

Communications between the Scottish Government and Celtic and Rangers on the Offensive Behaviour Act

PL/EO'N

11 April 2013

Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP
 First Minister for Scotland
 The Scottish Executive
 5th Floor
 St Andrew's House
 EDINBURGH
 EH1 3DG



Dear First Minister


Celtic Football Club is committed to tackling and eradicating unacceptable behaviour at its stadium. The Club participated fully in the Joint Action Group formed in July 2011 and was involved in the consultation process regarding the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Bill.

The Club's detailed submission to the Justice Committee recognised the importance of the issues, but indicated the Club's concerns regarding the proposed legislation, including; the potential for discrimination against football supporters, the potential for confusion in applying and enforcing the legislation, and issues around the extra territorial reach of the legislation.

The Club's concerns regarding the legislation remain. The experience of the last year has evidenced the difficulties arising in connection with the application and enforcement of the legislation. The First Minister will be aware of the concerns raised by Fans Against Criminalisation, an organisation predominantly, but not exclusively, comprised of supporters of the Club. In addition, the Club has received comment and complaint from its supporter organisations and wider supporter base.

The purpose of my letter is to request that the Club be invited to participate in the forthcoming review of the legislation, so as to represent the views of the Club and our supporters in connection with this very sensitive issue.

Yours sincerely,


Peter Lawwell
 Chief Executive

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First Minister of Scotland

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Peter Lawwell
Chief Executive
Celtic plc
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24 April 2013

Dear Peter

Thank you for your letter of 11 April concerning the participation of Celtic Football Club in the review of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications Act 2012.

As you will know, the legislation requires that a report on the operation of the Act be made to the Scottish Parliament covering a review period – effectively, August 2012 to August 2014. This report must be submitted to Parliament no later than one year after the end of the review period.

I am very happy to assure you that Celtic FC will be involved in this process and consulted fully on the operation of the Act.

Given that the scheduled review is still some time distant, you or another representative of the Club may wish to meet with the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs to share your views at an earlier stage and be briefed on plans for the preparation of the review report, including evaluation and evidence gathering. With this in mind, I have asked Roseanna Cunningham's office to contact you to offer such a meeting.

Yours for Scotland
Alex

ALEX SALMOND





PL/EO'N

4 October 2013

Ms Roseanna Cunningham
Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
EDINBURGH
EH1 3DG

Dear Minister

Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act

Thank you for your time on Wednesday. As we discussed, this is an issue, which is very important to the Club, and to our supporters, and I appreciate the opportunity to discuss matters with you.

Considerable doubt remains around whether the legislation was necessary and how it is operating in practice. The document that I provided to you at our meeting contains examples of the concerns held by some of our supporters around the statistics published recently and I look forward to receiving your comments on those concerns.

The level of doubt around the application and enforcement of the Act has been exacerbated by recent activity in the courts, and the appeal courts, leaving our supporters with genuine doubt over what conduct is, or is not, unlawful.

Inevitably, there have been calls for the legislation to be reviewed from many quarters. I understand from our discussions that the original intention was that the legislation would be reviewed after operation over two football seasons and that the Act sets a deadline by which a report must be presented. As a Club we will do all that we can to contribute to the review process. Given the issues that have been raised, however, is there no way in which the review of the legislation could be brought forward?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Peter Lawwell
Chief Executive

