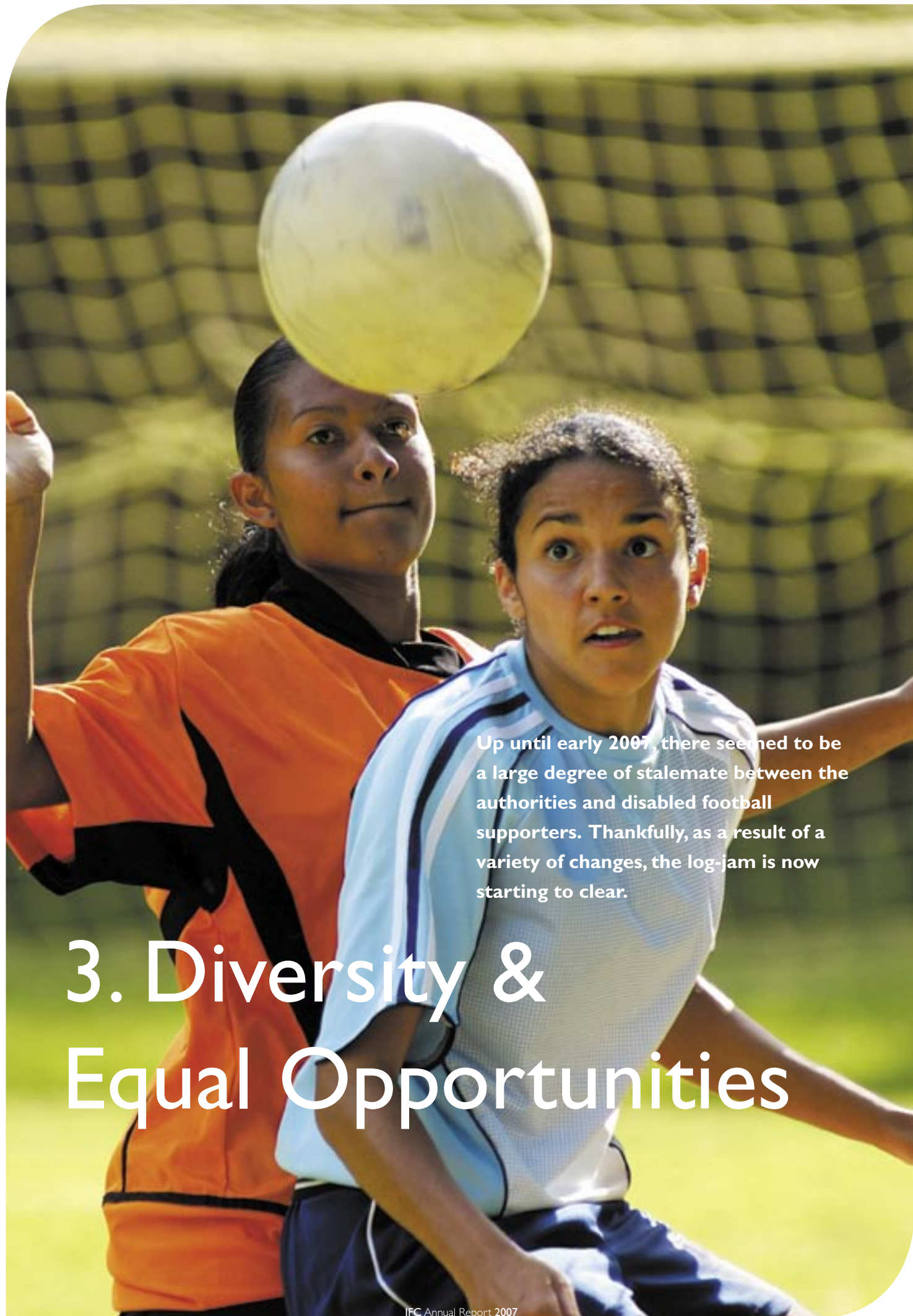
Lastly, the IFC would like to thank all of the fans who took part in this survey. Your time and your comments are very much appreciated.

Note 1

Annex D at the end of this Report shows the profile of the fans who were spoken to in the 2007 IFC Survey. There is also a full list of all the questions and, in certain cases, the suggested responses.

Note 2

Additional research for this chapter was carried out by Josh Clarke from Edinburgh University.



Up until early 2007, there seemed to be a large degree of stalemate between the authorities and disabled football supporters. Thankfully, as a result of a variety of changes, the log-jam is now starting to clear.

3. Diversity & Equal Opportunities

The IFC continues to be impressed by the excellent work undertaken by the three football authorities and associated bodies in this area. Only a handful of years ago, the amount of work taking place in this important and frequently tricky area was almost zero. Things have taken a quantum leap in a short period of time.



The All Agency Review Team (AART) has been a terrific success since it was set up. The IFC has attended the majority of AART meetings over the past two years and is hugely encouraged by the input from everyone involved. There is a serious determination from everyone concerned to tackle issues, many of them sensitive and complicated, without any hesitation. Indeed, the IFC feels that football can be looked upon as a shining example of how diversity and equal opportunities can be integrated into an area that is both a workplace and a source of entertainment for hundreds of thousands of people. Bearing in mind the vast number of people who are in some shape or form connected with football, whether as an employee at a club or a paying customer, the number of diversity and equal opportunity problems that arise is tiny.

This is largely due to the work of the people within the AART and those who implement their ideas and suggestions. They should be warmly congratulated for the speed in which they deal with concerns and their anticipation of potential problems.

The IFC was particularly impressed with the work being done by the FA in the field of homophobia. They have a Homophobia Awareness Committee that meets on a regular basis to keep everyone up to date with latest issues. They supported the successful campaign for London to host the 2008 Gay and Lesbian Football World Championship. The FA also organised an event at Charlton Athletic Football Club whereby a fans' representative from each professional club was invited for some basic guidance in becoming a Liaison Officer. This person would become the eyes and ears of a club in reporting any homophobia problems. They would also report back to the FA. The turnout was outstanding, with a large percentage of clubs represented. Within the space of six months, this initiative has gone from being an idea to become a fully fledged support network that many clubs are already finding to be hugely advantageous.

This is an excellent example of how fans, clubs and the authorities can work together for the good of the game. Clubs will find it extremely useful to have someone who can advise them. Many fans are not willing to contact a club directly. However, if they feel that a fellow supporter can be spoken to who will then take up their issue, there is then a chance that hidden problems may surface and be resolved. All of this should help eliminate homophobia behaviour from football stadia.

The IFC recommends that thought should be given to studying whether the FA's hugely successful approach to homophobia, can be integrated into other areas of diversity and equal opportunity. The idea of every club having a dedicated Liaison Officer for different facets of this topic could prove extremely useful.

There is a similar moving forward of ideas in the area of **football supporters with disabilities**. Up until early 2007, there seemed to be a large degree of stalemate between the football authorities and disabled fans. Thankfully, as a result of a variety of changes, the log-jam is now starting to clear. For example, when the IFC attended meetings between the football authorities and disabled groups twelve months ago, there seemed to be an atmosphere of confrontation. There was a real 'us and them' situation. Meetings would generally end with little or no progress and at subsequent meetings it was obvious that nothing had changed. There was huge frustration amongst the disabled supporters groups and, it should be said, the football authorities were also in a similar frame of mind. The main supporters group is the National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS). They are a hugely enthusiastic and hard working group of people who have the best of intentions for all disabled fans. They are happy to work closely with other groups related to those fans with disabilities such as the visually impaired or hard of hearing.

Recent meetings between the football authorities and disabled fans have been most encouraging. It is early days, but there now seems to be willingness for everyone to work together. The fans' groups realise that they can't expect miracles overnight, but now that everyone seems to be following the same lines, there should be marked progress over coming seasons. NADS has recently updated their State of the Game Report which shows that in certain areas a lot still needs to be done. According to their impressive Report, there is a surprising number of Premier League clubs (50%) who provide less than half of the recommended number of spaces for disabled fans. Issues such as having disabled fans

(mainly those in wheelchairs) being situated at pitch level or putting the visiting disabled fans in with the home disabled fans is clearly not ideal and needs addressing. There is also a disappointingly low number of clubs providing dedicated descriptive commentary for visually impaired fans via headsets. However, whereas in the past the IFC felt that little would have been done about these concerns, it now feels that under the new regime, there is every chance that progress will be made. It may prove tricky at certain old stadia around England, but there can surely be no excuse at new grounds or where extensions are being built. We hope that if a club falls short of its disabled spaces, it will redress the balance if any new construction work was to take place.

An example of the new found atmosphere of co-operation between NADS and the authorities, took place in January 2008 when the FA hosted an extremely impressive conference at Wembley Stadium.¹⁷ Most of the football authorities and stakeholders were in attendance, and there was an excellent show from the football clubs across England. It wasn't too long ago that this sort of event would have been unthinkable, such was the level of antagonism between various bodies. The IFC would like to think that recommendations made regarding disability issues in previous IFC Annual Reports, led in some way to this new and very encouraging relationship.

With all of the recent improvement in mind, the IFC recommends that the authorities look to consider direct financial funding of NADS. NADS produces a huge amount of goodwill amongst what rates as football's most loyal bunch of followers and would benefit from any amount of funding to further the impressive work that is currently undertaken by a small committee made up almost entirely from volunteers. They have a terrific network of members around the country and, with some additional help, can help improve the football experience for disabled supporters.

Currently NADS receives funding that allows one member of the organisation to receive a salary. The authorities also pick up certain costs incurred by NADS. However, this is not a long-term or full time arrangement and is therefore unsettling and does not allow for a long-term strategy. Consequently, NADS is producing a vast amount of excellent work through good nature and enthusiasm for the cause, as a result of which all of the football authorities benefit. The arrangement doesn't strike the IFC as being very fair-minded.

Various key issues came out of the 2008 Disability Equality Seminar. For example, don't assume that all disabled fans are members of disabled groups. Many are ordinary members of the public and therefore information and promotion needs to be varied in order to reach as many people as possible. It is important to be aware of the diversity of disability. Something like sensory impairment or learning disabilities may not be as obvious as a fan who is sitting in a wheelchair. Other points raised were to consider improving access for blind fans with Guide Dogs, and not limiting the availability of spaces available for disabled fans.

At the same Seminar, NADS launched their latest 'A Level Playing Field' initiative, and the Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB) promoted its 'Soccer Sight' programme that encourages clubs to have, amongst other things, audio descriptive commentary for visually impaired fans.

All of this shows how far the question of disability has come. Football is without doubt showing society how to break down barriers.

The Football League has also produced a comprehensive guide that looks at the main facilities for disabled people at all of their 72 grounds.¹⁸ Crucially, it is easy to follow and gives the names and telephone numbers of whom disabled fans should contact at football stadia.

Racism is now part and parcel of almost every football agenda. This is largely down to the work of the football authorities and their support, both vocal and financial, for many of the anti-racism bodies that work within football, the most prevalent being Kick it Out (KIO), Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) and the Asian Football Network (AFN), all of whom do terrific and effective work, much of it of a very high profile nature. Although there are still concerns in certain areas, racism is much less prevalent both on the pitch and in the stands. All of the football authorities work closely with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (which now contains the former Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)).

[17] 30 January 2008 Disability Equality Seminar, jointly funded by the FA and Wembley Stadium Ltd on behalf of the Premier League, Football League and Football Conference in partnership with NADS.

[18] Guide to Facilities for Disabled Supporters at Football League Grounds 2007-08

The Premier League and Football League work closely with Kick it Out to ensure that as many clubs as possible achieve the Kick it Out Racial Equality Standard (a framework document that sets out a series of measures to support the development of race equality policies and practices at clubs). Within the Premier League for example, the scheme was initially trialed at three clubs during the 2003-04 season but has steadily been rolled out to the remainder of the Premier League clubs. Every club is now taking part in the scheme. Most have achieved the Preliminary level while some have moved onto Intermediate level. The Premier League even refers to Kick It Out as a 'delivery partner'. The Football League is also pushing this scheme and encouraging as many clubs as possible to get involved.

However, despite all of the excellent work that is going on to combat racism, there was an interesting undercurrent present at IFC Football Forums and various club visits undertaken by the IFC in recent years. The IFC is aware that many clubs are looking for a new direction in this area. Currently, many clubs have a single week of racism awareness, and little else. Some feel the racist message is now giving out a wrong impression and that as long as racism is being mentioned in the same breath as football, the game will appear tainted and racist. Several clubs felt that the current anti-racist campaigns had 'run their course'.

The IFC recommends that research is done to study whether the issue of racism and how football clubs approach it, can be more effectively tackled.

While stating this, the IFC is in no way underestimating the terrific and valuable work carried out by the Kick It Out and Show Racism the Red Card organisations. They are at the forefront of the anti-racist message within football and must be credited for much of the pioneering work that has already taken place. Kick It Out's week of action, has now spread to a fortnight and tends to work under the banner of 'One Game, One Community.' The Football Foundation also helps KIO with funding for groups via Community Chest Grants.

Although some clubs feel that the racism message needs refreshing, there is still value in continuing the current theme. It has become a familiar sight at football stadia and in football publications, making it a sort of subliminal way of getting noticed. The IFC continues to be hugely impressed by the amount of work undertaken at all levels within football in a bid to hammer home the anti-racist message.



The Football League supported a fascinating piece of research that not only looked at the way football in England tackles the issues of racism, but also studied and compared it with the way racism is combated in the USA. For example, in America the term 'anti-racism' does not appear in any initiatives. The Spicing-Up the Stadium Report¹⁹ makes for interesting reading. The crux of the Report can be found in the final few paragraphs of the document:-

"The anti-racism message has been a predominant feature of football in England, and this can be partly attributed to the violence and hooliganism of previous decades. Major inroads have been made to eliminate racism from the game, and thus these anti-racism initiatives have had a positive impact.

However, in order to progress to the next phase of integration, the anti-racism message needs to be re-branded. The continual emphasis on this point infers that racism is still a major problem within the sport and may discourage people who have no first hand experience of attending football matches in the current environment, from going to stadia.

The new focus of the Football League should be inclusivity and diversity."

At one of the AART meetings attended by most of the key agencies involved in racism and football, the Football League was keen to discuss the issue of racism in the light of the Report, but there was a feeling that the time has come to stop talking and stop requesting more and more research which is unlikely to discover anything new. It would appear that, until someone comes up with genuine ideas about where the next way to tackle racism in football is coming from, we will stay stuck in a rut. The IFC found this to be disappointing bearing in mind the number of grumbles the Commission has recorded from many of the clubs throughout England. It is also interesting to note that one of the independent anti-racism agencies has commissioned a study of the activity of Football League clubs when it comes to tackling racism.



In addition, the Football League has appointed a team of consultants to look at best practice within all 72 of its clubs. They will work closely with the clubs and give them support in this area. If it is as successful as the Football League's moves to tackle Child Protection issues, then the clubs will find these latest developments extremely beneficial. (Coverage of Child Protection can be found in Chapter 6 of this Report).

It should also be remembered that the Football League has its own Diversity and Advocacy Group. This is a regular gathering of up to 10 clubs who discuss all matters relevant to equality. The results of these meetings, which provide a snapshot of what the clubs are doing and thinking, will be fed to all clubs via Football League officials. It is good to see that the Football League is approaching this issue from several angles which will go a long way to ensuring that all clubs can move things forward in a combined manner. The IFC has also been party to some fascinating discussions with the Football League about their own in-house ideas for tackling racism. These ideas, which will only come into fruition later in the year and therefore cannot be mentioned in detail here, will be a major step forward in integrating fans from all communities and backgrounds into football clubs and, all being well, go closer to cracking the major obstacle which sees many people from an ethnic background resisting going along to watch football at their local club.

The Professional Footballers Association (PFA) continues to do excellent work in the area of tackling diversity. For example, they are currently organising a meeting to be attended by all **Asian footballers** in England. This could lead to the setting-up of an Asian Players Forum, in much the same way that the Black Players Forum was devised. The PFA is in a unique position here in that it already has close links with the players and can set-up something like this in a short space of time. The key point here is that, although it may take time, discussions are at least taking place. The aim of these meetings is to try to identify what football can do to attract Asians into the game. Without doubt, this would have a double benefit; if Asian players start to appear in greater numbers on the pitch, then it seems logical that more Asian fans will turn up to support them from the stands.

It should also be pointed out that when it comes to diversity, there is a high level of uniformity amongst the football authorities and related agencies. Whereas early meetings between these interested parties seemed to involve a bit of sparring, there is now clear evidence that more and more people are providing a combined front.

The FA continues to lead by example in the field of inclusion. Their 'Get Into Football' initiative is wide-reaching and varied. It basically follows the premise of 'football for everyone', aiming to ensure that if someone wants to get involved in any area of the game, no matter what their ability, race, sexual orientation or social status, then they should be given an opportunity. Not surprisingly, the other football authorities frequently look to the FA for guidance in the area of inclusion.

The FA itself receives guidance from the Race Equality Advisory Group, (REAG) reporting directly to the FA Board. The aim of the REAG is to ensure that the FA gains input and representation from a wider cross-section of communities.

The FA's Disability Football Strategy, published in 2004, is also proving to be hugely successful with the number of disabled players and disability clubs, increasing dramatically. There are nine 'Ability Counts' leagues operating across England, purely for disabled players. In a similar vein to the way the FA has moved forward in terms of racism, there is now a Disability Equality Advisory Group who report directly to the FA Board.

Another initiative set up by the FA is the 'Goals Project'. This is a training course offered to anyone aged 18–30 and who is unemployed and/or disadvantaged.

Work is progressing regarding **women in football**. Latest FA figures suggest that football is now officially the biggest female team sport in England. Last season over 147,000 female players competed in affiliated league and cup competitions, a figure which has risen from just 10,400 in 1993 when records started. The PFA has also begun registering women players as members.

Despite the odd hiccup along the way, it must be emphasised that, in the view of the IFC, inclusion at all levels continues to be most impressive within football. The amount of work being done is nothing short of amazing. Sadly, little coverage of these good news stories is given by the local or national media, leading to the impression that little is going on at clubs in terms of community activity. How wrong everyone is. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the work going on within football to promote inclusion across society is groundbreaking. Other large organisations like the Health Service or the Armed Forces would do well to study how football has coped with these tricky issues.

Although not part of their remit, the IFC recommends that the agencies involved in monitoring such things as racism, disability inclusion etc, allow the football clubs, football authorities and closely related bodies such as the PFA, LMA, Football Foundation etc, to have some breathing space. They seem to have to spend a staggering amount of time compiling reports. This, the IFC feels, is at the expense of actually doing the real work.

The IFC also recommends that when the football authorities and other stakeholders are asked to attend meetings to update Government departments and exterior official bodies on what they have been doing, that they are given some guidance on what is required.

The IFC has witnessed several occasions when the football authorities have been asked to attend meetings to give presentations on their latest initiatives. The amount of work that has gone into some of these events is huge. The IFC feels that in certain circumstances, it is not up to the football authorities or the football clubs to devise new ideas. They should be given some help from the so-called experts who specialise in one particular field or another.

Football in general has had to absorb a vast amount of change. It has produced groundbreaking initiatives that, as far as the IFC is aware, have not been replicated elsewhere. The football authorities and their clubs are even getting involved in environmental work. The Premier

League is in the process of compiling a Sustainability Guide; many of their partners are being included to make this a joint venture. They're also investigating how they can get involved in tourism by working closely with Visit Britain.

The IFC feels that the time is right for a period of reflection to allow things to settle. Many of the changes will not happen overnight in any case. The IFC is in no way implying that football should 'take its eye off the ball', merely to allow things to bed-in and monitor the results. When complex changes are made, it is very easy to assume that they're either not working or aren't having the desired effect. There is then the temptation to alter everything again. It is frequently the case that actually things really are starting to bite, but that the changes have been very subtle and, in the early stages, difficult to detect.

The amount of emphasis in the ever-expanding areas of racism, disability, inclusion, homophobia, xenophobia, sexism, environment etc, is placing a lot on the shoulders of those people and departments who devise, run and further the wide variety of initiatives to cover these topics.

With that in mind, the IFC would recommend that those departments are given some additional help. They have been a victim of their own success. Most football fans will easily remember that, until a comparatively short time ago, things like Customer Service Departments did not exist at football clubs. It is generally this department at both clubs and the football authorities that seem to get involved in anything and everything. They are being stretched to breaking point. If help is not given, then either the level of service will reduce, or the flow of new initiatives will grind to a halt. As is the way of human nature, this would then leave clubs and the football authorities open to criticism.

It is a vicious circle, but it would be a shame to allow some of the good work to unravel.

A large crowd of football fans is gathered at a stadium, many holding Italian flags and standing. The scene is captured from behind a person in a white t-shirt, looking towards the crowd. The crowd is dense, with many fans wearing blue and white clothing. In the background, there are trees and a clear sky.

4. Safe Standing

Anyone who attends football matches or watches top games on television will confirm that uniform sitting of fans does not happen. It can range from a pocket of fans that steadfastly refuse to sit down, to massed ranks of thousands of fans who all stand. There also appears to be a steady increase in the number of fans standing, especially amongst the away fans.



One of the main topics of conversation amongst football fans, along with ticket prices, the cost of a pie and a pint, and the performance of their team, is whether to stand or to sit when attending a football match.

Following on from the Hillsborough Disaster in 1989 and the far-reaching Taylor Report, the general situation is that all grounds in the top two tiers of English football must now be all-seater stadia. This is a Government Regulation. Those teams that are promoted into the second tier (Football League Championship) and are not all-seater at that particular stage, are given three years dispensation in order for them to avoid the expense of installing seats and all of the building work that may be entailed, in the event that the team is relegated within that period. If the club manages to stabilise in the Championship, it must then begin planning to become all-seater. Some sides decide that the better option would be to move to a new stadium. If that is the favoured option, then a further dispensation will be given to allow building to commence plus the appropriate timescale for completion.

