

INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Scottish Gas Men's Scottish Cup - Round Six

Rangers FC v Celtic FC

Ibrox Stadium | Sunday 8 March 2026

Re: Crowd Disorder and 'Unacceptable Conduct'

Independent Lead: Mark Blackbourne

Final Report | July 2026

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Foreword

This report presents the findings of the Independent Review commissioned by the Board of the Scottish Football Association into the events at the Scottish Gas Men's Scottish Cup Round Six tie between Rangers FC and Celtic FC at Ibrox Stadium, Sunday 8 March 2026. Its purpose is to establish the facts, understand why a showpiece occasion descended into serious disorder, and recommend the changes required to ensure there is no repeat.

It must be stated unequivocally that the events of 8 March constituted two near-miss incidents of the most serious kind. Responsibility lies squarely with those groups and individuals - almost exclusively male - who behaved in a disorderly and threatening manner with complete disregard for the safety of the majority of fans, and of the stewarding, policing, medical and Rangers FC club personnel whose duty it was to keep them safe. This Review expects that prosecutions continue with full vigour, that courts apply the most robust sanctions available, and that football authorities pursue disciplinary action to the fullest extent of their powers.

It should be recognised that the 2025/2026 season was one of exceptional global visibility for Scottish Football, with the title race between Celtic and Hearts delivering a genuinely compelling climax that captured audiences far beyond these shores. It is therefore all the more regrettable that this wider moment of recognition was overshadowed by serious and repeated incidents of on-pitch encroachment and unacceptable conduct. Fan behaviour of this nature does not exist in isolation, nor is it confined to any single competition or regulatory framework. Accordingly, the Review has drawn upon a broad range of observational sources - including broadcast footage, print media and the direct testimony of those present - and the evidence gathered points clearly to an established pattern of conduct that demands a structured and consistent response.

It is acknowledged that a review of this nature benefits from hindsight - permitting the identification of errors and the framing of recommendations, without this constituting blame. If lessons are to be learned, it is essential that this Report is received in a culture that permits frank acknowledgement of shortcomings and commits to change without equivocation. On that point, the Review is encouraged. There is clear evidence that the governing bodies, the clubs and Police Scotland understand the gravity of what occurred on 8 March and are genuinely committed to change. The task now is to translate that commitment into action.

Finally, I would like to record my sincere thanks to my colleagues Steve Storey and Jonathan Buck, and to all those who gave their time to be interviewed during what was a particularly demanding period at the close of the football season. I am especially grateful for the openness and candour shown by the representatives of the clubs, Police Scotland and Glasgow City Council who contributed to this work. Their willingness to engage frankly, despite the pressures of the moment, is what gives this paper its foundation.

Mark Blackbourne

Independent Lead - Scottish FA Independent Review | July 2026

The Noise

Reaction to the events of 8 March was loud, immediate and varied. The comments below were gathered from interviewees across the Review and from media commentary, editorials, observers and commentators in the days and weeks that followed. They are reproduced here unattributed - a snapshot of the noise surrounding the match, and of the themes that recur throughout this Report. Their inclusion is for context only: to capture the post-match emotion and the reflections of those who love the game in its many colours. They are not intended to sway opinion, nor to influence the findings or recommendations of this Review.

"The events on Sunday were just completely and utterly unacceptable. The level of violence that, well, any violence is unacceptable - the level of violence displayed towards stewards, staff, fans, everybody, was just appalling and the injection of pyrotechnics adds in an extra level of danger which is unacceptable. So, I'm horrified by it and I'm sure the clubs are horrified by it as well."

John Swinney MSP, First Minister of Scotland

"I'm angry on behalf of the majority of all decent fans, who will all feel tarnished and stained by that debacle yesterday, which is the only way to describe it."

Stuart Murphy, Chief Executive - Scottish Football Union

Beyond the formal statements, a number of further observations from those interviewed and from wider commentary captured the themes that recur throughout this Report:

Ultra culture - the power of the minority over the majority, and over the clubs.

Ultra groups - operate like organised crime groups.

Ultra groups - forensically aware.

Tribal fan behaviour - once the Celtic fans went onto the pitch, the Rangers fans came on to confront them and reclaim their turf.

Mass pitch incursion - you cannot stop it once it builds; you can only deter it beforehand, and deal with it once it has occurred.

Marking your own homework - there is no independent oversight of Rangers FC and Police Scotland operational plans.

More severe sanctions - required from The Scottish FA and Scottish Professional Football League.