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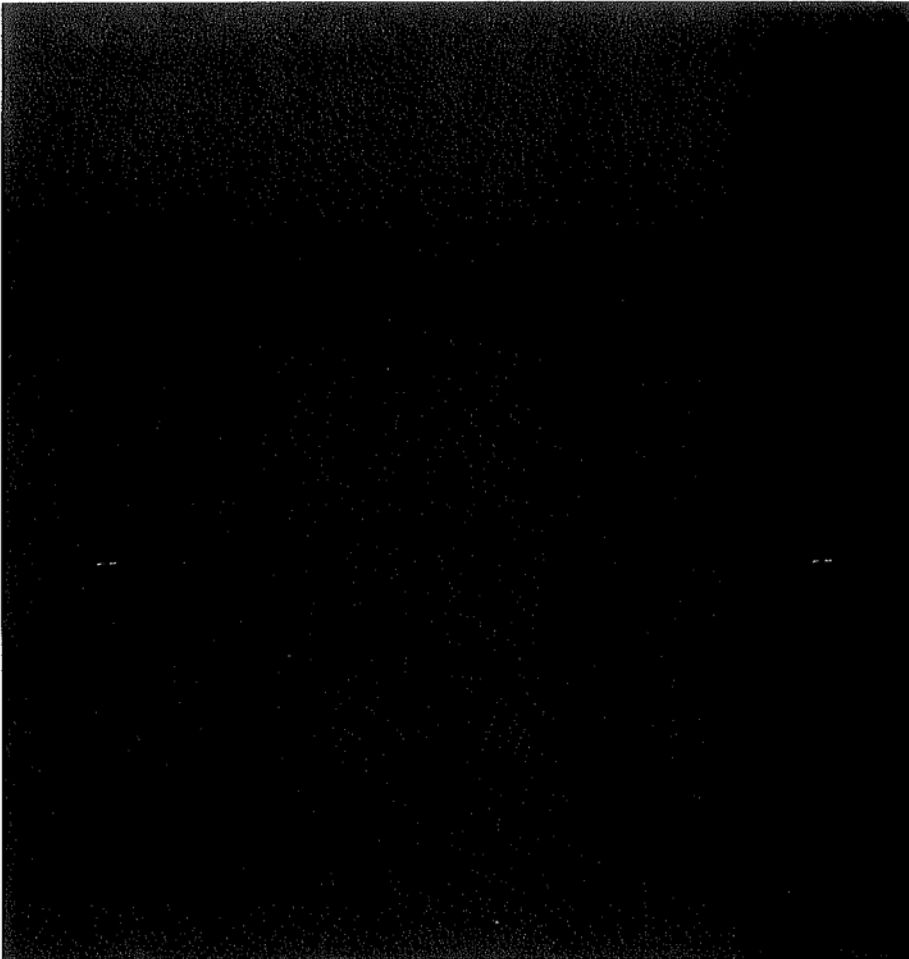
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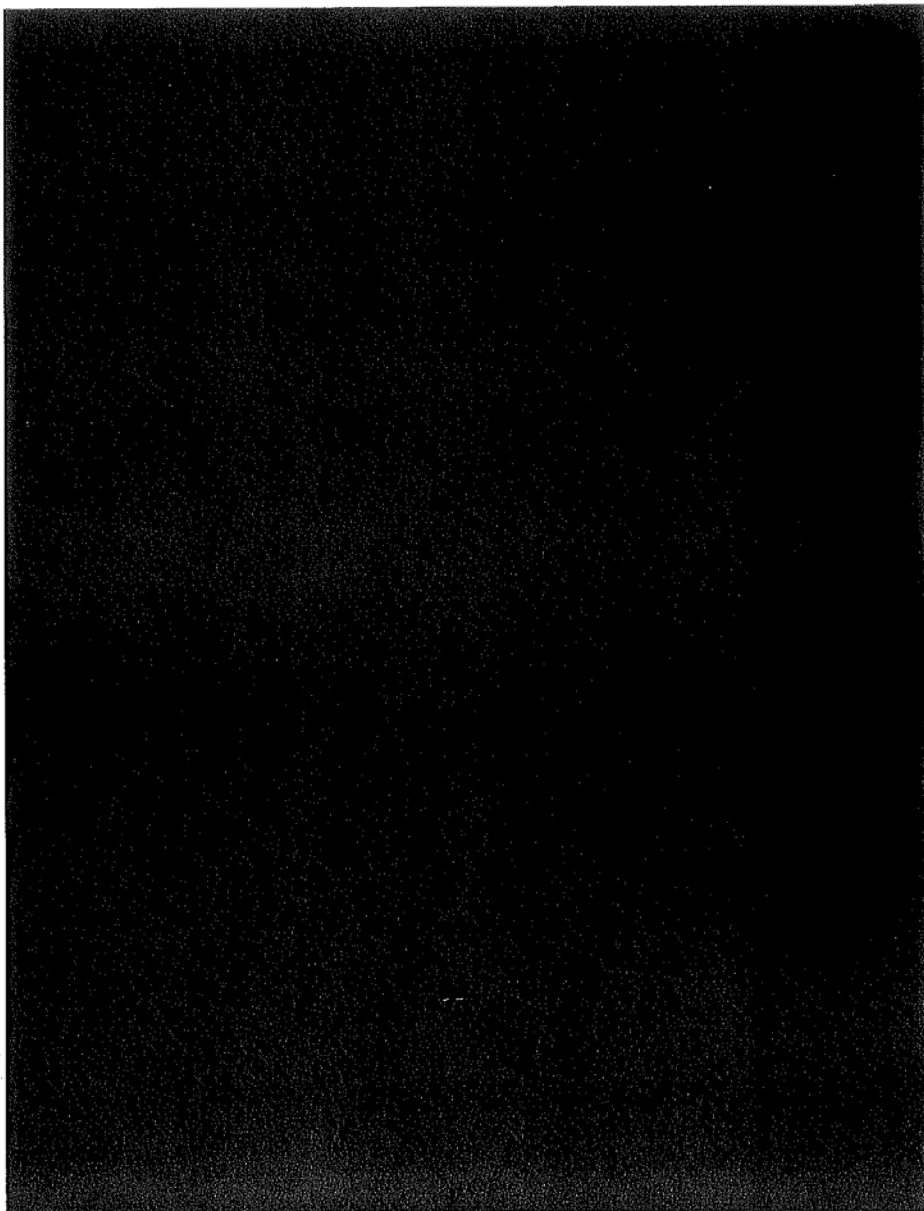