For many football fans however, choice has now disappeared. If you follow a team in the Premier League or Championship, you are expected to sit for 90 minutes. If you refuse to sit in your seat, you could be ejected from the stadium, banned, have your season ticket removed etc. However, anyone who attends football matches or watches top games on television can easily confirm that uniform sitting of fans does not happen. It can range from a pocket of fans that steadfastly refuse to sit down, to massed ranks of thousands of fans who all stand. There also appears to be a steady increase in the number of fans standing, especially amongst the away fans. Although the IFC has not actively measured this, it is plainly obvious when IFC staff and Commissioners attend games that the number of standing fans is on the increase. This is a view supported by many clubs attending the IFC Football Forums.

This causes problems. Theoretically, the ground authorities should take action to enforce the legislation. Stewards should be ordered into those sections of the stadium to ensure that fans take to their seats. This can lead to confrontation. There are also many fans that prefer to watch their football from the 'comfort' of a seat and take objection to having to stand purely because someone in front of them refuses to sit. Disabled fans, children, women, the infirm, elderly and those people of a shorter stature can be left in a situation where, if everyone is standing, they cannot see the pitch. This, again, can lead to confrontation. The football club is leaving itself in a vulnerable situation. It should also be emphasised that there could be issues of inequalities and failure to observe disability discrimination requirements. Some fans may feel that if they have been sold a ticket in a seating area and find themselves surrounded by standing spectators, then the club has failed in its obligations. Clubs might find themselves subject to breach of contract claims if they take no action against standing fans. Customer service has suffered. The local authority may take a dim view of the whole issue in regard to the ground's safety certificate. It all adds up to a catalogue of doubt and confusion.

It is blatantly obvious that fans are getting wise to the tactics used by football clubs who try to enforce the seating rule. If a handful of fans decide to stand, there is then a chance that if a similar number of stewards take action against them, the fans can be easily spotted, apprehended and removed from the stadium if they fail to sit down. However, if several hundred fans stand, the authorities are hopelessly out-numbered and frequently don't take any action. The IFC has observed on many occasions where stewards go into a section of standing supporters and try to get them to take to their seats. Some may obey the instructions, but many ignore them or merely stand up again once the stewards have moved on. The pack mentality of 'safety in numbers' has come into play.

If action cannot be taken on the day of the game, there is now a trend for clubs to be punished at a later date. This often results in the allocation of tickets for future away matches being slashed. Of course, this makes all of the travelling fans suffer rather than pin-pointing the 'guilty' supporters. Invariably this action sees fewer fans being able to travel but, due to the configuration of the visiting section at many grounds, the result of this action means that wide open spaces of empty seats remain, therefore penalising both clubs because the home team is almost certainly unable to sell those vacant seats. There also seems to be a determined backlash from the travelling fans who, in some sort of homage to those fans who've not been able to get a ticket, will steadfastly refuse to sit down. Presumably, if action has been taken once, it can be taken again, leading to the obvious conclusion that if large numbers of fans continue to stand and ticket allocations continue to be reduced, we will end up with no visiting fans at all.

The IFC has witnessed clubs taking action different from slashing the ticket allocation. For example, one Premier League club closed its bars in the visitors' section. The club, whose ground is rather remote from the town centre and retail facilities, did not inform the visiting fans of this action beforehand. Consequently, many fans turned up early expecting to be able to buy alcohol at the ground, as they had done in the previous season. Upon arrival, they discovered the bars to be shut, with only hot or soft drinks available. This was not only frustrating for the fans, but was also a potential flashpoint, particularly when it became obvious that bars for the home fans were open. Some away fans were given leaflets explaining that the bars were closed because fans had stood persistently during the equivalent match the previous season. There were also large notices to that effect within the stadium. That can only have made matters worse and caused further frustration for the visiting fans because, on the previous visit to this stadium, the fans had generally complied with the request to sit, under written threat of a cut in ticket allocation. The leaflet given to fans on that occasion had said:-

'If...supporters stand up persistently throughout tonight's game, the Football Licensing Authority has told (us) to reduce the allocation of tickets to (the name of the visiting club) in the future. This will affect your fans because fewer supporters will be able to attend. It makes sense to sit down because it is safer, and your children and disabled fans can see the match as well as fit adults. So if you care about (the name of the visiting club), for the sake of your fellow fans and your own team, please remain seated during this evening's game.'

In the light of those circumstances, it seems to the IFC hugely unfair on fans, that had travelled a long way, to have had to suffer from such heavy handed action when there did not appear to be a need for any action whatsoever. In addition, punishing the fans in that way had the undesired effect of causing wholesale persistent standing. As with reducing the ticket allocation, the home club must also suffer a commercial loss in such circumstances.

The IFC therefore recommends that if a club is going to take action against visiting fans, it is only fair to let those fans know in advance what that action is and why it is taking place. Clubs must also ensure that such information is accurate.

The IFC also recommends that the policy of reducing seat allocations is reviewed. It does not stop fans standing and financially affects both the home and away clubs. If allocations are reduced, then the home club, assuming it has done everything possible to encourage fans to sit, should be compensated in some way. It simply isn't fair that one club should be penalised by the actions of another club's fans.

During the course of 2007, the IFC held a series of Football Forums around the country, talking to clubs and various agencies connected with football. The issue of safe standing dominated much of the conversation. The only point that everyone agreed on is that the issue of fans standing in seating areas was a confused mess without any sort of direction or leadership from anyone. The football authorities (FA, Premier League and Football League) are in a difficult situation because they are caught between a rock and a hard place. They need to uphold ground regulations and the desires of the police and Government, and be seen to be supportive of the stewards and Safety Officers, but also recognise that fans are standing at grounds and that the supporters' organisations want some sort of official recognition that they should at least give everyone a choice.

Until the Government says otherwise, the police and safety officials have to follow the current legislation that fans supporting teams in the top two tiers of English football must sit in their seats. The Football Licensing Authority (FLA) won't budge. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the UK Football Policing Unit (UKFPO) have to enforce whatever the Government says.

So, what does the Government say?

On Wednesday 24 October 2007, there was a Parliamentary Debate on Standing Spectators at Football Matches.²⁰ The main speaker was Labour MP Roger Godsiff. He was speaking in favour of a partial return to standing at football stadia. The main, anticipated response would come from the then new Sports Minister, Gerry Sutcliffe, at the end of the debate. Several other MPs spoke, including former Sports Minister, Kate Hoey.

The vast majority of the argument has been heard before. Mr Godsiff began with references to legislation and Acts that arose from the Hillsborough and Bradford disasters. Not surprisingly a large chunk of this focussed on the 1990 final Report by Lord Justice Taylor that had been instigated following Hillsborough. Mr Godsiff pointed out that the abolition of terracing was not included in the legislation and that while blaming police, stewards, ground authorities and the presence of perimeter fencing for the Hillsborough disaster, the Taylor Report does not say that the disaster would not have happened if the Leppings Lane End had been all-seater. The fact that supporters were standing was not the reason for the deaths. Similarly, the 56 deaths at Bradford's Valley Parade Ground were not related to fans sitting. He added that if the Sports Minister wished to legislate for a return to standing, then the FLA would have to agree. The football authorities would also have to comply. He reaffirmed that, currently, legislation does not permit standing at football games in the Premier League and Championship. This is causing problems for stewards who are obliged, if asked by the Safety Officers, to either ask fans to sit down or eject them. However, if safe standing areas were introduced, this problem would be reduced. Mr Godsiff emphasised that this should not be forced upon clubs but merely give them the opportunity to alter their stadia if they so wish. He added that *"...the myth has grown that standing to watch football is inherently unsafe. It is not true"*.

He also said that when the impression was 'put around' that any standing area was unsafe, it worked in favour of the clubs who wanted to remove terracing, where prices were traditionally cheap, and install seating for which they could charge more. He said that more recently, instead of it being said that standing was unsafe, *"...the new line was peddled that it was outdated, not modern and not in keeping with the global image of the Premiership, that there was no real demand for it, that it would be turning the clock back and that it would cost too much money to provide safe-standing areas"*. He went on to add that when the above argument was challenged, the FLA and Premier League went down the route of then saying that if standing returned, it would mean that UEFA and FIFA games would not be allowed to take place in England due to those organisations having all-seater rulings. He rubbished this latter point by using the German scenario where most stadia have safe standing areas plus facilities where grounds can be quickly reconfigured for either standing or sitting depending on the fixture. He pointed out that the 2006 World Cup staged in Germany had proved that this could be done successfully.

In response to a question from another MP, Mr Godsiff did concede that seating made the policing and stewarding of games easier. Crowd control was easier. He added however, that he was in no way advocating a return to the wide-open terraces with unlimited access to standing areas. He again pointed to the German system where standing fans are ticketed and can only enter certain blocks of the ground. The numbers of people allowed into these blocks would be set by the local authority and safety committees.

He then moved on to the issue of the FLA policy of penalising clubs whose fans stand. Mr Godsiff is a Charlton Athletic fan. He said when Manchester United visited his ground, the stewards/police were not in a situation where they could eject 3,000 standing Manchester United fans. The result is that the FLA reduces the number of seats that Charlton Athletic can sell to Manchester United in the following season. He said that Charlton Athletic would like to have the option of introducing safe-standing areas.

He also spoke about the contradictions where football fans must sit, while rugby union / league, pop concert etc fans can stand at the same stadium. People are asked to stand for a minute's silence. Thousands of people stand at horse racing tracks. Mr Godsiff said that it would make sense to make regulations apply to the stadium and NOT to just the sport. Local safety officials and authorities would then be able to judge the situation and make their own legislation. He said that the FLA, which is charged with enforcing the regulations, knows that they cannot be enforced.

In conclusion Mr Godsiff said, *"I want clubs to have the option, if they choose and if there is a demand from the fans, to put in a safe-standing area. Watching football while standing is not inherently unsafe. The no-standing regulations are not only flouted every week, but they are unenforceable and throw up one contradiction after another"*.

Several MPs responded. Some MPs felt that all-seater stadia had led to a change in culture within football and this had, in turn, led to a reduction in hooliganism. One MP heavily criticised the FLA. Another comment was that football fans are “...just a little bit less in the human race and are not to be trusted”. There were even comments that seats in football stadia were all the same size, yet people came in different shapes and sizes. Another MP liked terraces because it meant you could wander around to speak to friends. One MP spoke in favour of all-seater stadia pointing out that, in his opinion, they had helped reduce hooliganism, violence and injuries at football grounds, and that the increase in women and children going to football was down to all-seater grounds. A final point from another MP was that it should come down to a matter of consumer choice.

In his reply to all of this Gerry Sutcliffe MP, who had only recently been installed as the new Sports Minister at the time of this debate, while accepting a lot of the points and appreciating that many fans did want to stand, refused to back down. He would not be changing any legislation. When comparing football to other sports, he said that football had a history of safety failures, violence and disorder that was not to be found in other sports. Football fans from opposing teams needed to be segregated. That didn't happen in other sports. He said it was his responsibility to ensure that spectators watched games in safety and without the fear of violence or bad behaviour. There needed to be the right balance. He quoted Lord Taylor's report who, when mentioning crowd behaviour said,

“...seating does more to achieve these objectives than any other measure”.

He went on to say that although the quality of stewarding at stadia was better than ever, all-seater stadia make it easier for stewards to manage crowds.

He said that attendances at football matches were at record levels but, in contrast, reported injuries were at their lowest ever level. He said that fans watching football at all-seater stadia were less likely to be injured than those at grounds where there was terracing. He gives figures of one injury per 39,000 at all-seater grounds; 1 per 22,000 people where there is terracing.

He concluded by saying, “It is important for us not only to listen to football supporters, but to strike the right balance between safety and security, and people's choice. On balance, we have done the right thing”.

So, for the moment, the Government, although acknowledging that some fans want to stand and that the occurrence of fans standing seems to be increasing, will not be changing any legislation, but at least the new Sports Minister has taken part in a discussion that aired the issue. The IFC suspects that this will be the first of many.



What do the fans say? In 2007 the Football Supporters Federation (FSF) put together a truly excellent report²¹ looking at this issue. The main crux of their report is that when dealing with the football authorities the reason for standing being prohibited is that, in their opinion:-

“...standing is less safe than sitting. We (the FSF) believe this proposition is flawed and unsupported by fact. We hope all those concerned with the regulation and management of safety at major football stadia...will carefully consider this report which advocates permitting safe standing areas. The time has come for change. Supporters want the choice to sit or stand. Modern technology and design, allied to better training and organisation, mean that that choice will be safe”.

The FSF report, which extends to 52 pages, takes an in-depth look at the history behind the legislation that forces fans to sit at many stadia in England. Although the Hillsborough disaster and subsequent report by Lord Justice Taylor are frequently cited as one of the main reasons for all-seater stadia, the FSF report quite rightly points out (as did Roger Godsiff MP during the House of Commons debate) that the fact fans were standing in the Leppings Lane area of the ground was not the cause of the disaster. The majority of the other arguments have been covered earlier in this chapter in the parliamentary report including examples where clubs can charge more for fans in seats than those who are stood on terraces; that fans would eventually accept all-seater stadia; that disasters have occurred at all-seater stadia.

The FSF also points out that although it is a condition of the licenses issued to all Premier and Championship grounds that standing areas are not allowed and that fans must be put in seated areas, any fans that refuse to sit are not breaking the law of the land. They are breaking the local regulations for the club and probably the regulations under which the club has been granted a licence by the local authority, but police cannot arrest anybody for standing in a seated area. It is not a legal offence. As the FSF say in their report:-

“One thing is clear; the all-seater requirement is a matter of regulation rather than statute”.

It should be emphasised that the FSF is not advocating standing in seated areas. They would like to see the return of some standing areas within grounds, to at least give fans a choice. To support this, the FSF had done extensive research in Germany, visiting a series of grounds where there has been the successful integration of seating and standing into the same section of the stadium. The FSF visited grounds that are home to FC Schalke, Werder Bremen and Borussia Dortmund. They noted that seated areas can be converted into safe standing areas either by utilising seating that can be locked into a vertical position when the area is used for standing, or where seats are removed and barriers put into their place. UEFA and FIFA are obviously content with this arrangement because the Schalke ground has been used for both the UEFA Champions League Final (2004) and for group and knockout matches in the 2006 World Cup. Borussia Dortmund's ground also hosted World Cup games. The FSF noted that the standing areas were generally restricted to groups of around 2,000 supporters, all of whom had tickets and all of whom only gained entry to that area via designated turnstiles and gangways.

The overall conclusion of the FSF is that if it can work at large stadia in Germany, it can work in England. They make an appeal to the football authorities to consider introducing safe-standing areas into all grounds where it is physically possible to do so.

Whether or not you agree with this conclusion, the FSF should be warmly applauded for this in-depth research that gives weight to the argument that fans should be given a choice of whether they sit or stand to watch a football match. It also proves that fans aren't just a stubborn bunch of people who religiously follow their team without giving any sort of consideration to what is going on around them and that they don't have the wherewithal to compile a dossier of evidence to back-up their claims and desires.

Another similar safe-standing campaign is being run by the Stand Up Sit Down group. They come to similar conclusions as those of the FSF. For example on the opening page of their website²² they say:-

"The aim is to restore supporter's choice as to whether they stand or sit to watch football, by agreeing areas where standing will be accepted".

However, one difference from the FSF campaign is that Stand Up Sit Down say:-

"...we want at least one area of each ground to be selected for supporters to be allowed to stand in front of their allocated seats".

In contrast to this statement, the FSF wants a specially designed area and does not advocate standing in front of the current rows of seats. However, the general flavour of the Stand Up Sit Down campaign follows the same lines as that of the FSF.

In the course of compiling this chapter of the Report, the IFC spoke with many of the people and organisations that can have a bearing on the safe standing issue. The Association of Football Safety Officers (AFSO) plainly has a problem because it is frequently their members who have to carry out government regulation. It is generally the club Safety Officer who makes the decision whether or not to send Stewards into an area of the ground in an effort to either encourage fans to sit or, at the other extreme, eject fans. They need to make a decision via a safety and security assessment, whether it would be possible to request fans to sit or eject persistent standing fans without causing a disturbance, or decide that the chances of creating a public order problem are too great to consider any form of action. In short, the decision must be made whether to do something or nothing. If the decision is

taken to ignore persistently standing fans, the stewards need to be informed and must merely monitor the situation. If clubs are to abide by the regulations, they should always make an effort to enforce the sitting rule. Plainly, this is not working and leaves the AFSO members in a difficult and vulnerable position.



ACPO recognise that there is a problem but they are in a situation of having to uphold the law and therefore lend support to the stewards and the football club in an effort to comply with regulations. As mentioned earlier, persistent standing is not against the law of the land, but if stewards endeavour to force fans to sit or be ejected, there is a chance of trouble breaking out which would then necessitate the intervention of police officers.

The police are also in favour of seats because it makes controlling crowds easier. It is much more difficult for fans to circulate around an area of a stadium if there are seats as opposed to open terracing. It is also easier for stewards and/or police to identify troublemakers because they are in a particular area of the ground. The police also support the idea of fans being able to text a hotline number during the course of a game whereby troublemakers can be pin-pointed anonymously purely because a concerned fan has sent a text outlining the precise seat and row number where the troublemakers can be found. Overall, the general consensus of the police is that they would not support a return to standing and would only agree to it if government legislation deemed it acceptable.

The FLA gave an interesting response to the IFC's request to meet them. It was along the lines of that if the IFC wanted to talk about safe-standing at football grounds, then they did not have anything new to add since our previous meetings. On that occasion, the FLA was firmly against any sort of standing and stated that they were carrying out the Government's wishes. The IFC can only assume that this is still the case. There was mild irritation from an FLA official at an earlier meeting between themselves and the IFC, that his organisation didn't meet with senior people within the football authorities and that most meetings tended to be held with more junior officers.

England's leading organisation for disabled football fans is concerned about persistent standing. NADS frequently complain that their members are severely affected by this problem. Many grounds provide disabled fans with a purpose-built section of the stadium, but fail to realise that if anyone stands up in front of this area, it will mean that the ambulant disabled, disabled fans who have difficulty in getting to their feet or are restricted to a wheelchair, are likely to find their view completely blocked. They may not have the ability to move from side to side. It is not a solution to move disabled fans to the front of a stand or onto the hard area surrounding the pitch as this may leave them open to the elements and would certainly place them in the firing line of stray shots. Consequently, the best solution is to ensure that the disabled fans are put in a special area amongst their own fans, with a clear zone in front of them ensuring that, even if fans do decide to stand up, the view from the disabled section will remain unobstructed. NADS should be congratulated for the work they do in this area and should be credited with the fact that, although it doesn't always turn out satisfactorily, the needs and requirements of disabled fans are now being included in the plans for new stadia or where additional building work is taking place.

Conclusion

The current climate within the Government suggests that the immediate situation regarding standing is unlikely to change. The IFC met with Sports Minister, Gerry Sutcliffe MP, and he confirmed that the Government is not in favour of a return to standing in our stadia. While recognising that there is a problem, he felt that it would be a retrograde step to return to any form of standing within stadia; the pros outweigh the cons, was the gist of his reply.

However, although the IFC supports the FSF by refusing to advocate that fans should be encouraged to stand in seating areas, it is difficult to find any sort of evidence which indicates that allowing people to stand in a seating area is inherently unsafe. The one exception to this, although there are no figures, is where children are forced to stand on tip-up seats in order to see. This is obviously hazardous. As mentioned earlier, the Sports Minister did give some figures when speaking in the House of Commons.²³ He claimed there was one injury

per 39,000 at all-seater grounds as opposed to one per 22,000 people where there is terracing. This suggests that even in seated areas where thousands of people are standing, there are very few (if any) injuries caused. Indeed, when the IFC visited a large Premier League club in early 2008, a senior officer of the club confirmed that after many years' service at the stadium, he could not remember an incident where a fan had been hurt as a result of standing. The IFC considers that if there is overwhelming evidence to prove that fans are regularly being hurt as a result of incidents caused by people falling over seats during games (as opposed to when they arrive/depart) then it would have been used by the authorities to justify their actions.



Ground construction may also prevent the introduction of standing areas. According to several clubs spoken to by the IFC, the nature of the building materials and designs used to construct their stadia, would not be able to cope with the additional weight produced when allowing people to stand in a designated area rather than sit. More people can gain access to terraces than seating areas, hence the increased weight. The gradient of seating areas is different to that of terraces. It can be assumed that many of the brand new stadia built in England over the last decade will fall into this category purely because they will have been designed and constructed without the perceived need for standing terraces.

The situation is likely to change only if football changes. For example, this could occur if grounds wished to investigate whether they could admit more people into a section of their stadium by allowing people to stand as opposed to sit, and therefore reduce the individual price of a ticket in order to attract fans that are perhaps being priced out of the game. If the atmosphere within the stadia becomes too sanitised, one answer could be to bring back standing. The IFC is unaware of any figures to support this, but it appears that the most singing and the greatest atmosphere, seems to come from the areas where people stand. This of course was always the tradition before all-seater stadia arrived. The TV companies will most certainly prefer to cover games with plenty of crowd noise. It is interesting to note that any general trawl through the Internet fan sites will find vast support for standing purely because many grounds now lack atmosphere.

The fact that MPs did get around to having a meaningful debate, albeit fruitless in the end, is a reason for those fans wanting a return to safe-standing to be mildly encouraged. However, it appears that a stalemate has been reached and, at the moment, the only choices open to those football fans wishing to stand is to give up the cause and sit down or, alternatively, watch football in the lower leagues, stand and risk ejection and the consequences thereof, or move to Germany.

There will be some fans who insist on standing no matter what. The only possible solution to this will be if the fans police themselves or if clubs operate a voluntary segregation system. For example, the IFC is aware that certain clubs have, on occasions, asked fans when buying tickets whether they mind going into an area where supporters generally stand. Although this goes against current legislation, it is a pragmatic approach which prevents complaints from disgruntled fans about having their view obscured. Another solution would be always to allow a certain amount of empty seating so that those people who either want to sit or are unable to stand for long periods or simply couldn't see if someone in front of them stands up, could be moved to an area of like-minded people. This is where self-policing by the fans would come into operation, ensuring that supporters don't ruin things for their fellow fans.