An entitled generation - with no consequences.

"First and foremost, let's not allow ourselves to blame everything that happened on the police. These were two sets of supporters who can't stand each other and who were prepared to violate all sorts of rules of decent decorum - so let's not remove the blame from those who were prepared to step onto the pitch and create havoc."

"We just want everyone who comes to one of our games to have a positive experience."

"Fan safety shouldn't stop at the border: Scotland must outlaw tailgating."

"My hope is that the proposed legislative change acts as a permanent deterrent that shifts the culture around matchday entry and stadium behaviour."

1. The Disorder - What Happened

The Scottish Cup quarter-final on 8 March 2026 was ultimately defined not by football but by a series of serious safety and public-order failures. Across the day: access gates were forced open; stewards and football staff were assaulted, two hospitalised; pyrotechnics were ignited; antagonistic songs were chanted; seats and LED boards were damaged; graffiti was daubed on internal walls; and missiles were thrown at players, officials and supporters. It was a minor miracle that no-one suffered more serious injury.

The post-match pitch invasion by several hundred Celtic supporters was wholly inexcusable. It provoked an immediate hostile response from sections of the home support, who forced past stewards and police to reach the pitch. Flares and bottles were thrown, a steward and Celtic staff member were accosted, and multiple scuffles broke out before control was re-established.

It must be emphasised that the initial actions of the disorderly Ultra groups (whose conduct set the tone) were a significant contributory factor in the match end descending into the chaotic and embarrassing scenes that unfolded. These actions were the catalyst. The disorder that followed was the consequence.

NOTE The most prominent Ultra Group associated with Rangers FC is the Union Bears, established in 2007. For Celtic FC, the Green Brigade - formed in 2006 - is the primary group, alongside The Bhoys Celtic. Scottish football is experiencing a period of countrywide growth in Ultra group activity, with an increasing number of groups aligning themselves to clubs across the professional game. It is however, the Union Bears and the Green Brigade that have consistently attracted the most significant scrutiny from a safety, security and regulatory perspective, and it is these two groups that dominate the operational planning demands placed upon both clubs and Police Scotland.

1.1 Near Miss - Two Fronts

The review assesses 8 March as a near miss on two distinct fronts:

- On the pitch: masked home fans armed with poles and reinforced gloves came within a very small margin of a violent mass confrontation. The four minutes twenty-eight seconds for the Police to re-establish control was a period in which life-threatening violence was possible.
- Outside the stadium: non-compliant supporters surging past police and stewards created real and foreseeable crushing risk at the Broomloan Road search lanes.

Both must be treated with the same seriousness that actual casualties would have demanded.

1.2 Action is Greater than Words

The review cannot help but follow the views of many, including interviewees, that this is Scottish Football's 'Wembley 2021', a watershed season, where action is greater than words - greater than a report.

2. Scottish FA Terms of Reference, Scope and Methodology

Terms of reference for the independent review into the events surrounding the Scottish Gas Men's Scottish Cup Round Six match between Rangers FC and Celtic FC at Ibrox Stadium on 8 March 2026 (the "Match").

2.1 Purpose and Scope of the Review

The purpose of the review is to assess the planning, operation and delivery of matchday safety, security and medical provision associated with the Scottish Gas Men's Scottish Cup Round Six match between Rangers v Celtic at Ibrox Stadium on 8 March 2026 (the "Match"), with a view to determining lessons learnt.

The scope of the review covers:

- To establish the facts surrounding what happened during the day of the Match, both within Ibrox Stadium and the surrounding area, including examining events and decisions made in advance of, during and after the Match.
- To examine the planning and preparedness of all stakeholders involved in the planning, operation and delivery of matchday safety, security and medical provision associated with the Match.
- To assess the roles and responsibilities and the adequacy of the responses to events, both within Ibrox Stadium and the surrounding area, on the day of the Match.

- To examine all aspects of planning and arrangements for matchday safety, security and medical provision for the Match, identify any areas of weakness and recommend changes.
- To identify any lessons learnt and to make recommendations to ensure there is no repeat of similar scenes at other fixtures with a similar risk profile.

Whilst the original scope of the review is as set out in the Terms of Reference set out above, it is evident that the behaviour of the main participants in Scottish football – clubs, players, supporters, etc. – is not markedly different between League matches and Cup matches. Accordingly, notwithstanding that this review is centred around the Match, the conduct of the review has demonstrated that factors beyond the Match deserve consideration. This report therefore includes comments and reflections that may be outside the original scope of the review, but which are felt worthy of inclusion.