Note of Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs meeting with Peter Lawwell and representatives of Celtic FC - Wednesday 4 February

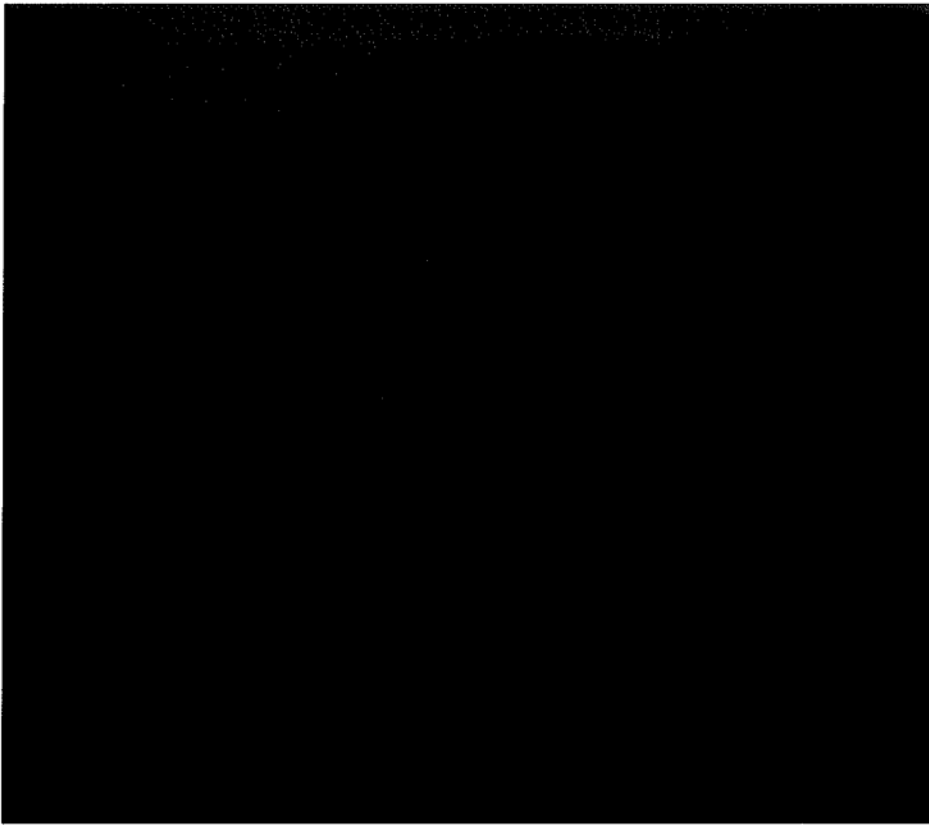
Present: Paul Wheelhouse, Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs
Elinor Owe, PS/Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs
John McFarlane, Special Adviser
Peter Lawwell, Chief Executive, Celtic FC
Michael Nicholson, Company Secretary, Celtic FC
Ronnie Hawthorn, Head of Safety, Security and Operations, Celtic FC
David Bell, SG Safer Communities Division
Stephen Coulter, SG Safer Communities Division
Douglas Forrester, SG Safer Communities Division

Note of Meeting





The Minister agreed it is important that other clubs get involved in the debate highlighting that charges under the Offensive Behaviour at Football legislation were also reported at Saturday's match between Aberdeen and Dundee United, he expressed a willingness to meet with representatives of other clubs as well as Scottish football's bodies if they are interested.