At the moment, it is obvious that in many cases, trying to get fans to sit down is simply not working. Stewards continue to waste their time trying to persuade fans to take to their seats and enforce the unenforceable. The stewards are risking confrontation which may turn ugly. There are glaring inconsistencies in the policies of various clubs, leaving fans confused as to what they can and cannot either get away with or expect to do. The IFC has been present at matches where stewards make a determined effort throughout the 90 minutes to encourage fans to sit. A Premier League club visited by the IFC confirmed that they insist on all fans sitting, otherwise it leads to some fans saying that if certain sections of the crowd are allowed to stand, then why can't they. Some clubs work closely with the police to anticipate whether they are likely to have any persistent standing issues at forthcoming fixtures. And there are some clubs who plainly don't bother at all, or say enforcement won't work, ignoring their duty of care to the young, disabled and those short of stature who cannot stand and see the game.

The issue of standing has plainly become a centre of attention for anyone and everyone involved in crowd safety. Purely from the IFC's observations, it would appear that this is something of a red herring. It is actually a Customer Relations issue. The fans affected by standing in a seating area are those who would prefer to sit, those who or are not able to stand, and people who, even if they do stand, are still not tall enough to see. All of those fans would have their view blocked if someone stood in front of them.

The whole issue is a mess. It leaves football in the ridiculous situation where many fans that cannot stand or who don't want to stand, pay for a seat, yet probably end up either not seeing or not enjoying the game. In the interests of customer service the current pretence of no standing cannot continue.

The IFC recommends that something is done to resolve this ludicrous situation where clubs are obliged to enforce a seating rule but plainly either cannot or refuse to bother. This is leaving clubs, stewards, local authorities etc in a situation where no-one seems to know what to do. Rather than running scared from what many perceive as a massive safety issue, the football authorities at least need to give their clubs some help in resolving what is fast becoming the major customer care issue at grounds.


In conjunction with Government, the football authorities should consider whether allowing clubs to permit some standing areas might have some beneficial effects. In a perverse way, once the fans know that they are no longer representing the rebel few, they may willingly sit down. It could also prevent those fans who want to sit, ending up in the wrong section of the stadium where persistent standing takes place. Stewards could be sensibly deployed elsewhere; it is likely that fewer police would be needed; the Customer Relations Department at the ground could get fewer fans complaining and, finally, with the removal of one source of potential aggravation, it is likely that health and safety figures might improve.

To do nothing is no longer an option.



5. Community

Some clubs are worried about the loss of Football in the Community. They are concerned that the 'gentleman's agreement' between clubs, in relation to clubs in one area of the country being affected by the work of a neighbouring club, will come to an end. There was genuine concern from some smaller clubs that their work would be swiftly undone or undermined if a bigger and potentially more glamorous club appeared on their 'patch'.



One of the key community developments in 2007 was the demise of the Football in the Community (FitC) organisation. FitC had done wonderful work since it was first launched by the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) in the mid-eighties, but the football authorities decided to call time on the organisation. From its offices in Manchester, FitC had promoted community work across the country and had monitored what clubs were doing. It had also been a central source of intelligence and guidance throughout the community initiative. On many occasions, the IFC spoke to members of the FitC team and was hugely impressed by the level of work and standard of input to the clubs and of course to the players. Several schemes devised by FitC were highly thought of and allowed clubs, particularly smaller ones, to work together yet put their individual 'spin' on things.

The IFC has mixed feelings about the closure of this organisation. Many clubs had commented that they now feel as though their own community departments have developed sufficiently to enable them to work more efficiently on their own without any involvement from a parent body. The IFC has no problem with this because several of the clubs visited and spoken to over the course of the year, are plainly doing some excellent work and have no need for FitC to assist them. FitC would be the first to admit this. In fact, FitC would have seen it as a major success to be able to confidently say that they could now stand back from a club because that club was doing well on its own. However, without any involvement from FitC, it means that a flow of potential ideas and maintaining of good relationships with neighbouring clubs would be lost. There would also be no single body overseeing everything.

Other clubs are worried about the loss of FitC. They are concerned that the 'gentleman's agreement' between clubs, in relation to clubs in one area of the country being affected by the work of a neighbouring club, will come to an end. There was genuine concern from some smaller clubs that their work would be swiftly undone or undermined if a bigger and potentially more glamorous club appeared on their 'patch'. Previously, FitC had liaised between clubs in an effort to make sure that this did not happen.

There is also a danger that links between clubs will disappear. The IFC has seen several examples where clubs, especially smaller ones, in a particular region, often work in harmony. They all run a similar scheme but put their own, individual flavour into it. This allows those clubs to put out a joint message across a region and hopefully gain greater publicity, yet still retain some local identity.

The IFC has also noted that FitC frequently came up with schemes and then distributed the ideas and materials to clubs. These clubs developed the initiatives and found them to be hugely beneficial. In most instances, these were the smaller clubs who had a lower number of staff in their Community Department. Sadly, this material will no longer be produced by a central base.

As FitC was closed in November 2007 and, of course, the IFC is to follow suit in April 2008, it will be impossible to judge whether there is any serious effect on club-based Community Departments.

One significant development has been the setting up of the **Football League Foundation**. This will distribute grants to the 72 clubs and is purely for the purpose of community work. Help will also be given to the Football League's clubs for their youth schemes. The money, £90m spread over 3 years, has come from the Premier League and the PFA and is being referred to as a 'solidarity payment'. The general feeling within the Football League was that FitC as an organisation and the schemes it generated, had run their course and that the clubs were now in a good position to operate things by themselves. The main aim was to ensure that clubs continued at the centre of their community. One comment in a meeting between the Football League and the IFC was that the new foundation would be:-

"...football for the greater good of society and that if clubs can help make a difference, then they should. We will make a difference in the community".

It was also felt that any club that had relied upon FitC on a regular basis for support had got things wrong. The IFC does not wholly agree with this because some clubs, purely due to limitations on either staff or finances, or both, will never be able to devote extensive resources to community work. They will always be looking for assistance.

The Football League said their clubs would be promoting a healthy lifestyle and not just sending a coach into a school to kick a few footballs around. Clubs are also being encouraged to set up their own trusts or ensure that their Community Departments have charitable status. This latter point is important because it means that all community funding would be protected if, for example, the club ran into financial difficulties or was forced into administration or even bankruptcy. It would ensure that the money put aside for community activity could not be raided by the club or its creditors.

The Football League will shortly appoint five Regional Community Managers to work 'out in the field' across the country to ensure that if any of the 72 clubs need any advice or assistance, it will be freely available. They will also help with local and regional funding initiatives. To date, a large percentage of the clubs are either working towards charitable status or have already reached that key milestone. For most, it will be an agreement where the clubs and the Community Department work hand in hand, yet retain financial independence.

It should be emphasised that the PFA is a partner in the Football League's Community Trust and pumps over £2.6 million into the funds on an annual basis. This will initially run as a three-year agreement and then be reviewed. As anyone who has ever attended a football community event can testify, the presence of a member of the playing staff, even for a short period, has a hugely beneficial effect. The PFA is fully aware of this and is doing excellent work in encouraging players from all clubs to get involved and lend their full support. It is to the benefit of everyone.

The Football League is also having tremendous success with its Fans of the Future scheme. The League estimates that since the scheme was launched in 2005, over half a million children have attended games. Almost every club takes part in one scheme or another. The relevant Fans of the Future page on the Football League website²⁴ is a useful source of information for supporters who may want to see what's coming up at their club or what has already taken place. All of the clubs spoken to by the IFC applauded the Football League for their efforts in putting this scheme together. It got off to a rather slow start with some clubs worried that they would end up with hoards of youngsters running amok around their stadium but, in general, the scheme seems to have settled nicely and has few detractors. Everyone seems to be of the opinion that the overriding premise of the need to attract younger fans through the turnstiles is a good one and that anything is worth giving a try in order to secure the future of many clubs. It should be emphasised that this is not an obligatory scheme; clubs are not forced to get involved. However, it is a good example of best practice and, despite a few grumbles from some clubs, surely the pros outweigh the cons. There was also a Fans of the Future fortnight staged at all interested clubs, in April 2007.

The League has instigated a Family Excellence Award. This is linked into their mystery shopper scheme whereby an independent fan arrives incognito at a football match and reports back to the League on his/her experience (144 reports have now been compiled, giving valuable information on every club, home and away). This idea has now gone one step further to become the Family Excellence Award. The winners were announced at the 2008 Football League Annual Awards ceremony. Wycombe Wanderers, Huddersfield Town and Norwich City picked up the Family Club of the Year awards for their respective divisions, while Watford was named as Community Club of the Year. Notts County, Brighton and Hove Albion and Charlton Athletic

picked up divisional awards for their Community initiatives. As can be seen from Annex A of this Report, two of the clubs visited over the past twelve months by IFC officers, were Watford and Huddersfield Town. The IFC was hugely impressed by the amount and quality of Community work going on at those clubs (and others) and it is good to see that they have received some official recognition.

The Football League continues to have great success with its Community Football Cup attracting boys and girls of varying ages to get involved in playing football. Those who reach the final of their particular category are given the chance to play in front of a sizeable crowd at one of the Football League's flagship events.

Overall, the IFC has been really impressed by the ongoing work taking place at the Football League. As other chapters in this IFC Annual Report exemplify, the Football League has taken notice of advice from its clubs, the fans, agencies and the IFC. The various schemes that have been put into place are already starting to bear fruit and, judging by the feedback received by the IFC, the vast majority of people appreciate what the Football League is trying to do. The League has made the move from being reactive to being proactive and the benefits are there for all to see.

As you would expect, with over 40,000 teams coming under its wing, the Football Association is heavily involved in community activity. Much of what they do surrounds the premise of getting as many people as possible involved in football, irrespective of race, ability, sexual orientation, gender or social status. All of this comes under their banner of Get Into Football, which really equates to football-for-all.

Consequently, for the purpose of this Report, and to avoid duplication, coverage of work undertaken by the Football Association is given in the Diversity and Equal Opportunities chapter.

August 2007 saw the **Premier League** unveil its own community programme called Creating Chances. The launch event was attended by all clubs in the division. Not all clubs in the Premier League seemed to be keen on Creating Chances. One felt that it was an unnecessary distraction from the good work that was already being undertaken. They told the IFC that players were expected to be involved, but the club felt that their players were already involved to a sufficiently high level on club community matters. One club felt that Creating Chances had been set up to only counter the loss of FitC which, in truth, had little bearing on the club's most recent work in any case. They viewed it as more of a PR stunt than anything else.

However, on the positive side, Creating Chances goes some way to showcasing a lot of the good work that goes on within and around Premier League clubs and successfully adds to the other initiatives such as Places for Players, Your Shot and the All Star tournament. The IFC appreciates that getting coverage for good news stories can be a

thankless task but the Premier League should be congratulated for at least trying. Creating Chances should also achieve a concerted effort within every club to at least do something at the same time as other clubs in the division.

Further details of the Premier League's community work can be found in their Community Report document.²⁵ As well as highlighting some terrific and highly varied work going on within the 20 Premier League clubs, there is also emphasis placed upon the partnerships that have been set up to help deliver community work. One of the biggest is the Premier League's involvement in the Football Foundation. To date, over half a billion pounds has been invested into the game via this initiative, making it the UK's largest sports charity. The PFA also puts in £2.6m worth of funding into the Premier League/PFA Community Fund on an annual basis. Coverage is given to Barclays Spaces for Sport programme which aims to provide sports facilities in communities across the UK, plus details of the Prince's Trust, Playing for Success, Premier League Reading Stars, V, Kickz and a couple of schemes operating abroad, namely Premier Skills and Magic Bus. Overall, an impressive list of work currently being undertaken by the Premier League.

Premier League clubs are also setting up their own Foundations. This will allow clubs to pump money into their own organisation for use on community schemes. The IFC was particularly impressed on a visit to Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. The club's Foundation had been running for a year and was already making good progress in the community. Funding in the region of £4.5million had been provided along with an additional £1m for other charitable causes. It was also extremely pleasing to hear that Tottenham Hotspur are working closely with other clubs in the area, avoiding any threat of poaching. There was the added advantage that in certain cases it was useful to have several clubs working on one particular scheme or, in the event of looking for additional funding or support, having two clubs sat around a board table was deemed more effective than just one. This was extremely heartening and certainly answered the fears of many clubs, especially the smaller ones, that they would be swamped by the bigger or more glamorous clubs.

Although not purely relating to the Community chapter of this IFC Annual Report, the Premier League's 'Sharing Success'²⁶ document made for fascinating reading and covered a lot of areas pertaining to community work at clubs and how clubs relate with their fans. The document wasn't for general publication and was circulated purely to the Premier League clubs. Its aim was, as the title suggests, spreading Good Practice and good ideas throughout the Premier League's 20 clubs. There are 14 different categories, all of which will have a common interest at every club. The document admits that it isn't the solution to every problem at every club, but it will certainly be an extremely useful tool for a lot of hard-pressed staff. A sharing of favourable information can only be to the

[25] Premier League Community Report 2006-07

[26] Sharing Success; A Good Practice guide for Premier League clubs. Distributed June 2007.



benefit of everyone. The intention is that the document will become something of a template for the future and will be added to in subsequent seasons.

In a large proportion of club community work, the involvement of one of the playing staff is crucial. As mentioned earlier, the mere fact that a player turns up to an event will concentrate interest from those attending and also raise the chance of media attention. With this in mind, the role of the PFA is vital. Obviously the organisation cannot attend every function, so they ensure that, as best as possible players are adequately prepared for what they need to do or need to say. Many will find this rather daunting; others will thoroughly enjoy it. From the IFC's experience, many players are reticent to start with but generally end up having a good time. Consequently, although the PFA, as the originators of FitC as a scheme, no longer have that direct input, they are still very much at the heart of community work and will continue to be very much involved in the future development of community initiatives. Without the presence of a player, many of these community events will fall flat.

The provision on an annual basis of £2.6million to the Football League Foundation and an equal sum to the Premier League/PFA Community Fund, shows that the PFA continues to not only provide support via player involvement, but that they also directly fund community schemes. In meetings between the PFA and IFC officials, it has been clear how proud the PFA is of the work they started over 20 years ago with FitC, and that, although FitC no longer exists, they intend to maintain and develop this important role within football.

It is also encouraging to note that players are being continuously encouraged to be aware of the local community that supports their club. Ten years ago, the average number of player appearances at community events was around 4,000. In 2007, the figure had more than quadrupled to almost 17,000. In a survey conducted by the PFA, each club was asked to show how many player visits had taken place. League One Scunthorpe United's players can take a bow; they were the highest in all four divisions, with 658 visits. Middlesbrough were highest in the Premier League (318); Colchester United topped the clubs in the Championship (516), and Mansfield Town took the honours in League Two (618).

The PFA is also a huge supporter of various initiatives and agencies working in and around football. They have hundreds of their members acting as ambassadors and patrons. This can be current and former players and managers. The organisation is involved in the Prince's Trust, Kick it Out, Show Racism the Red Card and National Literacy Trust, as well as giving support to the football authorities. The PFA should also be congratulated for their terrific work in the area of testicular cancer. Their 'Keep Your Eye On The Ball' campaign, which has been running for seven years and is in partnership with The FA and Institute of Cancer Research, targets players, managers, coaching staff (past and present), football fans and their families, plus the media, has gone to over 300 football clubs.

Overall, the IFC has been hugely impressed by the amount of varied and innovative community work taking place at clubs across the country. It is to the clubs' credit that they put so much time, effort, and financial backing into community work. Bearing in mind that clubs are, in effect, companies of varying sizes, the IFC doubts (although it has no figures to support this claim) that no other business puts such a high percentage of its turnover into community and charity work. For this, football as a whole should be warmly congratulated.

A white soccer ball with black hexagonal patterns sits on a green grassy field. In the background, a person is visible, slightly out of focus, standing on the grass. The background is filled with dense green trees under a bright sky.

6. Child Protection

Safeguarding children, Young people and Vulnerable adults

When it comes to Child Protection, if a club is asked who is responsible for Child Protection, the answer really should be ‘everyone’. If any other company or organisation needs to see how to ensure that it is taking every possible precaution in terms of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, then take a leaf out of football’s book to see how it is done.

The IFC is delighted to report that the issue of Child Protection continues to see an ever-increasing level of importance placed upon it by the three football authorities.

The Premier League and Football Association (FA) continue to make impressive strides in this area while the **Football League** has also responded to IFC recommendations and appointed a specialist Child Protection Advisor. This is a particularly welcome move and the person appointed to this important position brings a wide range of Child Protection experience. This is certain to make a huge difference to both the Football League itself and its 72 clubs. It will be a comfort to many of those clubs to know that they now have an official point of contact at the League to whom they can turn to for information and advice.

It was noticeable during the three IFC Football Forums staged in 2007 that many Football League clubs were still rather vague and in some cases unsure as to what they should and should not be doing regarding Child Protection issues. Hence, it is pleasing to see that within a short period of time since the appointment of the Child Protection Advisor, the Football League has already mounted a series of workshops around the country. This will be of real benefit to all of the clubs.

The IFC attended four of the Football League's Safeguarding Children workshops. All of them were extremely well attended and the general consensus among those attendees to whom IFC officers spoke, was that they had proved immensely useful and it was eye-opening to see the plethora of Child Protection issues. Overall, just over half of the 72 clubs in the Football League attended the sessions. Some clubs obviously had other commitments and were unable to attend, but it should be pointed out that around half a dozen clubs rarely, if ever, attend the specially produced Football League workshops. Shame on them! From the IFC's experience, the workshops are certainly worth making the effort for. It is almost guaranteed that if a tricky problem suddenly cropped-up at one of those clubs, the first people they are likely to turn to are the officials at the Football League. Whilst the League provides a lot of information and advice during the seminars, clubs are also encouraged to exchange their own examples of Best Practice and procedures which they have found useful or helpful. The League cannot visit every club individually; it simply does not have sufficient resources. Bearing in mind that these clubs are individual companies, they would be strongly advised to show a more responsible attitude and look after their own interests as well as those of the fans and players.



With the above in mind, the IFC recommends that all football clubs actively participate in Child Protection and Safeguarding Children workshops, conferences and seminars provided by their leagues. Those clubs that perhaps take a half-hearted attitude towards this topic should take a close look at themselves and not be blasé, thinking it does not affect them. Clubs need to ensure that all staff are aware of Child Protection policies that have been put in place for their own protection. It could save a lot of heartache in the future.

A lot of credit in the new Football League approach to safeguarding children (which is what Child Protection is becoming more widely known as) must go down to their new Child Protection Advisor. She is obviously extremely experienced in this sensitive area and manages to put across the issues, pitfalls and possible resolutions in a most user-friendly manner. The IFC was fascinated by the range of people who attended her workshops. It would be fair to say that over the course of the four sessions almost every single position within a football club would have been represented. This is fairly typical at Football League clubs where people generally answer to several roles. **However, when it comes to Child Protection, if a club is asked who is responsible for Child Protection, the answer really should be 'everyone'.**

The Football League workshops point out many areas where the safeguarding of children is involved. Some are obvious; some are not. For example it is easy to assume that Child Protection is purely about safeguarding young children coming to watch games. However, things like anti-bullying amongst youth team players or apprentices needs to be considered, as do the issues of images/photos of young people in matchday programmes, parental consent for away trips, birthday parties held at the club, team mascots and even considering whether youth team players staying overnight in a hotel have access to a mini-bar in their room or inappropriate channels on the TV. Another important issue is safeguarding those adults who come into contact with children from inadvertently putting themselves in compromising situations. It was noticeable when glancing around the workshop how many of the attendees



were quietly speaking to one another at certain times, especially when the League's Child Protection Advisor was mentioning precise details. It can be surmised that some of them were probably saying, "We haven't thought of that at our club. Perhaps we need to sort this out when we get back". The messages hit the target.

Another interesting feature from the workshops was the highlighting of what seems to be an ever-increasing problem of dealing with over-eager parents. Enthusiasm can easily spill over into aggression and abuse aimed at club officials, other players and other parents. This needs to be nipped in the bud. The Football League intends devoting part of the next round of workshops to this problem.

One of the workshop topics that always raised a lot of discussion and a good deal of confusion was the subject of Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks which should be carried out on all employees who may come into contact with children. The cost of carrying out these checks is high and will be a drain on many clubs' resources. Future government legislation is also likely to produce further checks and therefore added

expense. Currently, CRB checks are not portable, meaning that if someone moves from one football authority to another, the CRB checks have to be done again.

Overall, it should be re-emphasised that the Football League has taken a major leap forward in the area of Child Protection. The clubs are now being given guidance and there is someone, an expert, to whom the clubs can turn to for advice. It will certainly be a huge relief to the hard-pressed Customer Relations Team at the Football League offices. It is also encouraging to see that, despite being in the post for only a short time, the League's new Child Protection Advisor has also started to liaise with the other football authorities. Her experience and a joined-up approach can only be to the benefit of everyone within football. The Football League should be congratulated for grasping this nettle and giving their clubs an invaluable service which, given time and allowed to develop, will become a terrific asset. The only minor reservation is that she is currently only working for part of the week. The IFC suspects that so many clubs are now realising the importance of this topic and will look to her for advice, that she will be swamped. Time will tell.

It should also be pointed out that it isn't only the clubs that are being targeted by this latest development at the Football League. Workshops are taking place at the League's own offices in London and Preston to ensure that all Football League staff know what is expected of them and that, when it comes to football, everyone should know where their responsibilities lie.

The Football Association sees 2007-08 as a period of allowing things to settle. Child Protection has gone from being a topic that received very little attention at football clubs, to something that is close to being top of the agenda. This rapid increase in status and workload will have meant that many individuals at clubs or within organisations and County FAs (CFA's) will have had a steep learning curve. Quite rightly, the FA is allowing some breathing space to let things take shape. There is a huge amount of responsibility on the shoulders of the FA's Child Protection Department. Many people look to them for leadership and, although the Premier League and Football League may put a slightly different emphasis on varying areas of this issue, a lot of the guidance comes from Soho Square. It should also be remembered that whereas the Premier League and Football League are dealing with 92 clubs between them, the FA is faced with keeping an eye on a potential 42,000 clubs, a truly daunting prospect and, when considered in this light, something for which they should be congratulated, bearing in mind the workload.