2.2 Methodology and Evidential Framework

This Review was carried out as an independent fact-finding exercise. Its primary focus is the events at Ibrox Stadium on 8 March 2026 - before, during and immediately after the match - and the planning and operational decisions that preceded them. Where relevant, the Review also considered patterns of behaviour that contributed to the events of the day, and whether the disciplinary sanctions framework in Scottish football has a part to play in any findings or recommendations. It is no part of this Review to investigate particular acts of alleged criminality; those are matters for Police Scotland and the appropriate prosecuting authorities.

The Review team interviewed all principal stakeholders and examined operational plans, risk assessments, match logs, post-match reports and CCTV and broadcast footage. Where accounts conflicted, findings have been based on the weight of available evidence. Where the evidence was insufficient to reach a firm conclusion within the timescale of this Review, no finding has been made; instead, an organisational learning has been noted. No finding critical of any organisation or individual rests on a single uncorroborated account alone. The purpose of this Review is straightforward: to establish what happened on 8 March 2026, why it happened, and what needs to change.

3. Context

3.1 The Match - A Fixture of National Significance

For the first time in a generation, an early-round Cup tie between Celtic and Rangers was drawn at a club's home ground rather than Hampden. The quarter-final draw on 8 February 2026 set a month-long planning window for a fixture of exceptional profile; reduced to two weeks after a period of club-differing views. Celtic were allocated 8,042 tickets, occupying the entire Broomloan Stand: the largest away derby allocation since 2018. In recent Premiership seasons allocations had ranged from 2,000–2,500, following a two-year period when there were no away fans at the fixture; coming out of Covid-19 and club-to-club agreed reduced numbers. The jeopardy of extra time and penalties, the scale of the allocation, and the historical resonance of the occasion combined to produce a risk profile that bore no resemblance to the 1 March league fixture between both clubs at the same stadium, against which it was planned.

3.2 Governance and Planning Responsibilities

- Rangers FC: responsible for all stewarding, safety management, risk assessment and operational planning at Ibrox; engaged five steward agencies (655 stewards deployed).
- Police Scotland: to assist Rangers FC and assume responsibility for safety if club safety and security capacity was exceeded. See [Police Scotland document - Role of Police at Football](#). No concerns were raised about the 8,042-away allocation; 'not the bearer of bad news', so promote a 'can do attitude'. With RFC, designed the new away ingress plan and then installed barrier style search lanes; Celtic FC Safety Officer was not consulted in the planning stage.
- Safety Advisory Group (Glasgow City Council): has authority to issue, renew, transfer and amend safety certificates, and to enforce on behalf of the Council all matters relating to safety of sports grounds. In keeping with normal practice, however there was no SAG involvement at any stage before 8 March.
- Scottish FA Match Delegate: match presence as an observer; no executive powers. A single Delegate was unable to cover simultaneous incidents across the stadium.
- Scottish FA: competition organiser, compliance of regulation, and disciplinary function only. No operational planning or delivery role.

3.3 Away Tickets - The Governing Rules

In the Scottish Cup the away club may claim up to 20% of stadium capacity: a competition rule, not a negotiation. By way of contrast, SPFL Rule 127 provides that the home club must provide a “reasonable number” of tickets for away fans and, if the clubs are unable to agree such number, the number of tickets for away fans will be determined by the SPFL board, around 5% has been adjudged to be reasonable – case specific. Rangers FC and Celtic FC, however midway through season 2024/2025, agreed on an allocation of approximately 4% for away fans in SPFL matches between the two clubs.

4. Match Analysis

4.1 Planning Concerns and Failures

4.1.1 Pre-Match

Following the live television draw on 8 February, which confirmed Ibrox Stadium as the host venue for the Scottish Cup quarter-final tie between Rangers FC and Celtic FC, as of the first contact on 9 February – Celtic to Rangers – a dispute arose between the two clubs over the away supporter allocation for the match. Rangers FC executives advanced the position that the club-to-club agreement league fixture allocation of 2,500 Celtic supporters should apply; Celtic FC executives countered that Scottish Cup regulations supersede the agreed league fixture allocation and entitled the away club to an allocation of up to 20% of stadium capacity – historically the full Broomloan Road end, representing approximately 8,000 tickets. Rangers FC deferred the decision, awaiting Celtic FC to formally pursue their regulatory entitlement. Rangers FC subsequently sought clarification from the Scottish FA President, who directed them to the applicable regulation. Rangers FC accepted their regulatory obligation and confirmed the allocation of 8,000 tickets to Celtic FC on 18 February – 10 days after the draw. A further delay then followed between 18 and 23 February, spanning a weekend, during which agreement on away supporter ticket pricing – including the application of a concessionary price at Celtic’s request – was reached.