[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 08 May 2015 15:19

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Meeting with Peter Lawwell and Celtic FC - note of discussion

All

The Minister for Community Safety & Legal Affairs met with Peter Lawwell - Chief Executive of Celtic Football Club, Ronnie Hawthorn – Head of Security and Michael Nicholson – Club Secretary on 5 May 2015 at the Scottish Parliament to discuss the evaluation of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012. The note below is a summary of the main points raised:

- Peter Lawwell welcomed the invitation to meet the Minister and stressed the importance of on-going communications around the Act. Mr Lawwell confirmed that Celtic FC still had grave concerns about how the Act was working and still took the position that the Act should be repealed or material amendments made to it.
- Ronnie Hawthorn stressed that Celtic's main concern was with the relationship between supporters and police and the Club being caught in the middle – and the negative impact this was having on the Club's relationship with supporters. Celtic FC are concerned that the Act crosses a line by making unpleasant behaviour a criminal offence and is resulting in people being caught up in the criminal justice system that shouldn't be.
- There was no disagreement from Celtic that unacceptable behaviour needs to be removed from football but the club sees the Act as criminalising and discriminating against people – unfairly picking on football supporters.
- Michael Nicholson said the main fan complaint against the Act was lined to a view of excessive policing measures - being filmed during matches, buses being stopped and searched more regularly, children being searched, dogs carrying out searches at away grounds.
- Ronnie Hawthorn said that the Club had found itself in a position of being responsible for communicating police messages to supporters which was not envisaged at the start of the process.
- Peter Lawwell said that it was important to understand the problem before it would be possible to find a solution and he believed there was a problem with perception versus reality in football in Scotland, especially compared to Europe.
- Peter Lawwell said that there was uncertainty about what was and was not covered by the legislation and the Club was often having to wait for court decisions to clarify this. The Minister asked if providing Clubs with information on court judgements on a regular basis would help with this and there seemed to be general agreement that it would.
- Ben Cavanagh provided a brief overview of the evaluation process, highlighting that various officials and supporters connected with Celtic had been involved in the process.
- Peter Lawwell said that Celtic has approx. 200-300 "ultra" supporters and the Club engages and manages these supporters and currently has a good relationship with them. Mr Lawwell explained that for a recent match Celtic sold 44,000 tickets (single match tickets and season tickets). The actual attendance at the match was approx. 30,000 of which there was about 8,000 women and children and 200-300 'ultra' group supporters. As a result of this, Mr Lawwell suggested that the problem at Celtic Park with religious sectarianism was minimal.
- At away grounds, the Celtic support is smaller and the 'ultra' supporters make up a bigger percentage of the support and this does cause problems. The Club manage away supporters by

1



taking travel stewards to matches and liaising with local police before and after the match. The Club has developed a strong discipline code with input from supporters.

- Peter Lawwell said the Club are engaged with groups of young supporters and it is the Club's view that they are not politically motivated when singing songs but instead do it to provoke opposition supporters – not a problem at home games but a problem at away games. The Minister asked if education for these supporters would be beneficial and Peter Lawwell said it could help.
- Ronnie Hawthorn said that he felt the number of inappropriate songs being sung had increased since the Act was introduced – as an act of defiance
- Peter Lawwell said that there was a perception amongst some Celtic supporters that fans of other clubs might have been caught under existing legislation and the ACT had been introduced to target them. Mr Lawwell said that people at Celtic Park were not offended by fan behaviour i.e. the Club receives minimum complaints, but there was a feeling of excessive filming and people were being arrested – but who is actually being offended?
- There was general agreement at the meeting that policing had improved since the Act was first introduced.
- Peter Lawwell said the media had a responsibility and suggested a PR project be undertaken by Clubs/media/Government to try and resolve some of the reporting issues.
- Mr Lawwell said a Celtic supporter had been arrested at Murrayfield in the summer when Celtic were playing their Champions League qualifiers for having a Palestine flag. He stressed the need for clarity and proportionality in legislation – what might be offensive to one person is now a criminal offence under the Act.
- Ronnie Hawthorn said that Section 6 of the Act had been very positively received. He was unaware however, that the offence covered more than just online abuse linked to football.
- The Minister offered to notify Celtic FC when the evaluation report was being published and to meet with Club officials again after the publication to discuss the findings and recommendations and supporters views of it.