One of the key functions of the FA's Child Protection Department in recent years has been to promote and oversee the appointment and development of Child Protection Officers and Welfare Officers within the CFA's and clubs. They are also pushing for every club with a youth team to have a Welfare Officer. They would like to make this appointment mandatory before clubs can become affiliated to the FA in the 2008–09 season. The important point with Welfare Officers is that they offer a proactive approach to safeguarding children, rather than merely being available to resolve problems. They should be able to anticipate potential concerns before they develop. Crucially, the CFA Welfare Officers are now in a paid position rather than voluntary. The FA should be congratulated for pushing through development within Child Protection. The figures continue to be very impressive. For example, 210,000 people have completed the safeguarding children workshop; a staggering achievement.

The importance of CRB checks is being further emphasised, as is the need to speed-up the system. The FA also recognises the need for a 'portability' agreement with the Premier League. This would allow people who move within the organisations and who have already completed CRB checks, to be able to continue in their duties without being required to undergo renewed checks, which in many cases will be a repeat exercise. A pilot programme is underway and once the results have been analysed, a decision will be taken on if, or how, the scheme can be taken forward. However, it is pleasing to note that the football authorities seem to be working in closer unity on issues of safeguarding children. One of the highlights of this is the Child Protection Forum. The IFC has made various recommendations regarding this Forum over the years but, overall, it seems to be working well and, although its format and name may change, the overall concept will remain.

One disappointment is the lack of clarity regarding the age at which children should be accompanied to football matches. The FA feels that, currently, this issue is not a priority and will at some stage be addressed by all of the football authorities via the Child Protection Forum, a view with which the IFC disagrees. Whilst appreciating that the FA, Premier League and Football League have other child safeguarding issues to deal with and that everything cannot be resolved overnight, the issue of young children attending football matches unaccompanied was seen as a very big problem by the clubs that attended the 2007 IFC Football Forums. It became a recurring theme at every Forum and was precisely the reason why the IFC mentioned this problem in its 2006 Annual Report as it was rearing its head even then. One of the IFC officials attended a ground where she witnessed three under-11s being sold tickets to attend the match without an adult being present. Who was responsible for these children? The club.

With that in mind, the IFC recommends progress on the issue of minors attending football matches. It is a very real problem for the clubs, leaving many people such as stewards, ticket office staff, turnstile operators etc with a major issue. They may have to decide whether to sell tickets or allow admittance, to a group of very young children who are without adult supervision. Whilst the IFC applauds the attempts of the football authorities to interest the next generation of football fans in the game, the IFC recommends that they provide guidelines on the minimum age of children attending football matches unaccompanied, as well as safe adult:child ratios. At the moment, there are no rules or guidelines. A simple resolution by the football authorities would clear-up this issue.

Clubs openly admitted at the IFC Football Forums that once a child is on their premises, he or she becomes the club's responsibility. One instance was provided as an example of how things can go wrong. A Saturday 3.00pm game was postponed at the last minute due to sudden torrential rainfall that left the pitch waterlogged. Most of the spectators were already in the stadium. Upon confirmation that the game had been called off, everyone left the stadium and went home. All, that is, apart from a large group of children, scattered around the stadium, who had plainly been dropped off at the ground by their parents with the intention of collecting them at the end of the game. The club was left in the position of having to look after the children until 4.45pm, at which time parents started to arrive outside the ground to collect the children as previously arranged. Hardly a satisfactory scenario.

Overall though, the IFC would like to congratulate the FA on the wonderful work it does in the area of safeguarding children. It is pleasing to note that when it comes to something like the sensitive issue of young people, the FA can rightly be used as an example of how it should be done. Their website provides an excellent source of information which, from the IFC's experience, is regarded as an invaluable tool by all those who consult it.

As with the other football authorities, the Premier League has been extremely busy over the past 12 months in the area of Child Protection. They too are allowing new ideas to settle whilst at the same time devising many new ideas, although these won't come into practice until next season. It is encouraging to report that the Premier League has been working closely with the FA and Football League in a bid to find common ground when it comes to safeguarding children. The only area of concern would be in the exchanging of CRB information. Things seem to be moving rather slowly although it should be pointed out, this is not entirely down to inactivity on the part of the football authorities. The Criminal Record Bureau does not recommend portability (exchanging of CRB information) and highlights potential dangers of accepting what may be an out-of-date certificate. The main crux of their argument is that you are, in effect, taking someone else's word for things.

One snag on the horizon is the new government Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) agenda aimed at ensuring people are appropriately checked as to whether they should be suitable to work with children. This is likely to add to the workload of all Child Protection/Child Safeguarding Departments.

Therefore, the IFC recommends further progress in the exchanging of information between the football authorities. It would be useful to ensure that as many procedures as possible are quickly put into place to ensure that the current workload is dealt with before new regulations arrive.

The manner in which the ISA will function is still rather vague. If it adds an extra layer of security on top of the current CRB standards, then most clubs and organisations would be reasonably content but, if it means that everyone needs to, in effect, start again, then football in general will rightly complain because to date they have been a shining example in this area.

Child Protection within the Premier League clubs seems to be working well via the clubs' Children's Services Officers. There

are several working groups overseeing various areas within football. All of these will ensure that clubs and the Premier League itself will continue to provide what rates as an excellent level of protection. Every Premier League club has a guide for safe working practice for the protection of children and adults. The guide is very detailed and should prove to be an invaluable tool for anyone at a football club who may come into contact with youngsters.

It is also hugely encouraging to note that the Premier League has followed IFC advice and now includes mascots, scouts, ball-boys/girls and, indeed, anyone who may be involved with children during a game (for example player escorts, flag bearers, entertainers etc) in their Best Practice Guidance Document. The Premier League has also produced an excellent document aimed specifically at the taking of images of children.²⁷ It explains precisely what images are, including those taken on mobile telephones, and outlines a Code of Practice for clubs and photographers, bearing in mind that the term "photographers" also includes parents, friends, relatives etc. The document even provides some sample letters that may be used when parental consent is required.

The use of photographic images of children is a tricky area. The general rule of thumb is that if a picture of a youngster appears in something like a matchday programme, then the level of information provided next to it regarding their name, address, school, relatives etc, needs to be very carefully monitored. Of the 41 matchday programmes obtained by IFC officers over the course of 2007, it was found that clubs were still showing details of team mascots, including the schools that they attend. It is to be hoped that the clubs had secured approval from parents or guardians before including this information. Below is a chart showing details in full:

	Match-day programmes	Details of school shown
Premier League	7	1
Championship	15	8
League 1	3	1
League 2	3	1
Cup/Play-off Finals	3	0
Internationals	6	0

The PFA is increasingly involved in raising Child Protection issues with the players. Nothing gives children (and adults) more excitement than being in the presence of a footballer. However, the players need to be fully aware of their responsibilities and what they can and cannot do when in the company of young and/or vulnerable people. For that reason, the PFA is busy compiling a special leaflet that will be distributed to all of its members outlining some basic guidelines. There will also be details circulated to staff that deal with young players, bearing in mind that players under the age of 18 are still seen, in the eyes of the law, as minors. PFA officials will be included in the educating process, although the organisation already has its own internal policy.

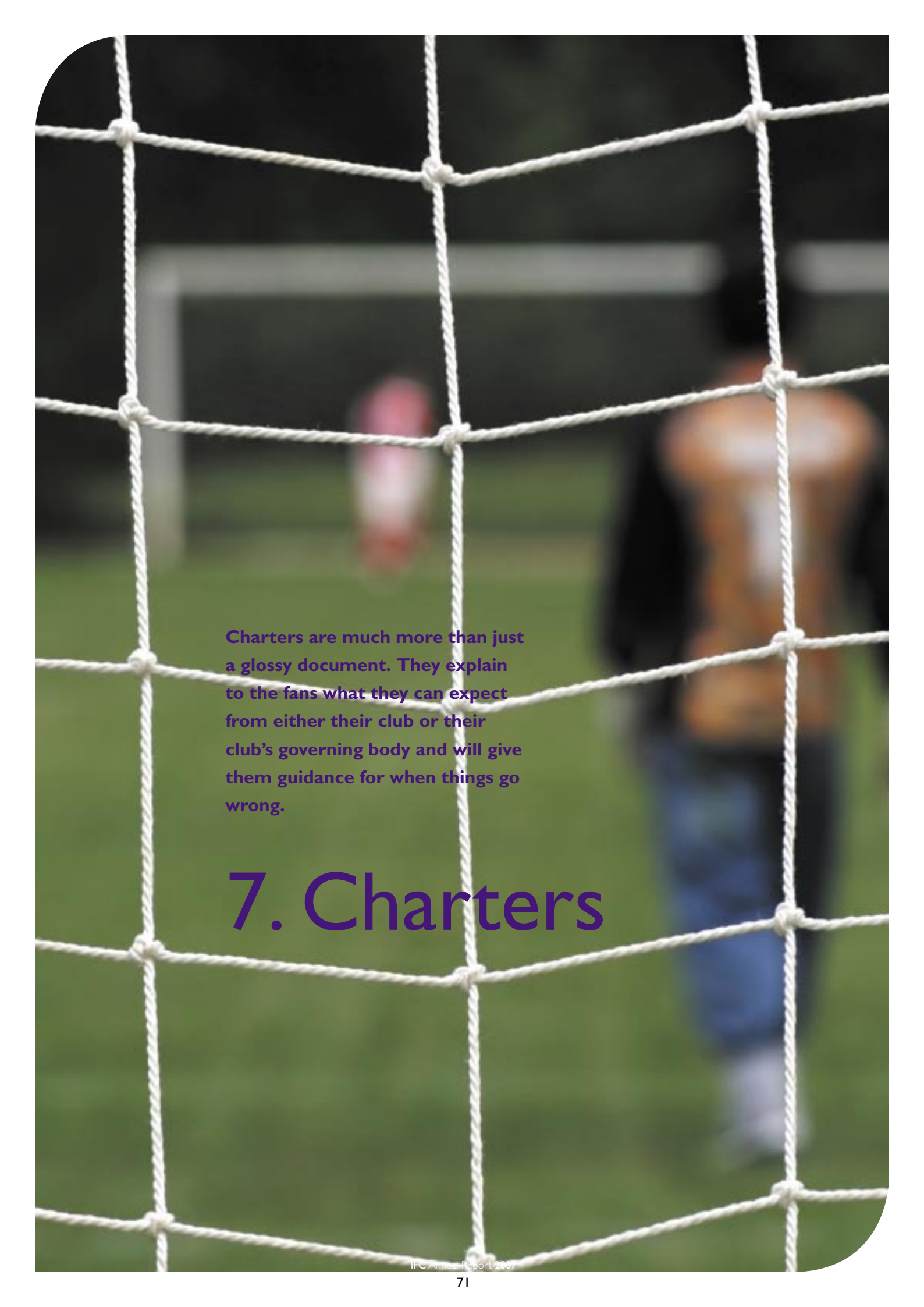
[27] Premier League Code of Practice; Images of children's participation in activities at Premier League games

Since the IFC published its Child Protection Report in 2005, it is extremely encouraging to note how far football has moved to look after the welfare of youngsters involved in football and also make adults aware of their responsibilities. There are still some areas that need to be addressed such as the lack of guidance on young children attending football. It should also be pointed out that the IFC has spoken with clubs who freely admit that staff, including players, who have not been CRB checked, often work with children. The clubs and their governing bodies are taking a huge risk here. The individuals involved are also putting themselves in a susceptible position, although the IFC suspects they are probably not aware of this.

This may prove difficult and expensive, but the IFC recommends that CRB checks are carried out on all football club staff at all levels, and ensure that employees do not commence work until relevant documentation is in place.

It will take time before best practice in the area of safeguarding children filters its way through to every level of the football pyramid but, in the meantime, football is moving in the right direction. If any other company or organisation needs to see how to ensure that it is taking every possible precaution in terms of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, then take a leaf out of football's book to see how it is done.





Charters are much more than just a glossy document. They explain to the fans what they can expect from either their club or their club's governing body and will give them guidance for when things go wrong.

7. Charters

at first glance, the idea of leafing through dozens of football club charters may seem like a rather tedious task. How wrong that assumption would be. They make for interesting reading and give a fascinating insight across the whole range of football from what goes on at international and grassroots level in the case of the FA, to what is happening at club level, whether that club is at the top of the Premier League or the bottom of League Two. They are valuable documents for this reason alone and should be recognised as such.

However, Charters are much more than just a glossy document. They explain to the fans what they can expect from either their club or their club's governing body and will give them guidance for when things go wrong. It should be pointed out that Charters are produced for the benefit of the fans and not solely for the IFC. It is the role of the IFC to monitor what is going on and comment on whether they feel as though the Charters are doing a good job and telling fans what they need to hear. The IFC also has a duty to review Charter Reports to fulfil its remit.

Following close consultation with the IFC, Charters are largely unrecognisable from when the Commission was first set up. They have gone from being to what amounted to a legal document, to something that really is worthwhile and serves a purpose both in terms of informing and directing.

At the end of this chapter, there is a resumé of the IFC's success, or lack of it, in obtaining copies of charters during visits to clubs on match days.

The Football League's Charter is a section in a very impressive publication that is really a review of both the League itself and of its 72 clubs entitled 'Goals, 2007-08, Improving the Supporter Experience'. It provides the reader with an excellent snapshot of what is going on and is a most readable document, while also doing what it is supposed to do (reviewing and previewing commitments made to supporters). It looks and feels good too. This is the perfect example of how Charters can evolve and become a valuable document rather than a chore for the person(s) who compile them.

The Football League asks each of its 72 clubs to come up with a list of three promises for the coming season, as well as looking back at last season's promises. The League itself does precisely the same. The areas covered by the club promises for the 2007-08 season are shown in the table below.

Out of the 72 Football League clubs only seven have made a promise to make changes to their customer charter. Morecombe Football Club made this promise and whilst we must remember that they are the newest member of the Football League, when we visited the club in February 2008 no charter was available and neither was it available from the club's website.

	Community and education	Consultation with supporter groups/ fans	Stadium and safety – issues / improvements	Club website improvement	Disabled supporters (including DDA)	Ticketing	Customer services, inc matchday experience	Children/Family initiatives	Racism and equity	Customer Charter	Other	Total:
Championship	15	4	10	1	4	10	10	7	4	5	2	72
League 1	22	6	2		2	9	11	9	3	1	4	69 ²⁸
League 2	16	8	4		3	10	13	7	4	1	3	69 ²⁹
Totals	53	18	16	1	9	29	34	23	11	7	9	210

[28] Swindon Town Football Club did not list three promises in the report for the 2007-08 season

[29] Brentford, Macclesfield Town and Stockport County Football Club's only provided two promises for the 2007-08 season

The IFC recommends that the charter be placed on the club's website as soon as possible so that it is easily accessible to all fans who wish to view it.

53 clubs promised to make improvements to their community and education initiatives, which will benefit the clubs in the future to ensure their good relationship with the local community.

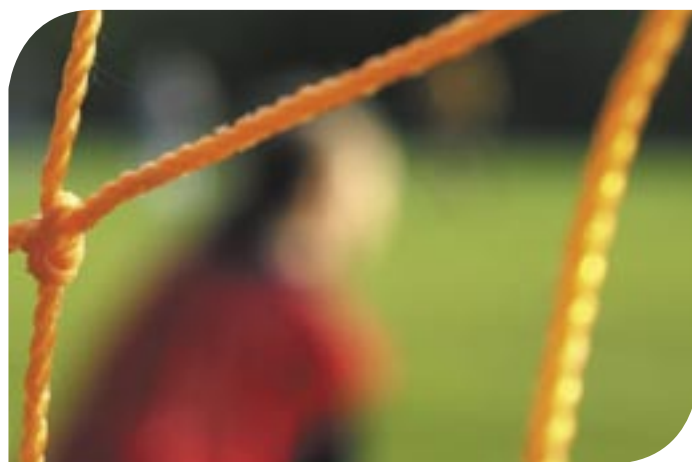
34 clubs recognised that customer services needed improvement in some way to ensure that the matchday experience is more pleasurable for the fans.

Among the other areas the clubs have promised action for the 2007-08 season are:-

- Organising coaches for fans to travel to games from remote areas for £5 (Norwich City Football Club)
- Continue to renew 5-year plan (Plymouth Argyle Football Club)
- Organise, instigate and monitor a subsidy scheme to help travelling supporters whilst the club is based at a temporary ground. The cost will be £2 concessions; £4 for others (Bristol Rovers Football Club)
- To develop a Club travel system to guarantee transport to all away fixtures for supporters (Carlisle United Football Club)
- To research and investigate how the Club can become more ecologically aware in its practices and day-to-day operations (Crewe Alexandra Football Club)
- To review and improve the Club's approach to recycling both on match days and around all office areas within the Club. Schemes already in place will be built on to achieve maximum benefit for the local environment (Nottingham Forest Football Club)
- To meet the demands of both home and away supporters by having merchandise on sale on a match day at the stadium (Barnet Football Club)
- To stay within budgets (Bradford City Football Club)
- To continue with the planning applications for a new ground. We hope to be starting the building work during the current season (Chesterfield Football Club)

A notable exception was Swindon Town Football Club who did not list any promises for the 2007-08 season. This worries the IFC as in January 2007 we received an issue regarding a health and safety matter at Swindon Town Football Club which had originally been sent to the club in December 2006. We wrote to the club on three occasions but did not receive a response for 10 months, despite the club's charter stating that it will respond to any correspondence received within 10 days. The club did eventually respond to both the IFC and the person who raised the issue, but only after IFC officials telephoned the club to ask why they had not responded and reminded them that they were in breach of their own charter.

The IFC recommends that the Football League ensures that all of their member clubs submit promises for each season in the time allocated.



For those fans wanting to look at the 'small print' of the Football League's charter, this can be found at the back of the 'Goals' publication and on their website. The same applies with most of the clubs. For example, in the 'Goals' document, Huddersfield Town Football Club explain what their three promises are for the 2007-08 season while also reviewing and updating the reader on what was promised for the previous season. A quick switch to the club's website and the Charter section³⁰ reveals the same promises plus further details about Customer Service, ticketing, the kit cycle, suggestions for visiting fans etc, as well as a list of contact names, numbers and addresses. Excellent. Most of the Football League's clubs follow this pattern. It works really well and provides the exact amount of information in a concise manner rather than forcing fans to wade through something that reads like a legal document.

One of the Football League's own initiatives was to undertake a 'mystery shopper' survey of some of their clubs. This seems to have been a success in many areas but, with regard to Charters, the IFC had a different experience to that of the 'mystery shopper'. Over the past six years, the IFC has visited 52 Football League clubs. When staff at the clubs were asked to provide copies of their Club Charter, the IFC officers were generally met with blank looks. Indeed, from the IFC's match-day experiences during 2007, only three charters were available from clubs in the Football League. This does not concur with the findings of the League's 'mystery shopper' exercise³¹ which was conducted on their behalf during the latter part of 2006 and early 2007.

Their findings show that Charters were found in club shops and main reception areas. From the IFC's experience, club shop staff are generally not aware of the Club Charter and usually direct you to the main reception at the ground, which is often not accessible to the public on a match day. Similarly, the IFC is unable to agree on the number of charters mentioned in matchday programmes. In the course of our 2007 research, the IFC found nothing outside of the Premier League clubs and programmes designed by the governing bodies themselves.

As for the 2007–08 season, the League is promising to undertake an audit of community activity at all of its clubs; introduce and roll-out customer service training for match day stewards, and introduce Customer Service awards to recognise best practice at its clubs.

At the back of the 'Goals' document, there is a full list of Customer Care contacts at every club. The majority provide a name, e-mail and telephone number. As many fans will testify, one of the main problems when contacting a football club is finding someone to talk to. The Football League should be congratulated for providing this valuable information.

The Football Association's charter³² looks good and is easy to read and follow. The opening page highlights the size of the task facing the FA. They are accountable for 23 England teams, eleven FA competitions, the development of Wembley Stadium, and act as the guardian of football throughout England. They are also shaping football's future in England by investing in schools, clubs, counties, leagues and the women's game. A sizeable remit.

The Customer Relations Department at the FA has increased in size over the past few years, and this has without doubt been reflected by an improvement in the speed and quality of service. The IFC receives relatively few grumbles from fans about the FA and, when compared to the number of fans they take to games all over the world, the level of satisfaction from England supporters must be considered to be generally high. However, as in previous years, the IFC did receive a number of e-mails regarding the allocation of tickets for the FA Cup

Final which was held at Wembley Stadium. Each team involved in the game was allocated in the region of 25,000 tickets, leaving the remaining tickets to be distributed to the 'Football Family'. Many fans feel that the club allocation is too small.

The number of people communicated with by the FA stood at 165,000 during 2007, a reduction on the previous year. There was also a dedicated e-mail introduced for fans with ticketing queries, which appears to be working well with over 8,000 e-mails answered in 2007. The FA has also launched FAN; the Football Association Number. This is a unique reference number given to anyone and everyone involved in football, whether it be a player, referee, spectator etc. Consequently, if a fan contacts the FA, they are asked for some basic contact details. In return they will be given a registration number. This will allow the supporter, or anyone else, to be tracked, therefore allowing the FA to build a historical record of previous contacts. If someone calls the FA with a query, their contact details and FAN number will be recognised instantly; their details will load onto a screen, allowing the FA official to quickly see if there have been any previous contacts with that person. In theory, the FAN number seems like a good idea although the IFC has received a few grumbles from fans who are not happy about it. The main complaint is that some fans do not want to register all of their details. All they want to do is contact the FA and pass some sort of comment. Time will tell whether this proves to be a worthwhile initiative.

The FA also prides itself on aiming to meet as many members of 'englandfans' as possible. Each year they have a series of road shows around the country. The FA rightly sees this as an effective way of listening to the fans.



[31] Source: GOALS Improving the Supporter Experience, The Football League 2007-08

[32] The FA Customer Charter 2008

The 'englandfans' supporters group has been a massive success. The 'englandfans+' group, which caters for fans travelling abroad, has a renewal rate in excess of 90%. This is hugely impressive and shows that the FA must be doing a good job despite the England team failing to reach Euro 2008, otherwise membership levels would fall. The FA is considering increasing the number of 'englandfans+' to ensure that all tickets for away games are sold. This is a sensible move, although some members will no doubt feel that it reduces their chances of getting a ticket for popular games. This argument can be countered by the desire to ensure that unsold tickets can be distributed to fans who would have been interested, yet under the current system are excluded. Some fans may complain but the IFC supports this move by the FA.