The scheduling of two Rangers v Celtic fixtures at the same stadium within seven days placed significant strain on planning. Operational focus centred on the 1 March match, leaving compressed preparation time for the 8 March fixture, which in fact carried the higher risk.

A significant dispute arose between the two clubs regarding the proposed ingress plan. Rangers FC advocated a revised approach that would route 8,000 Celtic supporters from Broomloan Road through a restricted access corridor before reaching the wider Broomloan Stand footprint. This position reflected Rangers FC’s review of the 2017 plan – away fans off ‘heavily Police resourced’ Edmiston Drive – in light of material changes in the intervening period – including shifts in supporter-group culture, the resource-intensive demands the previous plan had placed on Police Scotland, and changes to the surrounding area, notably the retail development on Helen Street, which had altered both community disruption risks and the potential for interaction between home and away supporters. Police Scotland added their support to the ‘new plan’.

Celtic FC argued for retaining the established plan, which directed 8,000 supporters from Edmiston Drive directly into the more spacious Broomloan Stand footprint – a route familiar to all fan groups and previously demonstrated to be workable at scale. Dialogue between the clubs began in the days preceding the pre-operations meeting and continued within it, with Celtic FC expressing concern that the revised plan placed excessive reliance on supporter compliance and lacked adequate contingencies for non-compliant groups, including Ultra factions. The meeting concluded with significant frustration on both sides; nonetheless, the revised ingress plan was ultimately adopted.

A comment recorded in the Match Delegate’s report noted that the Event Police Lead (EPL) representative described the proposed arrangements as “aspirational” during the pre-ops meeting. No Safety and Security Plan, nor any Police Scotland operation, should ever be characterised in this way. All such plans must be risk-based, risk-assessed, and operationally deliverable – not aspirational.

The Match Delegate’s post-match report indicates that Celtic FC’s Ultra group – who were subject to a club-imposed banning order prohibiting their attendance at any Celtic fixture – were nonetheless factored into pre-match planning discussions. It appears that representatives from Celtic FC discussed the Ultra group’s potential presence and behaviours with Rangers FC and Police Scotland. This highlights the challenges of implementation, and raises serious questions about the effectiveness of club-imposed banning orders, particularly at away grounds, and the extent to which planning was based on anticipated non-compliance rather than the formal restrictions imposed by Celtic FC.

The scale of this concern is material. At the pre-operations meeting, Celtic FC disclosed 227 club-imposed bans, of which 197 related to Green Brigade members. Notwithstanding those bans, Celtic FC openly discussed the group’s intended drums and seating locations, Green Brigade lower tier and The Bhoys upper tier and a planned pre-match

march - an acknowledgement, in effect, that the banning order was unlikely to be observed. This assessment proved well-founded. There is a club acknowledgement and clear media evidence that Green Brigade members attended away fixtures following the imposition of the bans. The banning order, as applied, did not function as a meaningful restriction.

4.1.2 Failure Summary

- Lack of multi-agency meetings; first multi-agency meeting - consider the significant operational changes (1) ingress for 8,000 (2) largest away fan allocation since 2017 - 5 March, three days before the match. No tabletop exercise was ever conducted.
- Risk Assessment near-identical to the 1 March league fixture despite 5,600 additional away supporters and penalty jeopardy. Pitch incursion rated 'Unlikely'. A number of interviewees independently used the word: complacency.
- Five search lanes deployed for 8,042 supporters; seven were used for 5,600 fewer supporters at the 10 May league fixture at Celtic Park between both clubs. No fan-flow calculations carried out by Rangers FC or Police Scotland.
- From Police Scotland interview no plan for ticketless fans left on the stadium footprint allowing for repeated attempts to enter by doubling-up, forgery or forcing gates.
- Celtic FC Safety Officer was not consulted on planning the away ingress plan, but raised concerns to the Rangers FC Safety Officer, prior to and at the pre match Ops meeting 3 days before the fixture.
- Neither the Rangers FC Safety Officer nor the Police Scotland EPL had conversation in regard to which end to use for penalties, a safety issue, not a football preference – allowed under IFAB Laws of the Game Law 10.3 'Unless there are other considerations (e.g. ground conditions, safety etc.), the referee tosses a coin to decide the goal at which the kicks will be taken, which may only be changed for safety reasons or if the goal or playing surface becomes unusable'

The treatment of the likely non-compliance by the Green Brigade with the club-imposed ban on them as a planning assumption by Clubs and Police Scotland rather than an exception indicates a failure in the effectiveness of such bans.