Let me know if you have any questions.





PL/EO'N

17 February 2015



Paul Wheelhouse MSP
Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
EDINBURGH
EH1 3DG

Dear Minister

It was very good to meet with you earlier this month. As we discussed, I look forward to a co-operative working relationship.

We touched on the review of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act at the meeting. In correspondence with your predecessor, I had indicated that the Club was very keen to be involved in the review process.

I should be very grateful if you were able to confirm the timetable and arrangements for the review process.

I look forward to hearing from you and to seeing you on Thursday evening for our UEFA Europa League match against FC Internazionale Milano.

Yours sincerely

Peter Lawwell
Chief Executive

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Mr Peter Lawwell
Chief Executive
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Your ref: PL/EO'N
Our ref: 2015/0007552

26 March 2015

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your letter dated 17 February 2015 regarding the arrangements for the review of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012.

Firstly, I would like to take the opportunity to formally thank you for taking the time out to meet with me on 4 February with your colleagues Mr Michael Nicholson and Mr Ronnie Hawthorn, and also your invitation for me to attend Celtic's UEFA Europa League match with Inter Milan it was obviously a hugely entertaining game, but it was also very useful to get a sense for how such a match is stewarded and policed also.

I would like to reassure you that the independent research team based at the University of Stirling, who are carrying out the evaluation exercise, have advised my officials that they have, to date, met with several representatives of Celtic FC during the course of their work in evaluating Section 1 the Act. The Club representatives include Mr Ronnie Hawthorn, Head of Safety, Security and Operations and Mr John Paul Taylor, Celtic Supporter Liaison Officer. Researchers have also held a number of focus groups with supporters representatives including three focus groups comprising of Celtic supporters.

The evaluation report must be laid before The Scottish Parliament no later than 12 months after the end of the review period, which ended on 1 August 2014. I can assure you the Scottish Government will fulfil its obligation by meeting this deadline.

I know that the former First Minister gave you assurances that he was very happy for Celtic Football Club to be involved in the review process and to be consulted fully on the operation of the Act and I would echo that sentiment. If you would like to discuss the evaluation of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications legislation further with

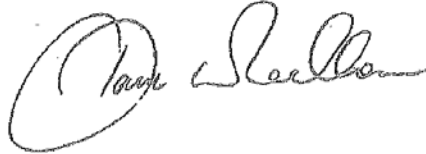
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me, I would be more than happy to meet with you to do so. If you wish to take up this meeting offer, please contact my Diary Secretary [REDACTED] to arrange a mutually suitable date.

Thanks again for your engagement with me since I took up my new responsibilities and I look forward to continuing in that positive way with you and your colleagues at Celtic Football Club in the months ahead.

Kindest regards



Paul Wheelhouse

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PL/EO'N

11 June 2015



Paul Wheelhouse MSP
Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs
St. Andrew's House
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Dear 

**The Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act
Evaluation Exercise**

Thank you for your time at our recent meeting. This letter summarises some of the issues that have arisen for the Club as a result of the Act, as well as some of the comment and complaint from its supporter organisation, wider supporter base and other organisations.

Celtic Football Club is committed to tackling and eradicating unacceptable behaviour at its stadium. The Club participated fully in the Joint Action Group formed in July 2011 and was involved in the consultation process regarding the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Bill.

The Club's detailed submission to the Justice Committee recognised the importance of the issues, but indicated the Club's concerns regarding the proposed legislation, including; the potential for discrimination against football supporters, the potential for confusion in applying and enforcing the legislation, and issues around the extra territorial reach of the legislation.

The Club's concerns regarding the legislation remain. The experience of the operation of the legislation has evidenced the difficulties arising in connection with the application and enforcement of the legislation.

Impact on the relationship between supporters and Police Scotland

Information from the Club's Supporter Liaison Officer, who works closely with Celtic supporters, suggests that the relationship between some Celtic supporters' groups and Police Scotland has deteriorated as result of the legislation and the application and enforcement of the legislation.