The IFC attended six international matches as well as the FA Cup Final in 2007. Reference to the FA's Charter was found in all matchday programmes. It was not possible to obtain a copy of the Charter at any of the matches, although at the England v Croatia match a member of staff within Wembley Stadium advised IFC officials that whilst she knew about the Charter, she did not have a copy available. IFC officials were asked to leave their contact details and advised that a copy would be sent out to them. Details were given but a copy failed to arrive.

The IFC also experienced a number of problems in the second half of 2007 related to the FA's website. The problems arose when fans were trying to contact the FA via the 'contact us' section of their website. The 'contact us' link was not particularly obvious and due to the IFC's details being on the same page the fans decided to use those contact numbers and e-mail address instead. Consequently, many e-mails and telephone calls came through to the IFC offices. This problem was resolved within a couple of weeks, although a small number of e-mails do still seem to be filtering through to the IFC. However, bearing in mind that a lot of people will go onto the FA's website to discover how to contact them, the IFC feels that it is still far from obvious when trying to find the correct link. The Premier League website suffers from the same problem. The 'home' page generally directs the user to various other links, but it is extremely difficult trying to discover the basic details of an email, address or telephone number via which the Premier League or FA may be reached.



Consequently, the IFC recommends that the FA and Premier League provide a clear link on their website to allow fans swift access to contact details rather than having to search for them. The longer a complainant has to search, the more exasperated they are likely to become. It should be pointed out that the Football League has a 'contact us' link on their opening page.

The IFC, as mentioned elsewhere in this Report, has been impressed by the work going on between the football authorities and the disabled supporters groups. The FA is one of the leaders in this area. They have been criticised in some quarters for not having an online booking service for disabled fans. The FA prefers to speak to disabled fans in person and aims to ensure therefore that the fan gets exactly what he or she needs. While fully understanding that disabled fans want to have the same sort of accessibility as other supporters, the IFC fully supports this and sees it as a preferable solution. The FA is going out of its way to provide a tailor-made service which will certainly be extremely useful to many disabled fans.



A nice touch throughout the FA Customer Charter is continued reference to their Commitments for 2008. Almost every chapter has some ideas or suggestions for the coming year. It is rather like the Football League's idea of three promises for every club, every season. And if those people who contact the FA's Customer Relations Department want to know a bit about the person they're dealing with, there's a brief resumé of everyone, including a photo, at the back of the document.

Overall, this is another really good publication by the FA. It's a shame that more people don't read it because, apart from giving important information, it would also show them how much the FA does, especially on behalf of the supporters. From the experience of the IFC's involvement with the FA, we would like to assure England supporters that the FA is working in your interests and does its best to try and act upon any complaints and concerns. They are the first to admit that they don't get everything right, but they really do listen to what the fans say.

The Premier League continues to attract a huge worldwide interest from fans and businesses. It is only right therefore, that fans can expect a high standard of customer care. With this in mind, a particularly interesting development at the Premier League is the launch of a Service Standard. This has been introduced for all twenty member clubs to work towards and will, in effect, replace the Charter Report. The Service Standard is a natural progression of the work with Charters and enables clubs to benchmark their progress in a more consistent way against agreed criteria. For example, ten key points are provided which should give the clubs some sort of guidance. It will also serve to demonstrate to fans that clubs are maintaining standards and working hard to make improvements. The first three clubs to achieve the Service Standard were Aston Villa, Blackburn Rovers and Fulham. The IFC would like to congratulate the clubs on their achievement. This is a really good idea. Packs to assist all clubs with this scheme are currently being put together at the Premier League and will be distributed to their twenty clubs in time for the start of next season.

The natural progression from Service Standard will be to have an externally accredited system for the facilities and service offered on a match day. A new Quality Assurance Scheme for Football Stadia will be established. The first two years will be open only to the Premier League, but it is hoped that once the pilot scheme is complete it can be rolled out to other leagues should they wish to get involved.

As part of the IFC's fact-finding duties, seven Premier League matches were attended by IFC officials in 2007. A charter could be obtained at only one stadium. IFC officials visited Manchester United Football Club in October 2007 and although no copies of the club charter were available on the day a member of staff offered to send a copy which arrived within 48 hours. The matchday programme also gave a good explanation on the back page of what the charter is, what it does for the supporters and how they may obtain a copy. It also gave details of the complaints process currently in place for supporters and advised them that after all avenues have been exhausted they can contact the IFC.

This is a great example and the IFC recommends that all clubs in both the Premier League and Football League place a similar piece in their matchday programmes throughout the season. Obviously, with the IFC ceasing to operate by spring 2008, the details should refer to the newly formed Independent Football Ombudsman service.

Each year the Premier League works hard on consulting with fans both at home and abroad. They regularly receive a high volume of queries and complaints regarding fixture scheduling. The Premier League sought to rectify the flow of information on fixture changes and as a result complaints have dropped by around 85% compared to the 2005-06 season.

2007 saw the launch of a ticket information service on the Premier League's website which enables easier access to tickets and information for all of their 20 clubs. Fans can also obtain travel and stadium information on the site. There has also been additional training for staff in ticket offices.

Good progress is being made by clubs who have become more responsive to the needs of their supporters and the ways in which they communicate. Policies and procedures are more transparent than before and many supporters communicate directly with their clubs via phone or e-mail.

Overall, the voice of the supporter is now more organised and better resourced. Clubs engage with established supporters groups to maintain a standard of good practice. For example, the Premier League's relationship with the Football Supporters Federation (FSF) took a new turn during 2007 which resulted in them providing funding of over £80,000 to enable the FSF to run a better service for fans and articulate its concerns.

Lastly, it is good to see that the Premier League is going green. They've put together an Environmental Sustainability Guide which encourages clubs and their various partners to look at joint initiatives.

Conclusion

As in previous years, the IFC is pleased to see how Charters are evolving. They are no longer stuffy documents. In fact, the word 'Charter', which has always been something that fans either don't know about or don't realise what it is for, has started to disappear. The use of 'Service Standard', 'Customer Promises' or 'Our Commitments for 2008', all give a more user-friendly feel to Charters. No matter what you call them, Charters serve a purpose that informs the clubs, the football authorities and the supporters. They allow everyone to know where they stand if something goes wrong. For that reason more than any other, they must survive in some shape or form.

Finally, as mentioned at the start of this chapter, requesting and reviewing Charters from the authorities and the clubs, is part of the IFC's remit. Consequently, during their regular match day research throughout 2007, whenever IFC officers attended a football match, they always asked club or stadium staff for a copy of the Charter. Officers also check to see whether copies of IFC publications are freely available and if the club charter, either in brief or in full, appears anywhere in the matchday programme. Research was also undertaken to ascertain whether clubs had copies of their Charter available on their websites. Overleaf is a resumé of the findings.

Availability of Charters at matches attended by IFC during 2007

	Matches	Charter provided	Advised on website	Offered to send copy
Premier League	7		1	1
Championship	10	1	1	3
League 1	7	1	1	4
League 2	2	1		
Cup/Play-off Finals	3			
Internationals	6			1

Information on Charters could be found in the Championship play-off final matchday programme and also included reference to the IFC.

Availability of IFC Publications at matches attended by IFC during 2007

	Matches	IFC publications available
Premier League	7	
Championship	10	3
League 1	7	2
League 2	2	1
Cup/Play-off Finals	3	
Internationals	6	

IFC publications were available at the following matches:-

Bristol Rovers v Leeds United (League 1)

Leicester City v Stoke City (Championship)

Peterborough United v West Bromwich Albion (League 2, but actually Carling Cup 3rd Round)

Plymouth Argyle v Sheffield Wednesday (Championship)

Leeds United v Southend United (League 1)

IFC publications were available in many areas of the ground due to complaints made by the home team fans following the deduction of 15 points by the Football League for the club going into administration.

Bristol City v Southampton (Championship). Copies of the IFC publications were available but not in sight of fans.

Charters available on Club websites

	Websites	Charters available on websites
Premier League	20	18
Championship	24	22
League 1	24	17
League 2	24	18

Charters mentioned in match-day programmes collected during 2007 by IFC officers

	Matches	Charter mentioned
Premier League	7	1
Championship	15	
League 1	3	
League 2	3	
Cup/Play-off Finals	3	3
Internationals	6	6

A soccer ball with black and white panels is positioned in the lower-left foreground on a lush green grassy field. The background is a bright blue sky filled with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

8.

The IFC Football Forums and the Complaints Process

One delegate felt that clubs tended to treat all fans' complaints as suspicious. The initial assumption is that the fan is wrong. It is easier to resolve things at smaller clubs because they tend to know many of their fans, but this is not so easy at larger clubs.

The role of the IFC is to monitor the actions of the football authorities. Much of the IFC's work is therefore based around what the three football authorities (Football Association (FA), Premier League and Football League) tell the Commission. However, the IFC would be failing in its duties if it did not check whether changes were taking place and whether new initiatives were trickling down to the clubs and related bodies. This forms an integral part of the IFC's information gathering process.

So, with this in mind, the IFC decided to stage a series of Football Forums around England, whereby clubs, fans groups, official bodies etc could speak to the IFC and, more importantly, answer any pertinent questions posed by the IFC. It was felt, in the light of the previous year's experience, that a more free and open debate would ensue if the discussions were conducted without the presence of the football authorities. The first series of Forums took place in 2006, with the 2007 Forums staged at Doncaster Rovers Football Club on 11 September, Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club on 18 September and Fulham Football Club on 25 September. Almost twice the number of people and clubs attended the 2007 Forums compared to the previous year. The events were extremely useful to the IFC and, judging by the feedback received at the IFC office, the attendees also found the sessions to be valuable.

The IFC would like to thank everyone who attended for giving up their time and providing the IFC with an extremely valuable insight. The IFC would also like to thank the host clubs for giving the Commission such a warm welcome to their grounds.

This is a resumé of the topics discussed at the 2007 Forums.

One of the roles of the IFC is to deal with complaints and issues raised by supporters. One delegate felt that clubs tended to treat all fans' complaints as suspicious. The initial assumption is that the fan is wrong. It is easier to resolve things at smaller clubs because they tend to know many of their fans, but this is not so easy at larger clubs. There was also a suggestion that some aggrieved fans were dealing directly with the fans' supporters organisations.

One feeling was that clubs don't seem to have a code of practice. This didn't seem to be the case with the Premier League where there were clear-cut guidelines, but smaller clubs seemed to be in a certain amount of difficulty over this. (We shall look at the complaints process later in this chapter).

Safe Standing

A large part of the information gleaned from the discussions that took place regarding this topic, can be found in Chapter 4 of this Report that looks into the issue of standing at football stadia in greater detail. The main points raised at the Forums in relation to standing were:-

- There should be a differentiation between standing safely in a specially designed and designated area, as opposed to standing safely in a seating area.
- The authorities have a problem that isn't going to disappear.
- There is persistent standing in seated areas.
- The situation can change from game to game.
- It would appear that large numbers of standing fans will not be ejected.
- Some fans felt that "We're all standing and we're not causing any problems, so leave us alone".
- There are anomalies where, for example, fans can go to a Rugby game on the Friday evening and stand/drink in the seated areas, but return the next day for a football match and be told to sit down by the same stewards in the same area as the previous evening. Pop concerts raised a similar disparity.
- The policy of reducing the number of fans as a penalty for persistent standing, does not work.
- The Core Cities Group (CCG), Football Licensing Authority (FLA) and Safety Advisory Groups were criticised for being inflexible.
- Local Authorities were worried about possible litigation.
- There was confusion in the lower divisions or at clubs who were promoted into the Championship because some fans were allowed to stand at their own ground, and then told to sit at another.
- One club felt that it should be up to them what they did.
- It was suggested that an experiment should take place.
- Some clubs felt that due to the construction of their stadium, it would be physically impossible to allow standing.

- It was argued that standing was a generational problem. Older people who had previously stood at grounds, wanted to continue standing, but the younger generation didn't mind. This was rejected however, with most clubs feeling that younger fans were a major problem.
- There was a tribal connection to standing.
- Football fans were different to rugby or pop concert fans in an arena. Football fans were more difficult to deal with. This prompted the comment that standing wasn't about safety; it was to do with social order.
- National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS) representatives said that standing was a major issue for wheelchair members. due to their view being obscured. It was pointed out that there was a similar problem for women, children and anyone who was short of stature.
- Football Supporters Federation (FSF) said that some grounds in Germany had standing areas for visually impaired people. They could be put in places where, although it sounded harsh, it didn't matter whether they had a decent view because they couldn't see in any case, but they could still enjoy the atmosphere.
- Several clubs said it was a matter of customer care. Would a club be legally liable if they knowingly sold a seat to someone in an area where fans habitually stood?
- One delegate commented that he was fed-up with the whole issue being placed firmly on the club's shoulders; what about those fans who refuse to sit because they are the ones causing the problem.
- There was also a feeling, especially amongst the smaller clubs, that they should do everything possible to attract fans and not tell them they can't attend for one reason or another.
- Some fans felt that the right to choose had now gone. At least if fans were in a standing area, they could migrate to stand with their mates.
- It was felt that mismanaged standing in seated areas was unsafe. If it could be controlled, then it didn't appear to be a problem.



Match Attendance

The IFC officials confirmed that the Commission received more complaints about matches being rescheduled than anything else. The figure even exceeded the number of complaints about the overall price of a ticket.

The delegates felt that ticket prices, TV coverage, switching of TV games and a lack of competitiveness were reasons for the stagnating of attendances.

It was noted that switching games to something like 12 noon on New Year's Day, was not only a problem for the fans, it was also a problem for the clubs because they needed to get staff and stewards in place by around 10.00am.

Some delegates felt that the football authorities had given away too much power to the TV companies and that although there was some merit in saying that "if you want to see the best players, you need the TV companies to pay a large amount and therefore it was only reasonable to assist them in providing coverage times that were desirable", it certainly didn't make things any easier for the fans who physically go to the games, or for those people who were required to work at the stadium.

One delegate said that around three years ago, if a game was switched, there would be several complaints. Nowadays, there was almost nothing. Some delegates felt this was due to the fans realising that there was no point in complaining. An example was given of a weekend in October 2007 when, due to a mixture of TV requirements, cup games etc, there was only a single Saturday 3.00pm kick off in the Premier League. The general feeling was that the switching of games would get worse. One delegate felt that if a foreign country, e.g. China with 250 million potential viewers, wanted a game changed and they were all paying £1 each to watch it, then the game would indeed be changed. Outside influences are coming into play too often.

Another reason given for the fall in attendances was a lack of competition within the leagues, especially promotion and relegation to/from the Premier League and Championship. It was now increasingly predictable which teams would go up or down. The huge difference between the sums earned for relegation as opposed to winning the league title, was why some clubs, referred to as yo-yo clubs, were far wealthier than the others. Fans would not go along to games that were meaningless. If there was also a long distance or bank holiday thrown into the equation, then even fewer fans would bother to attend.

One club said that the non-attendance of season-ticket fans was increasing, although the actual price of the ticket didn't seem to affect attendance. There was the full range of comments about this. Some delegates felt their clubs would be affected by any price change; other clubs said that any changes were rarely affected by attendance. One club had actually reduced season ticket prices, only to see a zero change in sales. In other words, unless the pricing was unreasonable, the price of a ticket didn't seem to deter the fans from attending. Everything is results driven and if a team plays well and wins games, people want to attend, and vice versa.

There was also a feeling that if fans paid more, they wanted more.

The FSF said there were now two groups of fans. One group went to games while another supported a club purely via the TV. Both groups still bought replica shirts and other club merchandise.

One club complained that in the Championship, if they were switched to a TV game, they got £60,000 from Sky. This did not cover the costs of losing the fans who decided to stay at home and watch the game.

All clubs said they would refund ticket prices if games were altered, but they did not entertain incidental costs like lost train or aeroplane tickets.

Other topics discussed

The CCG was criticised by several delegates. This Group was established to help regenerate economic growth in 8 cities outside London.

The effectiveness of the FLA was questioned.

Club ownership was mentioned. One delegate felt that the **'Fit and Proper Person Test'** needed to be looked at to clarify whether it was doing its job.

The cost of CRB checks for stewards was very expensive. One delegate said that if he needed to CRB check a referee through the local County FA (CFA), it would cost £12. If he needed to CRB check a steward through the FA, it would cost £48 for the same check. Why the discrepancy? He also felt that it was taking too long if the CRB check highlighted something. It often took six months for the check to go to the FA, local police, get someone to vouch for the person etc. During this time, the steward who is being checked has often left his post.



Police charging was seen as a major drain on the clubs and something that needed to be looked at. There seemed to be no guidelines as to what the number of police would be and the likely fee. One club said that the pubs and clubs in the city caused massive problems due to drunkenness and loutish behaviour but they were not charged by the police, so why should it be different for football clubs. One said that if the police charged for everything, there'd be no Notting Hill Carnival, no London Marathon, etc. One issue was 'full cost recovery' at football matches. This means that clubs are charged for policing things like motorway service areas, town centres, surrounding streets etc, many of them with possibly no influence from the football club.

Child Protection would still appear to be a muddled area. Many clubs were very vague about this. There were still no clear guidelines about underage children turning up to buy a ticket. What about children on coaches travelling to away games. If a child is ejected from a ground, whose responsibility is it if the child is hurt or disappears? NADS were worried about the age of some carers being allowed into stadia with disabled fans. A youngster with an adult in a wheelchair has no chance of assisting if there is a problem.

The national **no-smoking** ban is causing a major headache for clubs despite it being the law. Oddly, this seems to be a greater problem for clubs since the legislation was passed as opposed to previous seasons when some clubs operated a voluntary ban. One club said that it had a policy whereby if cleaners found one section of the ground where there were loads of cigarette stubs, then stickers would be placed on

seats in that area, alerting fans to the legal implications and explaining how in future games, that particular section would be closely monitored by CCTV cameras and if anyone was spotted smoking, they would be ejected. Some stewards, in an effort to stop people smoking, were being abused by fans. Toilets were a particularly bad area for smokers. Some clubs said this was part of the ground where they tried their hardest to prevent smoking due to children using the toilets. Some clubs felt the law was vague, especially in areas where they had open terraces. They felt that a law should be passed banning all smoking inside the ground perimeter not just in the main buildings. Some clubs allowed smoking in the car park, but others didn't, therefore causing confusion amongst the fans.

Many of the lower league clubs were deeply upset by the **disparity of the distribution of money in football**. They see the amount of money going into the Premier League and feel that very little is trickling down to the Football League clubs. They see it as a huge problem and that dozens of clubs were merely surviving. All clubs were an asset to their community and it is wrong that they should be put in danger by the lack of distribution.

Some clubs have a system whereby fans can **text the club** on the day of the game to report problems, e.g. vandalism, racism, abuse etc. This meant that fans didn't need to approach stewards to report a problem; they can do it via a text on their mobile phone. This seems like a really good idea. The IFC was surprised that all clubs had not put this into action.

Thankfully, from the Commission's point of view, most people were pleased by the contribution made to football by the IFC. The only negative point was surrounding the effectiveness of the IFC. Many attendees wanted the IFC to have more power. They wanted any decisions made by the IFC to be binding. The current position of the IFC means that, even if the Commission resolves a dispute in favour of a fan and recommends some form of redress should be provided by either the club or relevant football authority, the recommendation can be totally ignored. The club (or authority) can accept blame but refuse to do anything about it, as happened in one case.

Some delegates felt that the system of **dealing with complaints** was too slow and over-complicated. They wanted the football authorities removed from the complaints procedure because invariably once the complaint left the club, the process slowed considerably and often exacerbated the problem. Although there was a timescale when the football authorities were supposed to respond, it rarely happened apart from them acknowledging receipt of the problem. The IFC concurs with this because on several occasions, fans contacted the IFC in an extremely agitated state. In almost every case, it was as a result of a communication failure or breakdown. As with most grievances, if nothing is done, the whole event can fester and balloon into a major problem where both sides become entrenched. What started off as a minor grumble becomes a huge issue with invariably a point of principle at stake.

The IFC hopes that the administrative arrangements introduced with the Independent Football Ombudsman, streamline and make more effective the complaints process.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the Football Forums proved to be one the IFC's most useful tools in formulating its Annual Report and coming up with ideas and suggestions for the football authorities. On many occasions, the IFC was made aware of things that had not previously been obvious. The clubs and football-related agencies, felt comfortable speaking about problems within their own organisations. They also enjoyed discussing problems and concerns with other people who were frequently being faced with the same issues. The clubs were particularly keen to highlight concerns regarding the three authorities. Consequently, with this point in mind, the IFC decided the 2007 forums would be to the exclusion of the football authorities. All three IFC Football Forums were hugely successful and many of the points to be found in this Report are as a result of those meetings. A high percentage of people from the 2006 Forums attended for the second time, presumably because they had found the first sessions to be useful. Delegates also appreciated an opportunity to speak about football matters, many of which were common to delegates from other clubs and organisations, without any 'official line' from the football authorities. They also appreciated the fact that the meetings were totally anonymous.

In a very short space of time, new and valuable information was gleaned from the people who frequently have to put into practice what the football authorities have decided. The football authorities make decisions about football, but it is generally the clubs who have to make it work and, crucially, face the fans if it goes wrong. A typical comment was along the lines of:-

"...it doesn't matter whose fault it was or who came up with the decision to do something, the fan will always blame the club".



The IFC recommends that an independent body is appointed to pick up the mantle of Football Forums. The information gleaned from these meetings proved to be extremely useful to the IFC and frequently alerted the Commission to problems and issues within football that may not have seemed immediately obvious. As is the nature of many people, they are unwilling to criticise someone if that person or organisation is present. However, if they know that their voice will be heard anonymously, yet have their views directed to the relevant football authority, there is more chance of problems being raised and, importantly, resolved before they escalate. It would be a shame to cut off this valuable flow of information.