4.2 Collapsing Planning Period

- Scottish Cup Draw: 8 February 2026
- Ticket Allocation Dispute: RFC internal and external discussions as to club-to-club allocation position v's Scottish Cup 20% entitlement; 10-day delay
- Ticket Allocation Agreed: 18 February 2026
- Ticket Prices Agreed: 23 February 2026
- Match Day: 8 March 2026
- **Four weeks of planning time reduced by half**

FOOTNOTE OBSERVATION *The 'unique' circumstance of back-to-back fixtures at Ibrox on 1 March and 8 March between the same two clubs raises an important question: did the reduced planning period allow for full risk analysis, and the consequential contingency planning required for a fixture of this scale and risk profile? The review considers that it did not, and that this represents a localised planning failure distinct from, and additional to, the individual operational failures identified elsewhere.*

4.3 Police Scotland

- Police Scotland deployed 590 officers on matchday duty of which 111 were located inside the stadium on 8 March; this compares to 566 officers deployed on 1 March of which 111 were located inside the stadium. Those officers not assigned inside the stadium are positioned on the stadium footprint, ready to be deployed at the request of the Stadium Control Room located EPL, as well as traffic and community officers.
Figures noted from the Police Scotland Operational Commands Ver3.0.
- Police Scotland recorded in the Central Log that the Event Police Lead took stadium responsibility at 15.47hrs from the Safety Officer and returned the stadium to the Safety Officer at 16:03hrs. A Signed Statement of Intent has been recorded.
- Police Scotland's capacity to react to in-game developments was significantly constrained. The number of officers deployed inside the stadium was limited; additional resources were delayed in reaching pitch side owing to the time required for Public Order officers outside to negotiate the CBRN barriers before entering the stadium. Further officers were committed to upper-tier vomitories and exit gates in support of the

planned post-match hold-back operation, reducing the pool of resource available to respond dynamically during the match.

- In interview Police Scotland were recognised by the clubs with 'Doing a Good Job' in regaining the control of the stadium.
- It is deeply disturbing (for Glasgow, for Scottish football, and for the standing of the game) that a post-match Glasgow City Council Special SAG meeting should record that time-served Police Scotland officers are described as 'petrified' of policing another match at Ibrox Stadium. That word must be read in context, not in isolation; but so qualified, it remains deeply disturbing for Scottish football. This reference demands the most serious attention from all parties with responsibility for the governance of safety and security at major football fixtures in Scotland.

4.4 Stewards – Rangers FC

- Rangers FC Head of Safety and Security, as per SGSA Green Guide recommendation, Level 4 Qualification.
- Typically, during match time the Safety Officer is in the Stadium Control Room.
- Safety Officer has two Deputies.
- Stewarding for the match was under the control of Deputy Safety Officer/Head Steward.
- Rangers FC's own Security company, Garrion Security, acts as main contractor for steward recruitment, with sub-contractors ASG, G4S, Rock Steady and Security Scotland and Securi Group being called upon to complete the required deployment numbers.
- Ibrox Stadium is divided into ten seating areas, plus external turnstile monitoring, each overseen by a Stand Manager - an experienced and dependable matchday employee with a thorough understanding of their sector's geography and the operational challenges within it.
- Post Brexit and Covid there has been a reduction in the available number of qualified stewards; it is not uncommon for stewards to be transported from south of the border.
- It is not uncommon for games between Celtic FC and Rangers FC to find stewards working the stadium for the first time.
- It was recorded within RFC's Stand Managers post-match debrief; "I expect that some of the stewards will be sufficiently unnerved to decline future role at Ibrox".
- Steward numbers for 1 March; 605 stewards as per pre-op's notification.
- Steward numbers for 8 March; 640 Stewards as per pre-op's notification; 655 deployed.

Figures noted from the Match Delegate's report

FOOTNOTE OBSERVATION Following Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, the pool of qualified stewards has reduced, with it now being commonplace for personnel to be brought in from south of the border. In fixtures between Celtic FC and Rangers FC, it is also not unusual for some stewards to be working at the stadium for the first time. It was recorded within RFC's Stand Managers post-match debrief; I expect that some of the stewards will be sufficiently unnerved to decline future role at Ibrox.