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Specifically, concerns were raised by supporters in relation to:-

- What was regarded to be excessive police numbers and surveillance, including the use of video cameras.
- Supporters' buses being stopped more regularly for search.
- Searches being "heavier", and young children being searched.
- The use of police dogs at away matches.
- Uncertainty regarding the scope of the "offensive behaviour" offence. Concerns were raised regarding evidence said to have been given in court by Police Scotland officers regarding statements made by the Club and supporters' groups regarding certain songs, which we understand are currently the subject of complaints by supporters (see below).
- The perception that information was being shared between the Club and Police Scotland (see below).

Supporters' groups refused to attend at meetings organised by the Club's Supporter Liaison Officer with Police Scotland and FoCUS, which were intended to assist understanding of the application of the legislation. The supporters' groups indicated that this was a result of a breakdown in trust in, and the relationship with, Police Scotland. As a result, Club representatives met with FoCUS and sought to pass information back to supporters' groups. As noted below, this is not a role that the Club should be involved in on an ongoing basis.

Generally, supporters raised concerns regarding what they regarded as the "criminalisation" of being a football supporter. Concerns were also raised regarding the perception that Celtic supporters were being targeted, in circumstances where it is felt that the use of the legislation in relation to Celtic supporters often related to the "offensive behaviour" offence, which was not considered to be unlawful prior to the legislation, whereas the supporters of other football clubs were being charged with offences that would previously have been covered by existing Breach of the Peace charges.

Given the larger number of Celtic supporters travelling to matches at away stadia, supporters have raised concerns over the impact on individuals charged under the legislation, where those individuals have required to travel large distances during the court process.

These concerns have been raised again since the publication of the Appeal Court in the case of William Donnelly and Martin Walsh ([2015] HCJAC 35), in which it is stated "*The main, but not exclusive, focus is on the behaviour of certain Celtic and Rangers fans with their long standing attachment to opposing factions involved in the politics of Ireland, and Ulster in particular.*" (paragraph [1]) and "*There is no blanket ban on singing sectarian songs and the appellants are at liberty to indulge in their desire to do so at many alternative venues. There is, however, a prohibition on doing so at football matches for the reasons outlined in the policy memorandum to the Bill (supra).*" (paragraph [14]).

In some cases, supporters indicated that they were no longer willing to attend matches as a result of their concerns around the application and enforcement of the legislation by Police Scotland.

The Club is also concerned that the damage to the relationship between supporters and Police Scotland may have an impact on the safety environment at Celtic Park and away stadia, if supporters have lost respect for Police. There is also a perception among supporters that certain songs and chants are more prevalent now among a section of the support (particularly at away matches) than before the legislation came into force.

Impact on the relationship between supporters and the Club

The experience of the Club in the period since the legislation came into force is that the Club's relationship with a number of its supporters has been adversely affected. As noted above, in some cases supporters have indicated that they were no longer willing to attend football matches.

The impact of the legislation on the relationship between the Club's supporters and Police Scotland has also impacted on the relationship between supporters and the Club, in the following ways:-

- The Club has become a conduit for information between Police Scotland and supporters' groups. It is not considered that this is sustainable. The Club is seen by some to be involved in the process of enforcing the legislation. It is for Police Scotland and the Courts to enforce the legislation.
- The Club's Supporter Liaison Officer has given evidence in a court case brought under the Act.
- Concerns have been raised with the Club by supporters regarding evidence said to have been given in court by Police Scotland officers regarding statements made by the Club and supporters' groups regarding certain songs, which we understand are currently the subject of complaints by supporters. The Club was not present in court when any such evidence was given, but the Club can confirm the Club is not aware of any statement having been made by the Club to the effect that the song in question ("The Roll of Honour") was "sectarian and offensive".
- Concerns have been raised with the Club by supporters regarding information being shared between the Club and Police Scotland in breach of data protection legislation. The Club confirmed its position that any information shared was in accordance with the Club's legal obligations, but the perception was damaging for the Club.
- The relationship between the Club's stewards and some supporters came under pressure as a result of the some supporters' concerns regarding the conduct of Police Scotland (see above). Significant steps were taken by the Club to seek to improve the relationship, but supporters' concerns remain.

A substantial amount of resource has been committed by the Club in dealing with the concerns raised by its supporters regarding the application of the legislation. In some cases, this has adversely affected the Club's relationship with its supporters.

Summary


The Club remains supportive of the Scottish Government's commitment to addressing the extremes of behaviour. Given the experience to date, however, the Club retains significant concerns in relation to the potential for discrimination against football supporters and for confusion in applying and enforcing the legislation.