The Complaints Process

In 2007, 21 issues were raised with the IFC but none developed into an official complaint. However, several complaints that had been carried over from 2006 were investigated and adjudicated upon in 2007.

Ticketing again accounted for most of the 21 issues. This is a familiar theme in the IFC Annual Report and suggests that clubs and the authorities still need to look at this matter. Obviously, it is the subject that will directly affect any supporter who attends games and is therefore not surprisingly top of the list of moans. A full list of issues can be found in Annex B and a resumé of complaints adjudicated by the IFC can be found in Annex C.


It should also be added that the IFC was contacted by many Leeds United fans concerned about the 15-point deduction imposed by the Football League prior to the start of the 2007-08 season. As it became clear that legal action was about to take place, the Commission was prohibited from getting involved.

In the IFC's role of being last port of call for anyone with a complaint against either a football club or football authority, the IFC encountered what seems to be a slowing of the pace in which the Football League dealt with complaints. It seemed to be an easy solution to leave things and then pass them on to the IFC. This delay would no doubt have been a huge frustration to the person who made the complaint in the first place. All of this can lead to the problem escalating.

Consequently, the IFC recommends that the resolution of complaints needs to be quickened. The IFC managed to resolve one case within 24 hours via a series of telephone calls.

Another grumble seems to be that supporters, or customers, can often struggle to find someone to whom to complain. This is less of a problem at bigger clubs where there is generally one individual who deals with queries.

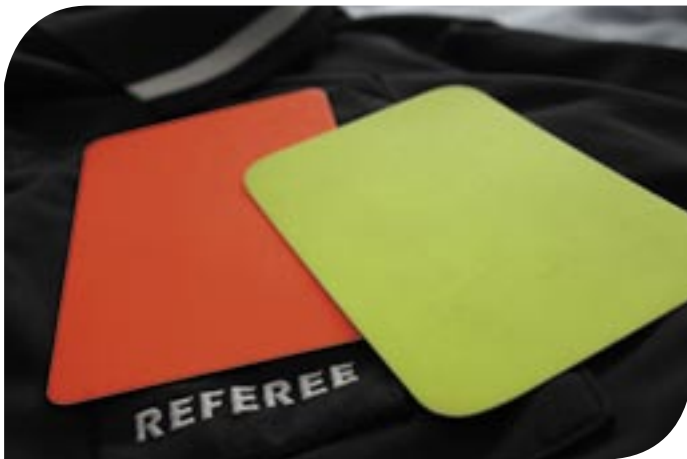
Smaller clubs may struggle, but the IFC recommends that all clubs have a nominated complaints contact who should ensure that all complaints are dealt with appropriately and in accordance with the Club Charter. This should help minimise any delays in the system of dealing with complaints, and prevent their escalation.



The IFC Report into Child Protection in Football and the recommendations contained therein had far reaching influence and showed precisely what the IFC could achieve. It typified precisely why the IFC was in existence. The Commission brought to everyone's attention something that needed to be addressed. Without the prompting of the IFC in this sensitive area, it is doubtful whether such progress would have been made.

9. Summary of IFC Recommendations 2002 – 2006

In every Annual or Special Report published by the Independent Football Commission (IFC) since 2002, there have always been several recommendations. In the majority of cases, these recommendations have been recognised by the football authorities and acted upon. As this will be the final IFC Annual Report, it seems pertinent that we should look back over the years at some of the main recommendations and see what has happened since then. The 2006 recommendations and corresponding responses from the football authorities are reported in full at the end of this chapter in the normal tabulated form.



As with all of the IFC Annual Reports, there are several main chapters looking at key topics such as Charters, Community, Finance and Governance, Issues and Complaints. In later years Child Protection, and Diversity and Equality were added. There were also Special Reports looking into the Euro 2004 tournament, Child Protection in Football, and the Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions 2005-06. There were also special chapters included in various Annual Reports looking at such things as ticketing and merchandising.

The first publication by the IFC was their **2002 Annual Report**. In the section looking at Issues and Complaints, the main recommendation by the IFC was to speed-up the period of time between clubs or football authorities receiving a complaint, and handing it on to the IFC. The governing bodies accepted this with some reservations.

When it came to Charters, the IFC asked the governing bodies to introduce new ideas and initiatives that would help promote Charters amongst the supporters. There was also a suggestion that there should be some clearly measurable targets for every year, with a

report looking at how things had progressed in the previous year. The Premier League wasn't keen, but the Football League embraced it and required all clubs to come up with three promises in their Charter Report every year. This continues nowadays and is extremely useful. The IFC also wanted independent validation of specific charter issues. This met resistance, but eventually went ahead.

In the area of Finance and Governance, the IFC originally reported on the activity of the FA's Financial Advisory Unit (FAU), but it was later decided that this was impractical. There was little point in the IFC effectively duplicating work undertaken by the FAU. Consequently, it was decided that in the future, the IFC would speak to the FAU in the weeks leading up to the publication of their Annual Report and merely include a brief summary of the FAU's work.

The **2003 IFC Annual Report** was a much larger publication than the 2002 edition because the Commission could now reflect on changes from the previous year. One of the biggest chapters was Finance and Governance. There were recommendations that the Football Association (FA) should become a central advisory unit to help clubs in need of financial advice; that standard requirements for all clubs should include a demonstration of security of tenure over their grounds and that they should have annual budget and business plans. There was also a desire to ensure that clubs could meet their costs, plus ensure that Finance Directors and Accountants at all clubs should periodically meet to discuss and exchange ideas. All of these points were accepted.

One of the main recommendations was that a Fit and Proper Person Test should be introduced for directors of football clubs. This was agreed and now forms a major part of the football landscape. Another agreement came with the recommendation that the Football League should formulate new rules to set standards for financial forecasting and include penalties for non-compliance within a reasonable time scale.

2003 saw Racism appear for the first time as a separate chapter in an IFC Annual Report. There was a feeling that things were moving slowly in this area. The IFC recommended that the football authorities should come up with targets for racial integration strategies. There was a need for education to be spread across all of football to encourage diversity awareness. All of this was agreed and led to the setting up of the hugely influential AART that now meets on a regular basis to advise everyone within football. The three football authorities plus relevant bodies and agencies exchange ideas and devise new initiatives in what has become an extremely effective forum.

Community also appeared as a chapter for the first time. The IFC recommended increased promotion of community work by the football authorities. This was agreed and became something of a regular feature of the IFC Reports. It shows that, despite a lot of good work going on at the clubs and the football authorities, it is extremely difficult to 'sell' a good news story.

Facilities for the Disabled made an appearance in 2003. This topic was eventually brought together with Racism under the banner of Diversity and Equality. The IFC recommended closer liaison with the disabled supporters groups and try to promote the work they do. There was also a desire that certain details should be included in club and football authority Charters; for example, ensuring that home and away disabled supporters were situated with the appropriate fans and that there should be a named contact for every club to assist disabled fans. These points were accepted by the authorities, although it took at least two more years before any noticeable change took place. However, it should be added that this was not purely down to the fault of the football authorities. There were also a few sticking points within the supporters' organisations.

Charters were still proving to be rather awkward, mainly because it was difficult to pin-point precisely what everyone thought they should do. The IFC was clear in its intentions, saying that Charters should make definite commitments to supporters on a rolling basis and ensure that the commitments had a measurable timescale. There was also a desire to make the Charters more readable. The authorities accepted this and promised to readdress the situation. Although it took several years, Charters have evolved into extremely useful documents that can be valued by the football authorities, the clubs and by the fans, should they ever need them.

One chapter within the IFC 2003 Annual Report looked at Match Re-scheduling. This is being revisited for the 2007 Annual Report and is discussed in Chapter 2.

The **IFC 2004 Annual Report** included a report on Euro 2004. Many of the recommendations surrounded the success of the operation in Portugal, stating that it would be advisable to continue the good work with other authorities and supporter groups in the build-up to the World Cup in 2006. There was broad agreement from everyone. There was also a recommendation to widen the official England supporters group, 'englandfans'. This took place, and indeed it still taking place although such has been the success of the initiative that it is proving difficult to change the mix of people included on the list. However, this will gradually occur during forthcoming seasons.

There was also the first hint that the future of the IFC needed to be sorted out. The general response was that everything should wait until Lord Burns had completed his review of the FA. There was also a recommendation from the IFC that it should be allowed to expand its remit to include the County FAs (CFA's) and receive appropriate funding to allow this work. This was largely rebuffed.

There was further refining of the Charter process. By now, there was definite progress on this matter and the Charters were taking shape. There was also a recommendation that the football authorities should give greater publicity to the complaints process whereby fans can complain first of all to the club, then to the appropriate football authority and, finally, to the IFC. There was broad agreement with this point. Over subsequent years, although rather patchy, more and more coverage did start to appear in Charter information, within matchday programmes and on websites.

2005 saw the most important of the IFC's Special Reports. It covered **Child Protection in Football**. The biggest response came from the FA. This is to be expected bearing in mind the number of clubs and leagues that come under their wing. They agreed to look at funding Child Protection Officers at each of the CFA's and ensure that contact details were provided for these people. This eventually came into practice and has proved to be hugely successful with many of the officers operating in a proactive rather than reactive manner. The aim is to identify and solve problems before they arise.

There was a recommendation to provide guidelines on the use of photographic images, as well as ensuring that other groups within football such as club scouts, stewards, people dealing with club mascots, ball boys and ball girls etc., would be included in all Child Protection initiatives. This was also implemented to the extent that brochures are now available explaining what is and is not appropriate behaviour. The IFC wanted to see the football authorities facilitate a system whereby those people who had been CRB checked by one football authority, would be able to move to another football authority or role within football without the need to go through the CRB checks again. It seemed to be something that each football authority supported but, as is often the case within football, putting it into practice was rather more awkward.

Due to the amount of potential work involved in implementing all of the Child Protection measures, the IFC recommended that all three football authorities should work closely together. In the main, this has been the case. The FA is largely seen as the leader in this area, but both the Premier League and Football League have acted swiftly.

The main result from this IFC report was that the three football authorities set up the Child Protection Forum, convened by the FA. This met on a regular basis and included other interested parties. It has been of huge benefit to everyone involved and continues to evolve.

Whereas the FA gave individual responses to most of the IFC Child Protection recommendations (there were 23 of them), both the Premier League and Football League avoided going through everything one by one. The Football League, who recently appointed its first Child Protection Advisor at its headquarters in Preston, placed a lot of the emphasis on the shoulders of Customer Service Departments and confirmed an intention to discuss all Child Protection issues at various Customer Service Seminars. The IFC was invited to attend. Since the publication of the IFC report, the Football League has made huge strides forward in the area of Child Protection. As can be read in various chapters within this current Report, this is proving to be a huge asset both for the League itself and to its 72 clubs.

The Premier League gave its response in the form of a statement from their Board, giving support for many of the recommendations and in particular promoting the Child Protection Forum. The Premier League had the advantage of having Child Protection Officers already in situ and liaising with the FA, so they could respond more quickly to the recommendations than the Football League. They also had the resources to pump funds into additional training. However, as with the Football League and the FA, the issue of Child Protection has moved to the top of the agenda. It is taken very seriously at all three football authorities. The work that has been undertaken within football can only be described as groundbreaking and is frequently used outside of the game as an example of what can and should be done.

Overall, the IFC Report into Child Protection in Football and the recommendations contained therein had far reaching influence and showed precisely what the IFC could achieve. It typified precisely why the IFC was in existence. The Commission brought to everyone's attention something that needed to be addressed. Without the prompting of the IFC in this sensitive area, such progress may not have been made.



The IFC's **2005 Annual Report** prompted the FA to increase the speed of the implementation of the Burns Review. It also encouraged clubs and the football authorities to aim for a greater ethnic mix in terms of supporters at football matches. The latter point has proved a particularly difficult 'nut to crack' and is still a cause for concern. There was a call for the football authorities and the clubs to work more closely in terms of their community programmes. Everyone seemed to be working on their own, in isolation, rather than working for the common good. This eventually culminated in the closure of Football in the Community. It remains to be seen whether football will regret this move.

2006 saw the publication of another special IFC Report, this time looking at the **Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions**. The IFC followed English clubs in UEFA Cup and Champions League competitions on the continent, and studied the experience of the fans. The IFC wanted to see whether English clubs and the governing authorities were doing everything possible to ensure that whenever a fan decided to follow his or her team across The Channel, they would be in safe hands and would expect the same standards of safety and security that they experience at home. IFC officials travelled with the fans via various routes; on official travel club flights, on unofficial flights, and independently. The IFC found several examples of UEFA Regulations not being followed and lapses in safety arrangements. The IFC made 17 recommendations. They witnessed scenes of crushing, dangerous stadia, the need for UK police to be recognised, and talked with fans who had witnessed multiple stabbings.

The overwhelming fact that did come from the report was that English clubs go above and beyond what they are required to do in order to assist their supporters. The English football authorities are also well organised in this area. The main recommendations were aimed at UEFA but their only response was less than helpful and typified their attitude towards the IFC throughout. It is disappointing that the sort of problems identified by the IFC continue to occur in matches abroad.

And finally, onto the IFC's **2006 Annual Report**. The list of recommendations given in that Report, plus the appropriate responses from the FA, Premier League and the Football League are given opposite in the traditional tabulated form.

Implementation of Recommendations from the IFC 2006 Annual Report

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Recommendation

The IFC recommends that the FA make progress on the Burns reforms as quickly as possible.

Action

FA Response: On 29 May 2007 The Football Association Shareholders AGM voted in favour of a reformed structure for The FA and ushered in a new era for the organisation. The shareholders voted by 718 votes in favour to 197 against to implement the changes emanating from the report of Lord Burns. This represents 78.5% of the total 915 votes cast, passing the necessary 75% threshold.

The vote marks the successful end of the Structural Review process designed to make The FA a modern, effective governing body fully equipped to lead, develop and govern the modern game.

Among the major changes to The FA's structure are:

- Two independent members of The FA Board (Chief Executive and Independent Chairman) alongside five representatives from the professional game and five from the national game (down from six each)
- An expanded FA Council to better reflect the diversity of the game, with added representation for players, managers, referees, women's football, ethnic minorities and disability football, supporters, etc.
- A re-organisation of The FA's committee structure to streamline decision-making and better define areas of authority
- A semi-autonomous Football Regulatory Authority to govern the game, reporting to its own Board
- A new Funding Formula dividing The FA's profits 50:50 between the professional and national games.

The new Board, Council and Committees structure will come into effect following the FA Summer Meeting on 30 June 2007. Membership of these bodies, as well as the Football Regulatory Authority, will be determined at this meeting.

The process for recruiting the Independent Chairman will also start this summer, with the new Chairman to take office in summer 2008.

Football League Response: Noted

Implementation of Recommendations from the IFC 2006 Annual Report

DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Recommendation

The IFC recommends that the FA tries to give additional support, advice and resources to County FA's to let them take ownership of local issues in their area and promote equality at grassroots level.

Action

FA Response: *The FA welcomes this backing for The FA's equality work and the recognition that County FAs have a significant role to play. We have also recently created a new post of Equality Co-ordinator to work with County FAs in exactly this role. In addition we have increased our funding to 'Kick it Out' so that increased support can be given to County FAs through their staff. They have now appointed a member of staff to work closely with our Equality Co-ordinator with a focus on County FAs.*

We have also developed a training programme which is now available to County FAs to assist them with their equality work. The programme includes generic equality training as well as specific training on handling discrimination cases and racism allegations. We have secured funding from Sport England to employ an office to focus on disability football with a main emphasis on supporting the County FAs with their disability programme.

The new five-year National Game Strategy is an opportunity to ensure that County FAs are resourced to deliver strategic objectives as we will deliver funding direct to Counties against agreed targets. Central to this strategy is the workforce and we are looking at ways in which we can increase the resource for football development and refereeing development staff in the counties.

In general, demand on the FA's finite resources always exceeds supply, and an increase in one area may have to be balanced by savings elsewhere, but of course we will fully consider this recommendation.

Football League Response: *Noted*

The IFC recommends that the Football League initiates a dissemination programme to ensure that all clubs are aware of initiatives in the area of equal opportunities and anti-racism.

FA Response: *We would refer the IFC to our colleagues at the Football League.*

Football League Response: *The Football League agrees with this recommendation. For the past two years The League has been working to a Diversity Action Plan agreed with The Commission for Racial Equality. A Diversity Advocacy Group with representatives from clubs has been established to lead the process of collating best practice and disseminating practical guidance of all clubs.*

The IFC recommends that the FA, Premier League and Football League freely circulate to all other interested parties, any research findings and relevant conclusions.

FA Response: *The recommendation is noted. We will do so where it is appropriate.*

Premier League Response: *The Premier League is happy to circulate conclusions and recommendations from research in this area. Findings are regularly shared at the AART meetings.*

Football League Response: *The Football League supports the recommendation to circulate research and relevant conclusions to interested parties. The League plays an active part of the All Agency Review Team and will continue to use this forum for the exchange of knowledge and information.*

DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Recommendation	Action
<p>The IFC recommends that the authorities look into having some sort of clearing house system to look into requests for sponsorships, support etc, whereby they can meet on a regular basis to discuss all of these requests as a whole, not just individually.</p>	<p>FA Response: There is certainly the need for some kind of filter system, giving the number of agencies and groups now approaching all three football authorities for funding or assistance on all sorts of subjects. We will raise the recommendation with the other football authorities through the All Agency Review Team (AART) meetings.</p> <p>Premier League Response: The football authorities meet regularly to discuss areas of common interest and have agreed to inform each other of major sponsorship and support agreements for charities.</p> <p>Football League Response: The Football League meets informally with the other football authorities to ensure that there is a consistent approach to working with external bodies and agencies and is open to holding discussions with the other authorities on how to develop this recommendation. The Football League is a listening organisation and within the terms of our Customer Charter, if approached by individuals or organisations, we will respond accordingly.</p>

COMMUNITY

Recommendation	Action
<p>The IFC recommends that the Premier League gives more coverage to the good Community work that is being done and where it is being done.</p>	<p>FA Response: We would refer the IFC to our colleagues at the Premier League.</p> <p>Premier League Response: The Premier League is launching a major new charitable initiative in August 2007 and expects media coverage of this area of work to be significantly enhanced. A comprehensive 72 page report will be published to coincide with the launch.</p> <p>Football League Response: Noted</p>
<p>The IFC recommends that research is done by the authorities to see how more disabled fans, both individuals and groups, can get their point across to the people who make decisions on how the game is run and how stadia are built.</p>	<p>FA Response: We acknowledge that the group which currently purports to represent disabled fans (NADS) has a very small membership and is therefore not very representative. We have already raised this through the AART and The FA will lead on establishing something which is more representative of disabled fans. We will look to establish an advisory group similar to the Race Equality and Disability Advisory Groups for fans.</p> <p>In addition, fans with disabilities are already able to make their point to The FA via the same channels as any other fans and we have surveys of disabled 'englandfans' on a regular basis. TheFA.com is set up to cater for those with visual impairment, for example, and some FA publications are produced in audio format.</p> <p>We are also confident that Wembley Stadium has the best facilities of any stadium in the world for fans with disabilities.</p> <p>Premier League Response: The Premier League, Football League and FA have agreed that the FA will establish a new forum for consultation with disabled supporters. The forum will have a broader membership and be representative of more disabilities.</p> <p>Football League Response: The Football League is always looking to improve the way in which it liaises with supporters. The Football League welcomes the recommendation and plans to extend its interaction with disabled supporters by engaging with disabled supporters at different clubs, in addition to representative bodies.</p>

Implementation of Recommendations from the IFC 2006 Annual Report

COMMUNITY

Recommendation

The IFC recommends that the FA adjusts their diversity figures to make the situation more realistic and therefore avoid building up any false hopes.

Action

FA Response: The FA acknowledges that our targets for 'englandfans' diversity in particular have been very optimistic and we are taking steps to make them more realistic in 2007. We have to do that while still challenging ourselves in this important area.

Football League Response: Noted

The IFC recommends that a review is taken of all FA activity outside of the England team set-up.

FA Response: We welcome praise for the FA's wide range of activities and efforts contained in the report, and we accept this as a constructive criticism, as intended. It can be argued that the FA has spread itself 'too thinly' in recent years, but this is borne of a desire to do the best for English football at both elite and grassroots level.

The FA Chief Executive had already instigated strategic review of activities which will be completed in the second half of 2007. Following the recent approval of the FA Structural Review we can now concentrate on strategic matters and a new FA strategy should tackle this recommendation.

Football League Response: Noted

The IFC recommends that the Football League ensures that their disability guide is updated on a regular basis and, if possible, added to with extra information.

FA Response: We would refer the IFC to our colleagues at the Football League.

Football League Response: The guide is reviewed every season to ensure that information is up to date, accurate and relevant. An up-to-date version is published each year to each club and placed on The League's website.

CHILD PROTECTION

Recommendation

The IFC recommends that clear guidelines are considered regarding the age at which children must be accompanied to football matches; what the adult-child ratio should be; whether a mixed group of children need a mixed ratio of supervisors etc.

Action

FA Response: The FA recognises that stadia are used not just for football matches but for a variety of events, such as concerts and community days. Any guidance developed is likely to raise questions about the use of stadia for any type of event. The notion of suggesting criteria for those under-18 years of age is therefore a complex one, and needs to be guided by the Child Protection Forum.

Premier League Response: The Premier League will work with the other football authorities to establish the value of guidelines in this area. Internal discussions are already underway.

Football League Response: The Football League is in the process of appointing a Child Protection Advisor. These issues will come under this individual's remit who will provide further advice and guidance to clubs. This issue will be raised with clubs via Customer Services Seminars to ascertain existing best practice.

CHILD PROTECTION

Recommendation	Action
The IFC recommends that the sharing of information should start now and the portability of CRB disclosures should be agreed upon as quickly as possible.	<p>FA Response: The FA takes seriously its role in administering CRB Disclosures and recognises the complexities and potential risks in establishing portability. Indeed the CRB itself does not advocate for portability. The FA and Premier League are progressing work in this area and once we are satisfied the necessary safeguards are in place, we will pilot a joint portability agreement in due course.</p> <p>Premier League Response: The Premier League has always supported the portability of CRB disclosures and is pleased that the IFC is backing this. We are now working with the FA on producing a sharing agreement and are hopeful that this will be in place soon.</p> <p>Football League Response: The Football League supports this recommendation and both the League and its clubs utilise The FA CRB Unit which is currently the most appropriate option regarding portability.</p>
The IFC recommends that the format of the Child Protection Forum is reviewed.	<p>FA Response: The Child Protection Forum has now been operating for 12 months and a review could indeed therefore be timely. This and the other relevant IFC recommendations will be put to the Forum for consideration.</p> <p>We would like to ask for some clarification of Chapter 9 of the IFC report, which states that “...the IFC will look back at the 30 months since the influential IFC Child Protection Report was published, to study what has happened and what needs to be done”. It would be helpful for us to know how the IFC plans to do this; whether in a new stand-alone update report or as part of next year’s main work plan, so that we can ourselves plan for that review.</p> <p>Premier League Response: The Premier League welcomes this recommendation.</p> <p>Football League Response: The Football League is happy to review the format of the Child Protection Forum in co-operation with the other members.</p>
The IFC recommends that the possibility of an independent chairperson being appointed to the Child Protection Forum should be explored.	<p>FA Response: The FA disagrees with this recommendation. The Forum meets and discusses issues on an equal basis and already involves independent views expressed through the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU).</p> <p>Premier League Response: The Child Protection Forum is a three party group consisting of the Premier League, Football League and Football Association and as with other such groups, the Premier League does not believe that an independent chair is necessary or appropriate.</p> <p>Football League Response: The Football League is open to considering this recommendation in conjunction with the other members of the Child Protection Forum.</p>

Implementation of Recommendations from the IFC 2006 Annual Report

CHILD PROTECTION

Recommendation

The IFC recommends that, through the Child Protection Forum, the authorities get together and produce one set of guidelines on the use of images that would be applicable to all levels of football.

Action

FA Response: The FA disagrees with this recommendation. The IFC report accurately describes the collaborative process which has resulted in The FA's set of guidelines for grassroots football, the vast majority of which is played on public land, and the Premier League's guidelines for use in professional football. Both sets of guidelines are based on the same core principles drawn up by The FA. The Premier League then worked with practitioners in the clubs and simply tailored the language and tone to work for the professional club setting, such as where stadia are owned by the clubs and therefore constitute private land. The football authorities believe that this is what is required – core guidance which has been quite rightly tailored for the different, specific contexts.

Premier League Response: This set of guidelines has been produced for all the authorities by the Premier League.

Football League Response: The Football League agrees with the recommendation. We believe that clubs will benefit from having guidelines on the use of images and that these should be available for all levels of football. This issue will come under the remit of The League's Child Protection Advisor.

The IFC recommends that the FA ensures it employs appropriately trained people to carry out the role of CFA Child Protection Officer and does not continue to rely on individuals giving their time freely to this important area of work.

FA Response: The FA recognises the widespread dedication and commitment of the volunteer workforce. In March 2007 The FA commissioned an independent review of the current CFA Child Protection Officer infrastructure. The findings from this review are still being considered, as the new National Game Strategy is being developed, to ascertain what is in the best interests of safeguarding children and young people involved in grassroots football. We will update the IFC in due course.

Football League Response: Noted

CHARTERS

Recommendation

The IFC recommends that the scope of fans surveys should be broadened.

Action

FA Response: Although the recommendation is primarily aimed at the fan surveys conducted by the professional leagues, The FA welcomes the acknowledgement in the report for our efforts to communicate with fans. Praise for the fans forums and our charter document is very welcome, and we will try to continue to improve even further. We should always be interested to hear more from the fans.

Premier League Response: More research has already been carried out into fans not renewing season tickets, those who only attended a few matches, those who only watch on television etc. This research is carried out as a management tool rather than a public consultation exercise.

Football League Response: The Football League regularly reviews the way in which it communicates with supporters and we intend to continue to conduct surveys of supporters. Our recent Fans Survey has over 44,000 responses, which makes it the largest ever survey conducted. Only 63% of those who responded claimed to regularly attend football matches.

AGENTS

Recommendation

The IFC recommends that the Premier League look again at the point raised in the Stevens Report that the PFA should be removed from getting involved in organising transfers.

Action

FA Response: The FA welcomes the IFC report in relation to Agents. The FA has and will continue to work proactively to ensure that a meaningful and effective set of regulations governing agents and the transfer market are introduced across the English game.

Unfortunately in the last 6 months The FA has been met by several complaints and the threat of legal challenges to the regulations by agents, despite the fact that there was a long consultation process, which importantly included agents, and which achieved widespread consensus in the game regarding the scope of the regulations. This now means that The FA's regulations will come into force on 1 September 2007 following a further round of consultation. However, The FA does not intend to abandon any of the principles that have been established over the course of the last 18 months.

Careful thought has been given to the PFA's role in transfers following consultation with stakeholders. It is recognised that the PFA may have an important role in transfers as the players' union, although some concerns have been raised about whether it is appropriate for the PFA to act as agents. On balance, it has been decided to allow the PFA to remain involved on the current basis. However, as with all the regulations, this area will be reviewed and, if necessary, further consideration will be given to whether it would be preferable for the PFA's role to change in any way. This could include whether they should cease acting as an agent but have a greater role in assisting with the monitoring of transfer activity.

The FA would stress that it recognises the role of agents in modern football and is not on a "witch-hunt" as some have suggested. In fact The FA is seeking to create a fair balance in the transfer market and ensure a robust and proportionate framework of regulation in this difficult area that will safeguard all of the parties involved, protect the integrity and image of the sport and thereby provide significant benefits to all stakeholders, whether clubs, players or agents. This must be supported not only by effective enforcements but also education so that all parties recognise the important role and responsibilities they have in bringing about required changes in this area and ensuring the probity of the sport.

Premier League Response: At the Shareholders meeting held on 8 February 2007 a paper was presented to the Clubs listing all of the Stevens recommendations and indicating how the recommendations were to be treated.

In relation to the Stevens recommendation that "the PFA should not act as agents to players in respect of transfers" the paper indicated that the Premier League did not agree with the recommendation and that the PFA should continue to act as agents for players as well as providing advice for young players.

This remains our view and the PFA has been made aware of our position.

Football League Response: Noted

The IFC recommends that the dual representation regulation should be strictly enforced.

FA Response: The first thing is to ensure that the regulation is put in place to prohibit dual representation. The FA has worked hard to get stakeholders to accept that such a regulation is necessary, although some agents continue to resist some aspects of the proposed regulations in this area. As recently announced, The FA continues to liaise and consult with those agents as well as other stakeholders and intends to put in place the new regulations with effect from 1 September 2007.

The FA will enforce the regulation by investigating any allegations of a breach of the new dual representation provisions and will take appropriate action in relation to any such breaches. The other important consideration is to educate the players, clubs and agents to ensure that they understand the new regulations and avoid acting in a manner contrary to them.

Football League Response: The Football League has led the way on this issue and we introduced this principle into our regulations in June 2006. The League continues to enforce the prohibition of dual representation and, indeed, we are the only governing body currently able to do so.

Implementation of Recommendations from the IFC 2006 Annual Report

THE EXPERIENCE OF ENGLISH SUPPORTERS IN EUROPEAN CLUB COMPETITIONS

Recommendation

The IFC recommends that UEFA holds meetings on a yearly basis to update all of the senior people within national FAs of current trends and new ideas regarding safety and security.

Action

FA Response: *The events of this season already suggest that some action of reform by UEFA is needed and we are assisting with the inquiry following these recent events. The FA already communicates regularly with travelling clubs and their fans, including sending a crowd control expert to every away match. Any actions which we take have to be practical, as well as good in theory. Where the domestic and UEFA competition fixture list allows, The FA will endeavour to arrange a meeting of all clubs competing in Europe in the 2007/08 season either before or at the beginning of the new season.*

In the 2006/07 season UEFA initiated an education programme on stadia safety and security for all the member national associations of UEFA, with the key safety and security officers from each association attending a three day course at UEFA headquarters. The FA has been involved in assisting UEFA with both the development and delivery of this education programme. We understand that it is UEFA's intention to invite all national associations to further such meetings on safety and security on a regular basis.

Football League Response: *Noted*

The background of the page is a solid green color. On the left side, there is a large, semi-transparent image of a soccer ball. The ball is white with black pentagonal patches. It appears to be in motion, as indicated by the blurred edges and the presence of several bright, curved green lines that sweep around it. To the right of the ball, there are more abstract green lines and shapes, some resembling a stylized 'X' or a series of parallel lines, all in various shades of green.

Annexes

ANNEX A

Meetings, Visits and Consultations and Matches Attended in 2007

MEETINGS ATTENDED BY THE IFC

All Agency Review Team (AART)	Future of Football Conference, The
Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)	GFSN/FA Liaison Officer Briefing Day at Charlton Athletic Football Club
Association of Wheelchair and Ambulant Disabled Supporters (AWADS)	
Birkbeck College	Grant Thornton
BSkyB	Hextails Solicitors
Clintons Breakfast Seminar - Agents, What Are They For?	Huddersfield Town Football Club
Customer Service Network	Institute of Directors
Deloitte	Institute of Directors Course – Simon Bull
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	Institute of Directors Sports Dinner
Disabled Group Meeting, Manchester	Kick it Out
FA Agents Conference	London Sports Forum at Leyton Orient Football Club
FA Gay Football Supporters' Network	Mail on Sunday
FA Financial Advisory Committee	Mel Stein, Association of Football Agents
FIFA	National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS)
Football Association	Newcastle United Football Club Supporters Panel
Football in the Community	NSPCC Child Protection Conference
Football League	Peterborough United Football Club
Football League Child Protection Workshop at Blackpool Football Club	Pannell Kerr Forster (PKF LLP UK Ltd)
	Premier League
Football League Child Protection Workshop at Wycombe Wanderers Football Club	Professional Footballers' Association (PFA)
	RSMi, France
Football League Customer Services Seminar at Doncaster Rovers Football Club	Soccerex Conference, Johannesburg
	Soccerex Conference, London
Football League Customer Services Seminar, Football League Offices	Southend United Football Club
Football League Customer Services Seminar at West Bromwich Albion Football Club	Supporters Direct
	Supporters Direct Annual Conference
Football League Customer Services Seminar at Wycombe Wanderers Football Club	Tottenham Hotspur Football Club
	Watford Football Club
Football League Leadership and Diversity Awards	Women in Sport Conference
Football Safety Officers Association (FSOA)	
Football Supporters Federation (FSF)	
Football Supporters Federation Fans Parliament	

ANNEX A

Meetings, Visits and Consultations and Matches Attended in 2007

FOOTBALL MATCHES ATTENDED BY THE IFC DURING 2007

2006-07 Season:

Arsenal v Chelsea (Carling Cup Final)
 Barnsley v Sunderland (Championship)
 Chelsea v Manchester United (FA Cup Final)
 Darlington v Accrington Stanley (League 2)
 Derby County v West Bromwich Albion (Championship Play-Off Final)
 England v Brazil (International Friendly)
 England v Spain (Euro 2008 Qualifier)
 Liverpool v Arsenal (FA Cup Fifth Round)
 Middlesbrough v Manchester United (FA Cup Sixth Round)
 Southend United v Queens Park Rangers (Championship)
 Stoke City v Crystal Palace (Championship)

2007-08 Season:

Blackburn Rovers v Liverpool (Premier League)
 Bolton Wanderers v Middlesbrough (Premier League)
 Bristol City v Southampton (Championship)
 Bristol Rovers v Leeds United (League 1)
 Cheltenham Town v Luton Town (League 1)

Coventry City v Bristol City (Championship)
 Crystal Palace v Plymouth Argyle (Championship)
 Crystal Palace v Sheffield Wednesday (Championship)
 Doncaster Rovers v Leyton Orient (League 1)
 England v Croatia (Euro 2008 Qualifier)
 England v Estonia (Euro 2008 Qualifier)
 England v Germany (International Friendly)
 England v Ghana (International U18 Friendly)
 Leeds United v Southend United (League 1)
 Leicester City v Stoke City (Championship)
 Luton Town v Everton (Carling Cup Fourth Round)
 Manchester United v Middlesbrough (Premier League)
 Nottingham Forest v Hartlepool United (League 1)
 Peterborough United v West Bromwich Albion (Carling Cup Third Round)
 Plymouth Argyle v Sheffield Wednesday (Championship)
 Walsall v Leeds United (League 1)
 West Bromwich Albion v Sheffield Wednesday (Championship)
 West Ham United v Middlesbrough (Premier League)
 Wigan Athletic v Middlesbrough (Premier League)

CLUBS AND ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED AT THE IFC FOOTBALL FORUMS HELD IN SEPTEMBER 2007

AFC Bournemouth
 Aston Villa Football Club
 Birmingham City Football Club
 Bristol City Football Club
 Burnley Football Club
 Coventry City Football Club
 Doncaster Rovers Football Club
 Football Safety Officers Association (FSOA)
 Football Supporters Federation (FSF)
 Huddersfield Town Football Club
 Leeds United Football Club
 Macclesfield Town Football Club
 Manchester City Football Club
 Millwall Football Club
 National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS)

Newcastle United Football Club
 Northampton Town Football Club
 Plymouth Argyle Football Club
 Port Vale Football Club
 Professional Footballers' Association (PFA)
 Reading Football Club
 Rotherham United Football Club
 Sheffield United Football Club
 Southend United Football Club
 Tottenham Hotspur Football Club
 Tranmere Rovers Football Club
 Walsall Football Club
 West Bromwich Albion Football Club
 West Ham United Football Club
 Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club

ANNEX B

Issues Raised with the IFC during 2007

One of the key functions of the Independent Football Commission has been to deal with issues and complaints from supporters. The chart below gives a resume of the 21 issues raised during 2007.

CATEGORY	SUBJECT	GOVERNING BODY
Customer relations	Response by governing body to issue relating to England's performance in the World Cup 2006 (1)	The Football Association
Ticketing	Ticket allocation for 2007 FA Cup Final at Wembley Stadium (2)	The Football Association
	Ticket allocation and prices for 2007 FA Cup Final at Wembley Stadium (5)	The Football Association
	Membership scheme at Arsenal FC (1)	The Premier League
	Ticket allocation for the 2007 Community Shield (1)	The Football Association
	Ticket touting – 2007 Community Shield tickets (1)	The Football Association
	Manchester United Football Club's add-on clause for STH's to signup for automatic cup ticket scheme (1)	The Premier League
	Manchester United Football Club not applying refund for 2007 Community Shield tickets not received (1)	The Premier League
	englandfans members not being given priority to purchase tickets for England U21 match played at Wembley on 24 March 2007 (1)	The Football Association
	Ticketing procedures at Everton Football Club's UEFA Cup match and stewarding on the evening of the game (1)	The Premier League
Safety	Safety at match between Swindon Town v Bristol Rovers (1)	The Football League
Customer relations	Customer service received from Manchester United Football Club ahead of 2007 Community Shield (1)	The Premier League
Other	Smoking in Stadia (1)	The Football League
	Lack of Policing at Stoke City v Hull City match (1)	The Football Club
	Punishment handed to Leeds United Football Club following pitch invasion (1)	The Football League
	Charter Standard Clubs not having all coaches CRB checked (1)	The Football Association
	Provision for Disabled Supporters in UEFA Competitions (1)	UEFA

The Independent Football Commission also received a high number of issues from fans of Leeds United Football Club regarding the 15-point deduction imposed by the Football League prior to the start of the 2007/08 season. It became clear that the club is to take legal action therefore the IFC was unable to become involved in the matter.

ANNEX C

Complaints adjudicated by the IFC during 2007

No new complaints were received by the IFC during the course of 2007. However, five complaints spilled over from 2006. The findings and results are to found below.

COMPLAINT 1

This complaint was lodged by a disabled supporter, who considered he was entitled to a concessionary discount for a seat at Aston Villa Football Club.

The complainant was a season-ticket holder and, as he had not been happy with his seating position at Villa Park during the 2005-6 season, the Club offered him a seat in a different part of the stadium, which he accepted.

For the 2006-07 season, the complainant wanted the same seat, but felt he should pay the concessionary price of £320 instead of £475. The club refused, citing the policy as per their Customer Charter. The seat in question was not in the area designated for disabled supporters, but the complainant felt that as he is 15% disabled, he should receive a concession regardless of where his seat was in the stadium.

The main issues were whether the complainant's circumstances met the Club's criteria for concessions for disabled people, and whether the Club's policy was fair.

The IFC considered that the complainant's circumstances did not meet the Club's criteria for a concessionary seat and also that the Club's policy was indeed, fair and in line with the required standards set out by the Football Association in its guidance to clubs on the practical implications of Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act. Further, the Club's policy had also been approved by the consultant previously employed by the FA Premier League to provide guidance to clubs in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act and other Clubs within the FA Premier League have the same policy.

The complaint was not upheld and the matter concluded.

COMPLAINT 2

The complainant attended the Wolverhampton Wanderers v Ipswich Town game on 8 August 2006. He is an away Season Ticket Holder with Ipswich Town Football Club and complained that his seat had a restricted view because of a barrier adjacent to the exit ramp. His complaint was that this was a restricted view seat which was not marked on the ticket as such and should not have been sold at the same price as other tickets in the same stand. He was dissatisfied with the response of the clubs and authorities.

According to Wolverhampton Wanderers FC, the seat in question in the Jack Harris Stand has been regularly allocated to both home and away supporters over many years; no supporter had previously complained about the sightline. The complainant contended that this was irrelevant, and that he was entitled to a refund on his ticket.

The IFC considered that there were two aspects to the complaint. The first was the substantive issue of whether the degree of restriction of view impaired the complainant's enjoyment of the game and whether as a matter of fact this was a restricted view seat which should have been indicated as such. The second aspect was whether the response of the Club was reasonable in the circumstances.

The IFC visited Wolverhampton Wanderers to tour the ground and inspect the stand in which the relevant seat was located. The IFC noted that the Football Licensing Authority considered that the barrier in question met the requirements of the Green Guide on the Safety of Stadia. The IFC acknowledged that some movement of the head would be required to follow all aspects of goal-mouth incidents at the away end but concluded that the degree of impairment did not merit the designation of this particular seat as a restricted view seat. Wolverhampton Wanderers FC confirmed that the away end of the stadium had not been fully sold-out at the match in question, and that it would have been possible for the complainant to have moved to another seat in the stadium had he so requested.

Although the IFC did not uphold the complaint, Wolverhampton Wanderers offered the complainant two complimentary tickets for any fixture between the clubs next season in recognition of his alleged unsatisfactory experience.

The IFC concluded that the offer of two complimentary tickets was a reasonable and appropriate response to the complaint.

The complaint was not upheld.

COMPLAINT 3

The complainant is a long-standing supporter of Stockport County Football Club. At the Stockport County v Bristol Rovers game in September 2006, an incident occurred where, it was alleged, the complainant grabbed hold of the Club Chairman by the throat and they had to be separated by a third party. The Club had imposed what amounted to a six match ban on the complainant, against which he had appealed. At the appeal hearing, the original decision had been upheld.

The IFC reviewed all the evidence, including local press coverage. The Panel also observed further evidence which related to other extraneous issues not central to the complaint itself.

ANNEX C continued

Complaints adjudicated by the IFC during 2007

As in so many cases, there was a dispute over the facts. The IFC considered that the complainant's behaviour had been unacceptable, certainly meriting disciplinary action, which was regrettable for someone with a long-standing history of support for the Club. The inquiry that followed, including consideration of the incident by witnesses and by the Safety Officer of the Club concluded that a ban of six matches should be imposed.

The complainant's appeal was heard by a Club Director who had not been privy to the original arrangements nor witness to them. That appeal was held with the support of the Club's Managing Director, who had furnished factual evidence to the appeal and had been a witness to the original incident and had also developed the documentation to the appeal. The complainant alleged that the presence of the Club's Managing Director had vitiated the appeal process. The appeal was not successful and the ban was upheld.

The IFC was apprised of an attempt after the six match ban had been completed to bring the two parties together under a more amicable basis. It had been hoped to issue a joint press release to "draw a line" under the unfortunate incident and to restore a harmonious relationship. However, in the event, it was not possible to agree the wording of a statement and no such reconciliation took place.

The IFC was satisfied that the Club had been right to deem the attack by the complainant on the Club Chairman as unacceptable social behaviour that would certainly merit an expulsion or ban. The IFC does not have a view as to whether a six match ban was appropriate; some at the Club thought it was too lenient whereas the complainant thought it was too harsh. This had to be a matter of judgement for the Club and the IFC were satisfied that the Club properly exercised its due powers in the light of their procedures as outlined in the Club Charter.

The matter of the appeal was slightly more complicated. The Club clearly acted properly in identifying an independent Director who had not been involved in the earlier incident to consider the appeal. It was unfortunate that the Club's Managing Director, who had been so closely involved in gathering the evidence and reporting the incident previously, chose to attend the hearing, even though in order to present the factual evidence and to take minutes. While the IFC adjudged that it had not been in line with best practice in complaints resolution to have somebody so closely involved in previous stages present at the appeal, the IFC considered that the comments made by the Director who considered the appeal suggested that he had not been influenced at all by the Managing Director's presence. The appeal had been well considered and the outcome properly reported. The IFC did not consider that the appeal process had been vitiated by the presence of such an interested third party.

Although the IFC did not uphold the complaint, they recommended that in the case of a future appeal, the Club should take care to ensure that any appeal is heard only by those who have not been involved at an earlier stage, in accordance with Appendix 2 of their Charter.

COMPLAINT 4

The complaint related to the match between Rotherham United and Millwall which took place on 30 September 2006. The complainant and his wife attended the match in response to the Chairman's appeal for ex-supporters to "return to the fold". They had not attended Millmoor for two years.

The complainant alleged a number of breaches of Trading Standards, namely misrepresentation and a failure to operate the Club's Customer Charter. These included the Club charging 10% more for tickets than was advertised on the website; a misleading description of the location of the seat, described as being in the Main Stand; a failure in courtesy and customer care by the Stewards and the Club Safety Officer; failure to offer a refund before kick-off, which is included in the Club's Regulations; and not meeting the response times as advertised in the Club's Customer Charter.