From feedback received by the Club from the Club's supporters, there has been significant impact on the relationship between some of the Club's supporters and Police Scotland. Further, the Club is concerned that the relationship between the Club and some of its supporters has been affected.

Given the potential for discrimination against football supporters and the confusion in applying and enforcing the legislation, in particular in relation to the "other behaviour that a reasonable person would be likely to consider offensive" offence (section 1(2)(e) of the Act), the Club considers that that part of the legislation relating to Offensive Behaviour at Regulated Football Matches should be repealed or substantially reviewed to address the issues that have arisen in its application and enforcement.

The Club remains of the view, expressed in its submission to the Justice Committee, that the outlawing of behaviour which we would all find offensive or threatening is welcome, if those offences are not adequately provided for in existing law, but these offences should not be applied in a purely football context. That part of the Act relating to Threatening Communications reflects that approach.

Yours sincerely


Peter Lawwell
Chief Executive

Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs
Paul Wheelhouse MSP

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Peter Lawwell
Chief Executive
Celtic Football Club
Celtic Park
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16 July 2015

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your letter of 11 June 2015 and the opportunity to meet with yourself, Michael and Ronnie on the 5 May. I was greatly interested to listen to your views and the concerns you raised on behalf of the club and supporters' organisations.

You will be aware since receiving your letter the Scottish Government's Report on the operation of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012 (the Act) was published on 12 June along with supporting documents and hate crime statistics published by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. I hope you have had the opportunity to digest the report and its supporting research evaluations as well as the details of the charges reported under the Act for 2014/15.

I have publicly stated on many occasions, and am sure that you agree that, we must never forget the vast majority of football supporters are well behaved and simply wish to support their team. It is a minority of supporters who cause problems and can ruin the enjoyment of the match for everyone.

Whilst it is disappointing to see any recorded offences it is good to note a further reported decrease in the number of offences relating to the Act, down another 6 per cent and a 28 per cent decrease since year one. It is, in my view, noteworthy that the number of offences that

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have occurred at Celtic Park has dropped dramatically. Whilst this only covers offences recorded at the stadium, rather than by fans elsewhere, it does suggest that the behaviour of Celtic fans within their home stadium is of a good standard and I congratulate the vast majority of Celtic fans for their good behaviour.

The statistics also make it clear that there is no evidence to support the contention that any one group of supporters or football team is being singled out by the Act. The Act has been used across a wide range of football fixtures involving a variety of clubs, and across a wide range of stadia, and there is nothing to support the suggestion of targeting of any particular club.

It is important to note that while tackling sectarianism was a key driver for the introduction of the Act, and tackling sectarianism remains an important strand of the Scottish Government's work to achieve equality for all, the focus of the Act is much wider. The Act therefore aims to tackle all offensive behaviours which are likely to incite public disorder and expresses hatred towards others based on religious beliefs, race, colour, nationality, sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability. The Scottish Government is fully committed to tackling all forms of prejudice and bigotry regardless of who these are aimed at, and I believe that the Act remains an important tool for doing this.

In addition, the Scottish Government has never stated that football is the cause of sectarianism or that sectarianism is something that is confined to football. I have been at pains to stress otherwise. I believe our work to tackle sectarianism speaks for itself and, out of the 44 community-based projects that were funded to tackle sectarianism between 2012-15, only four projects were specifically football oriented. In the current 2015-16 financial year, we are funding 38 community-based projects and again only four of these are specifically football oriented. The Scottish Government has accepted the findings and recommendations of the independent Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland which published their interim report on 13 December 2013 and their final report on 29 May 2015. Both of these documents made it clear that football was not the sole cause of, or sole outlet for sectarianism, however, they did recognise that there are sectarian problems associated with football and that these need to be addressed.

One of the key purposes in creating legislation relating to equality, fairness and tackling abuse is to reflect the standards and attitudes of contemporary society. Our laws must send a clear signal that society is moving on from a toleration of the prejudices and behaviours of the past and is instead looking forward to a future built on the principles of inclusion, respect and understanding. Independent surveys of football fans conducted as part of the evaluation of section 1 of the Act clearly indicate that the public are fed up with the abusive behaviour that is all too often associated with Scottish football, and a recent YouGov survey of the Scottish public showed strong support among respondents for legislation to tackle such behaviour and specific support for retention of the Act. I believe that the Act reflects the changing attitudes in Scottish society and is a clear signal that recognises that abusive behaviour undermines the positive principles that an inclusive democratic society is built on.