The IFC found that broadly speaking, the Club had acted within its Terms of Reference and along the lines outlined in its Club Customer Charter and Ticketing Regulations. There was some confusion over the price of the ticket as previously advertised, but the IFC accepted that the price paid on the day was the correct price. The IFC also found that the description of the Main Stand is conventionally used in many grounds to refer to the whole footprint of the main stand, including the covered area which had previously, no doubt, been used as a standing terrace. The Club was right to claim that the ticket was correctly described as in the Main Stand.

Clearly, the complainant and his wife remained unimpressed with the customer care they received on the day, but the IFC was unable to judge how sympathetically the Club Officials had treated the complainant as it was impossible to determine the accuracy of each party's recollection.

The IFC did not find that the Club had failed to meet its guidelines as to the term of the response. However, the Football League advised the Club that its timescale was "relatively tight" and that it should reconsider whether a more generous timescale should be allowed to gather evidence and respond in a proper manner. Although this element of the complaint was well founded, **the IFC did not uphold the more substantive part of the complaint relating to the price of the**

ticket, the availability of the refund, the relocation and the customer care treatment. So in summary, while the Club is advised that it must make better endeavour in the future to meet its own timescales for responding to complaints, the complaint as a whole is not upheld.

COMPLAINT 5

The complainant and his partner attended the Southend United v Ipswich Town match in October 2006, having bought their tickets through the Ipswich Town away supporter's passport scheme. Whilst their tickets had seat numbers allocated and a warning that the tickets were valid only if used for the allocated seats, when they entered the ground, the stewards told them that there was no allocated seating and that they could sit anywhere. As the stand filled, the only seating remaining had restricted views and supporters were becoming agitated. The sight line from the front row was at grass level and was severely obstructed by steel trellis fencing, passing stewards and vendors. Latecomers to the game, who could not find suitable seats, stood in the gangways. The game started with the entire away support standing and the gangways crowded, yet no officials entered the stand and no announcements were made to get the crowd organised.

During the game there were a number of incidents when Ipswich Town supporters surged forward and some supporters were injured as a result. The complainant approached a steward, asked for something to be done about the situation, and asked to speak to the Safety Officer. A steward passed on his request but returned saying that the Safety Officer refused to come and that the complainant should put any complaint in writing. The steward said that the problem seemed to be that too many tickets had been sold. Other fans added their concerns and one lady made it clear that she had been hurt after the first goal. The complainant attempted to involve the police but they walked away.

The complainant sent letters of complaint to Southend United, Ipswich Town, the Football League, the Football Licensing Authority (FLA), and the Safety Advisory Group of the Local Authority (LA). He enclosed copies of photographs showing fans standing in the gangways.

The IFC obtained comments from Ipswich Town (ITFC) who said that they had written to Southend United saying that they had received "many unhappy letters" from their supporters about the game. ITFC said that they had sold their ticket allocation but, on the day before the game, Southend United had offered them a further 150 tickets, which they had refused. ITFC said that, having purchased tickets with seat numbers, their supporters had not expected a free-seating arrangement, which encouraged fans to leave gaps which are awkward to fill. Fans entering close to kick-off had not been able to see where to sit and had stood at the back and in gangways. ITFC said that Southend United would see from the copies of complaint letters which they had enclosed, that people had been hurt when the crowd surged forward. The PA of the ITFC Chief Executive and their head groundsman had both been very

concerned about the events on the day, and had feared for their safety. ITFC said that their own stewards who had attended the match had no wish to attend at Roots Hall again; they had not been briefed and had been left on their own to deal with a situation not of their own making.

The IFC obtained a copy of a report on the match by a Safety Adviser from the Football Association. The Stadium Manager had had 48 club stewards, 48 agency stewards and 10 ITFC stewards under his command; a number of stewards had not attended because of a change of Stadium Manager. ITFC fans had been allocated the North Stand; blocks X and Y had been left sterile with netting over some seats. The North Stand had been used as unallocated seating, despite each ticket having a seat number, and fans had stood in the seated area and on the gangways and staircases. Soon after kick-off, 79 home fans who had been sold tickets in block Y of the sterile area were escorted to other seats, and some ITFC fans, which had been standing because they could not identify their seats, were then transferred to the sterile area. Other ITFC fans stood throughout the match and surged down to the pitch perimeter fence each of the three times their team scored. The Safety Adviser had witnessed no attempts by stewards to manage the stand; they had merely protected the pitch perimeter. The attendance was 11,415 with 2,112 away fans. The Safety Adviser concluded that stewarding had not been adequate; the FLA was pursuing with the Local Authority the issues arising from the match. The Advisor also commented that the away toilets had been in a disgusting state and had clearly not been cleaned since last used.

In April 2006, the Football League's Safety Advisor had attended the Southend United v Colchester United local derby. Southend's Stadium Manager had had 117 stewards under his command. Colchester United had been allocated 1,500 seats in the North Stand; two blocks had been kept as a sterile area. Approximately 200 Colchester fans had stood throughout the match; gangways were kept clear. The Safety Advisor concluded that the stewards had been alert and well drilled.

In February 2007, the IFC's Deputy Chair attended the Southend United v Queen's Park Rangers match. He bought an away ticket at the turnstile. A steward showed him the location of his numbered seat but said that he could move if he wished once the match had started (many seats have restricted views because of pillars or speakers), because the stand would not be full. He changed seat on several occasions, sometimes because many away fans stood persistently. Although prominent notices said "WILL SPECTATORS PLEASE SIT IN SEATS ALLOCATED", he did not witness any attempts by stewards to get fans to sit, but there were no apparent problems. The front row of seats in the North Stand, the seats at the back of the gangways, and the fencing above the wall had all been removed. The seats all had numbers. The toilets were in an acceptable condition.

The IFC also spoke to the FLA official who had attended the Ipswich Town match. She outlined the problems which she had witnessed, which corresponded largely with the complainant's version of events. She said that ITFC fans normally sit but capacity at the match had not been reduced (where seats are unallocated) as per the "Green Guide", and ITFC fans had stood in the gangways. The FLA and the LA had taken steps with Southend United to improve arrangements.

ANNEX C continued

Complaints adjudicated by the IFC during 2007

Members of the IFC visited Southend United, met with the Chief Executive and the Stadium Manager and toured the North Stand, the away section of the stadium. The Southend United officials readily accepted that there had been problems at the match which they had later discussed with the FLA and the LA. They explained that the first problem on the day had been the policy of unallocated seating. In addition, their Chairman had released tickets for sale in what should have been a sterile area. (Apparently the Chairman had been informed that 8,000 home tickets had been sold, whereas the figure was 9,000). When he had learned of this, the Stadium Manager had telephoned the Chief Executive and the practice was stopped, but 80 tickets had already been sold to home supporters. The Stadium Manager had moved those fans to another area, which allowed Ipswich fans to spread out into the former sterile area. The away end can hold 2,300. The sterile area is normally 728 seats, but 400 of those can be opened if necessary, leaving an area of 328 seats sterile. There had been 2,190 away fans.

Southend United had no record of any incidents during the match, but knew that one lady from Ipswich had been injured when the seat she had stood on had broken, and they had received copies of complaints from ITFC supporters. They said that CCTV footage had not been kept, they thought because there nothing untoward had occurred. Southend United had no record of a reply to the complainant, but were certain that they would have sent one. (Their computers are currently in the hands of police who are investigating another user of Roots Hall).

As a result of lessons learned at the ITFC match, and discussions with the FLA and LA, Southend United had implemented a certain amount of remedial action to try to eliminate future problems. They now operate a system of allocated seating; the front row of seats and the seats at the back of the gangways have been taken out; the trellis fencing has been removed; copies of CCTV footage are kept; and stewards have been trained in stand management.

The Chief Executive offered to refund the complainant the cost of his two tickets, and to round that up to the sum to £150 in recognition of the effect that the problems had had on him. The Chief Executive agreed to send the complainant a reply to his letter of complaint. The Chief Executive subsequently wrote to the complainant offering apologies for any "inconvenience" caused to him and enclosing a cheque for £150.

The IFC upheld the complaint. The IFC welcomed the fact that Southend United had taken the matter seriously and had taken steps to ensure that such problems could be avoided in the future; and that the Football League, through their Safety Advisor, had followed up the steps taken by Southend United. For his part, the complainant made clear that his quest was not for financial compensation, but to seek satisfactory safety arrangements for future matches. He nevertheless appreciated that Southend United had made him a fair offer.

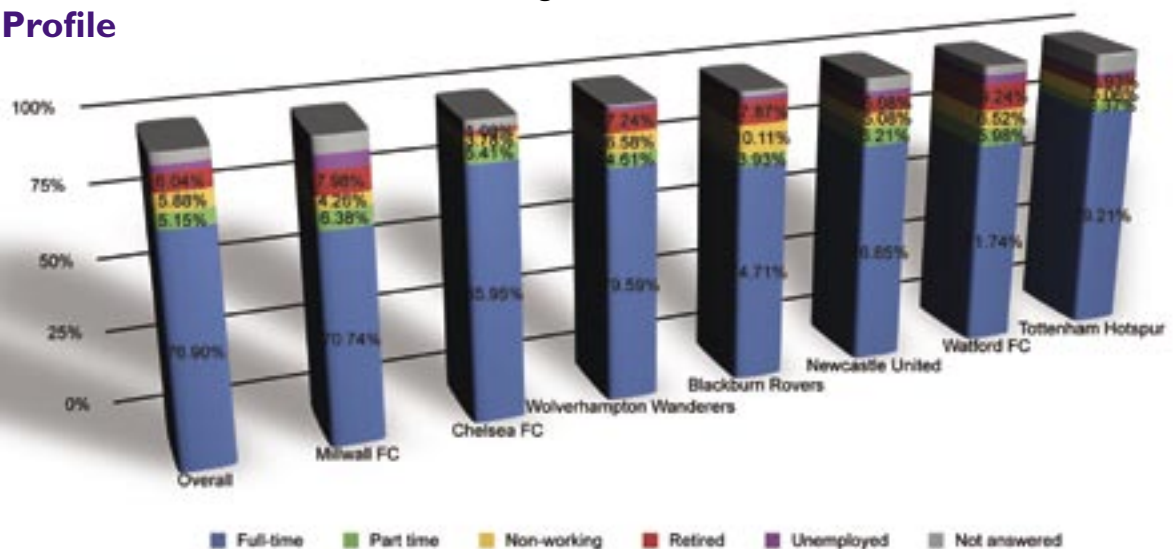
ANNEX D

The IFC Ticketing and Match Scheduling Survey

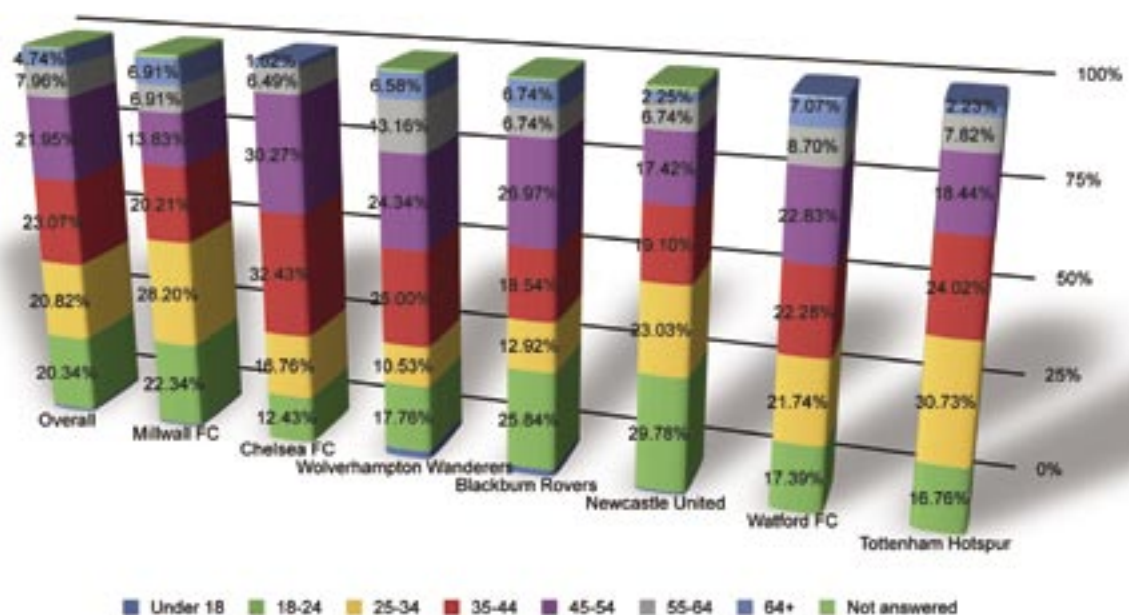
In 2007, as part its work looking at the effects of ticket prices and matchday scheduling, the IFC undertook a survey of fans. This Annex details the questions asked, the clubs visited, plus an outline of the fans that were spoken to. The analysis of these results plus a full summary of the IFC's work in this area can be found earlier in this 2007 IFC Annual Report, in the chapter entitled, Ticketing and Matchday Scheduling.

Working Status

Fans' Profile



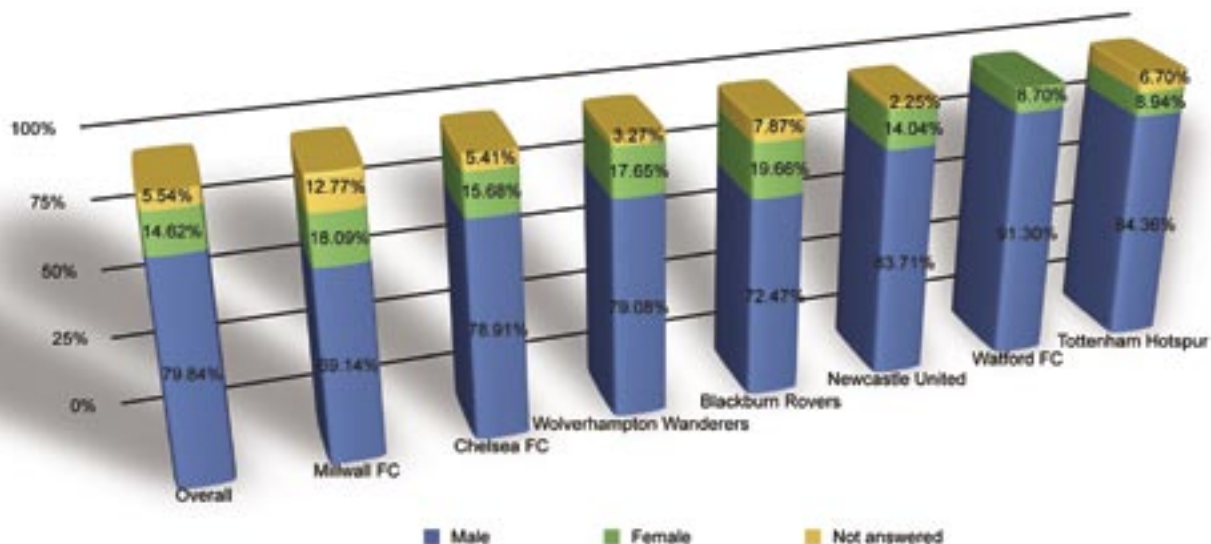
Age



ANNEX D continued

The IFC Ticketing and Match Scheduling Survey

Gender



The Clubs Visited

Newcastle United	23 September
Chelsea	29 September
Millwall	29 September

Watford	2 October
Blackburn Rovers	6 October
Wolverhampton Wanderers	6 October
Tottenham Hotspur	10 October

The IFC would like to thank all of the fans who gave their time to assist in this research. It is very much appreciated.

The Questions

19 questions were asked. Some of the questions had multiple choices as answers:-

- 1 Are you a season ticket holder?
yes / no
- 2 Do you feel that ticket prices are fair?
agree / disagree / don't know
- 3 How often did you attend home games last season?
never / 1-5 times / 6-11 times / 12 or more
- 4 How often did you attend away games last season?
never / 1-2 times / 3-4 times / 5-6 times / 7-11 times / 12 or more
- 5 Compared to other sports or leisure activities, do you think that tickets to football matches are value for money?
yes / no
- 6 Has the cost of a match ticket affected your attendance at games?
yes / no
- 7 If your team is/was featured regularly on TV, would it affect your decision whether or not to buy a season ticket?
yes / no
- 8 Has television influenced which club you support?
yes / no
- 9 Do kick off times affect your match attendance? In other words, are you more likely to attend at certain times than others?
yes / no
- 10 What is the main factor that determines your kick off time preference?

Effects of Match Rescheduling

- 11 Last season, was a game you wanted to attend rearranged?
no / once / twice / 3 or more
- 12 Did the match rescheduling mean that you could not attend the match?
no / once / twice / three or more
- 13 If a match is rearranged what was the level of inconvenience?
not a problem / slight / quite a lot / creates a major problem.
- 14 If you were inconvenienced, what caused the problems? Choose from any of the following possibilities:-
new match kick-off time did not fit in with work commitment
did not fit in with family commitments
did not fit in with hobby or other leisure pursuits
no available transport at the new rescheduled time meant companion could not attend, so decided not to go
any other reason
- 15 Has rescheduling ever caused you extra expense? If so, what was it?
additional travel expenses
loss of pay due to time off work
loss of deposit on pre-booked travel/accommodation
additional accommodation expenses
any other reason
- 16 What do you think are the main causes of games involving your club being rearranged?
the game was moved due to it being on television
weather
international games meant players were called-up clashed with a European/FA Cup/League Cup game
clashed with a neighbouring club having a big game
safety reasons
any other reason
- 17 Does match rearranging make you do more or less of the following, or does it make no difference at all?
go to watch your team as a spectator
watch football at home
watch football screened in pubs
listen to football on the radio
read about football in newspapers/magazines
- 18 Do you think matches are becoming too predictable?
yes / no
- 19 Do you think there is a lack of competition/unpredictability for promotion/relegation issues? (In other words, do you feel that you can now predict which clubs will go up and which go down).
yes / no

ANNEX E

IFC Publications

IFC Annual Report 2002: *pushing the pace of reform* (January 2003)

Annual Report 2002 - Executive Summary (January 2003)

IFC Annual Report 2003: *a call for unity of purpose* (February 2004)

Annual Report 2003 - Executive Summary (February 2004) (pdf version only available)

Self-Regulation - *an examination of how football is regulated, with recommendations for the future* (May 2004)

Report on Euro 2004 - *a report on the FA's role in off-field initiatives and services provided for supporters* (September 2004)

The Governance of Football Clubs - *an Independent Football Commission seminar* (October 2004)

IFC Annual Report 2004: *going forward*

Report on Child Protection in Football (August 2005)

Supporters Guide to the eyes and ears of football (April 2006)

Supporters Guide to the eyes and ears of football (April 2006), large print version

IFC Annual Report 2005 (April 2006)

I'm Still Not Satisfied - *guide to complaint procedures* (2006)

I'm Still Not Satisfied - *guide to complaint procedures* (2006), large print version

I'm Still Not Satisfied - *guide to complaint procedures* (2006), Audio CD

The Experience of English Supporters in European Club Competitions 2005-06 (December 2006)

IFC Annual Report 2006 (April 2007)

IFC Annual Report 2007 (April 2008)

All of these publications are available for download, free of charge, from our website: www.theifc.co.uk. Unfortunately, we can no longer provide hard copies of the above documents.

ANNEX F

Members of the Independent Football Commission 2001-2008

Professor Derek Fraser	August 2001 – present
Alan Watson CBE	December 2001 – present
John Willis	December 2001 – May 2002
Rt Hon Ann Taylor MP	December 2001 – November 2003
Kate Barker	December 2001 – July 2003
Lord John Taylor of Warwick	December 2001 – January 2003
Julian Wild	December 2001 – December 2004
John Simpson	June 2002 – January 2006
Garth Crooks	April 2003 – July 2004
Brian Lomax	November 2003 – April 2007
Clive Betts MP	November 2003 – present
Nicola Waldman	October 2005 – present
Joslyn Hoyte-Smith	January 2006 – present
Andy Worthington MBE	September 2006 – present
Warren Barton ³³	

[33] Warren Barton attended one meeting of the board but felt obliged to resign because of his ongoing disciplinary work with the Football Association

ANNEX G

Matchday Programme Adverts

Are your complaints about football being waved away?

If so, then we may be able to help...

The Independent Football Commission (IFC) is the final stage in football's complaints procedure. We can't help with anything to do with your team's performance on the pitch, but we can look into complaints about such things as your club's customer service, crowd control, safety, etc.

So if you have had no joy from your football club and had no satisfaction from the Football Association, Premier League or Football League then you need to contact us - The Independent Football Commission. We're here to help you when all else has failed.

For more information about football's complaints procedure and contact details for the Football Association, Premier League or Football League please ask at your club's main reception, ticket office or club shop for a copy of our complaints brochure: "You and Your Football". Alternatively you can order a copy and find out about other IFC activities from our website at www.thefic.co.uk

ifc
THE INDEPENDENT FOOTBALL COMMISSION

IFC advert in the Newcastle United FC match day programme.
August 2007

Are your complaints about football being kicked into touch?

If so, then we may be able to help...

The Independent Football Commission (IFC) is the final stage in football's complaints procedure. We can't help with anything to do with your team's performance on the pitch, but we can look into complaints about such things as your club's customer service, crowd control, safety, etc.

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ifc
THE INDEPENDENT FOOTBALL COMMISSION

IFC advert in the Burnley FC match day programme.
October 2007

Acknowledgements

The IFC is grateful to the football authorities, football clubs, research bodies and other agencies for their co-operation in responding to requests for information.



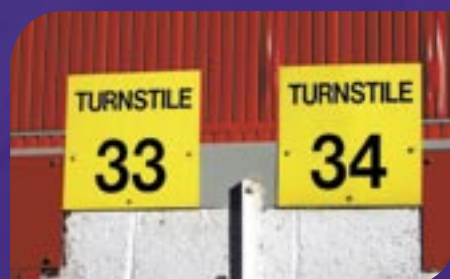
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