I have stated that I believe the legislation is working, however there are important messages in the recommendations about how the legislation is implemented, how this can be improved and how we can help fans to understand the impact of certain behaviours. For instance in response to concerns of criminalising young people I have already announced an extension of funding to develop the Sacro – Diversion from Prosecution programme Scotland-wide as an alternative disposal to court action. I know this has been raised as a concern by football clubs and supporters' groups. Appropriate people, whether first time or low-tariff offenders, will be kept out of the criminal justice system and given an alternative education programme.

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to make them understand the implications of their actions and to prevent the potential of being caught in a downward spiral of offending and negative impacts on their employability.

One of the key recommendations made from the evaluation of the Act highlighted the need for strengthening relationships and trust between supporters groups, clubs and the police so that the critical gains in terms of the reductions in offensiveness are consolidated. The Scottish Government is keen to support this recommendation and recognises that this is an area where clear leadership from Scotland's football clubs will allow us to make significant strides towards continuing to reduce offensive behaviour at football and in society more generally. I have already committed to working with all key organisations to take forward the recommendations made in the evaluations of the Act and am particularly enthused at the suggestion that some groups of fans are recognising offensive behaviour and are self-policing. This is certainly to be encouraged, however, we are clearly not at the stage where self-policing alone will address offensive behaviour at football.

As you know the overall responsibility for policing matches remains with Police Scotland. FoCUS was established by Police Scotland to ensure that the overall approach to the policing of football is consistent across Scotland. Of course this does not mean a one-size-fits-all approach, it means that appropriate and proportionate action will be taken in response to individual issues and circumstances that arise at different matches. However,, consistency will be developed through experience and the deployment of FoCUS across the country to share experience and best practice. FoCUS liaises with all football clubs in relation to fixtures and in particular those matches that potentially have higher risks, whether that is down to numbers attending, significance of the match, known previous issues between or among fans, date and time of kick off etc. I know that Police Scotland is constantly looking to reduce the presence of its officers at matches and has been exploring the potential for 'police-lite' and 'steward only' games with clubs, but this of course can only be achieved with co-operation of, and consistent good behaviour by, fans.

The evaluation of section 1 of the Act has recognised the good work done so far by FoCUS but that all parties need to work cooperatively with Police Scotland to consider how other concerns can be addressed going forward. For example to ensure that the standards of local policing are consistent across the country so that away supporters will have the confidence that they will be treated in a manner which is both fair and consistent with the treatment that they receive at their home ground. I know that Police Scotland remain keen to constructively engage with clubs and supporters even though some supporters' organisations are unwilling to have any engagement with them.

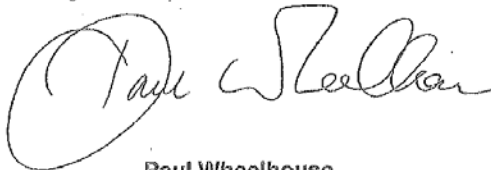
I am well aware of the strong views of some fans and that they have taken an immovable stance of complete opposition to the Act. However, evidence from the evaluation clearly demonstrated that football supporters views on what behaviour is offensive is in line with the objectives of the Act. It is therefore imperative that we all encourage dialogue between all parties. You mention that you do not see the club as having a long term role in relation to liaising between supporters' groups and the police, however, I am certain that you also do not want to see these relationship breakdown any further and, as the organisation which is in the strongest position of trust and respect with fans, I believe it would be helpful for Celtic Football Club to encourage all parties to come to the table to discuss the issues they feel are important to them and start to build the trust and respect needed to allow fan groups and the police to have a positive relationship in the future.

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I am very conscious that you have suggested repealing or substantially reviewing section 1(2)(e) of the Act to address the issues that have arisen in its application and enforcement. I therefore understand that you will be disappointed that this has not happened, but I do hope you will be able to welcome an increased focus on diversion from prosecution. We will continue to work with all partners including, and most importantly, football fans to ensure that information is available on what constitutes unacceptable behaviour. We will of course additionally consider input from key stakeholders as part of our on-going work to improve the operation of the Act.

Kindest regards



Paul Wheelhouse

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