There is an obvious challenge to the SO and the Stand Managers each matchday to position stewards in best fit locations.

4.5 Ingress - Pre-Match Near Miss

"Evidenced by Police Scotland drone footage, the coordinated actions of the Celtic Ultra group, the Green Brigade - whose members demonstrably waited for sufficient numbers to gather and assessed potential areas of weakness before acting - overwhelmed stewards and police at the Broomloan Road search lanes, creating dangerous conditions for supporters, stewards and Police officers in an already overcrowding area." As reported in RFC Stand Manager debrief notes supporters without tickets and with forged tickets, rushed to the turnstiles and tried to gain entry by doubling-up and forcing Exit gates. At Exit Gate 31, a steward was subsequently found to have been accepting payments and directing supporters to turnstiles and fire exits; he has since been arrested. Gate 31 was opened, allowing an estimated 30–40 fans unlawful entry and contributing to overcrowding in the Broomloan Stand. Away Turnstiles were closed for 28 minutes by the Safety Officer, to attempt to regain control outside - itself creating build-up and crush risk.

4.6 In-Stadium Behaviour

Sectarian chanting by both sets of supporters. Pyrotechnic devices were deployed in both home and away sections (*detailed below, as per Match Delegate's recorded match report*). Coins and vapes were thrown at players and match

officials. A Rangers player reported racial abuse; noted by match referee and Match Delegate's report and Control Room log - it should be noted that this matter was followed up by Celtic. The RFC mascot was twice observed and recorded, by the Match Delegate, provoking the away support and personally warned by the Safety Officer. Reported by the Match Delegate at the time, and recorded in his post-match report, that RFC music was audible throughout the stadium from 10:30am, when Celtic supporters were the only occupants - represent a preventable provocation at a high-risk fixture.

Pyrotechnic Use

Seven devices were recorded and witnessed inside stadium within the Rangers support and approximately twenty within the Celtic support.

Pre-Match

- *Home team Ultra group Union Bears members, ignited pyrotechnics during the march to Edmiston Drive.*
- *Away team Ultra group, Green Brigade members ignited green, white and yellow smoke devices within the away section; acrid smoke took approximately five minutes to clear.*

In-Match

- *13:31 - Sodium flare ignited behind the Union Bears banner.*
- *13:36 - Green smoke devices ignited within the Celtic support following a goal.*
- *100th minute - Five flares ignited within the Union Bears section, Copland Stand, following a Rangers goal.*

Post-Match

- *Two smoke devices ignited within the Green Brigade section; one further device near vomitory 1.*
- *During the pitch incursion, a sodium flare was thrown from approximately 30 yards into the Celtic support, thrown back and forth between both sets of supporters before self-extinguishing.*

4.7 Pitch Incursion

Following the decisive penalty, Celtic player number 22 ran to the Broomloan Stand and swung on the crossbar. Two to three supporters joined from the Broomloan stand to celebrate; a significant number rapidly followed. As a follow on from a small number of individual RFC fans entering the pitch from the lower tiers of the Main Stand and Govan enclosures, the RFC Union Bears and other home supporters left the Copland Stand for the track and pitch. They ran en masse towards the Celtic supporters to violently confront them. A flare was thrown between the two groups six times - one striking an RFC security operative; the CCTV operator was also struck by a flare. Stand Manager was confronted by a masked Rangers fan - assumed to be an Ultra group member - and hit in the face and hospitalised - the club's Stand Manager (employee) is receiving ongoing treatment to the inner ear following a traumatic injury. Police established control in four minutes and twenty-eight seconds. Rangers FC, through season ticket allocations, have agreed to position Union Bears members centrally within the lower tier of the Copland Stand. The Celtic Ultra group, the Green Brigade, were located in the lower tier front rows, whilst the Bhoys were allocated upper tier - though it must be noted that a significant number of Green Brigade members had secured entry to the stadium illegally, having been subject to a Celtic FC banning order. It can reasonably be inferred that these individuals displaced legitimate ticket holders to establish themselves in front row positions. In both cases, this placement afforded each group the most direct and unimpeded access to the pitch, and the greatest capacity to influence crowd behaviour at moments of high tension and emotion. The Celtic Ultras were the first to enter the pitch in jubilation, with others following their lead. In contrast, the Union Bears' movement onto the track and towards the pitch was reactionary, confrontational, and overtly threatening. In both cases, the proximity of these groups to the playing surface materially increased the likelihood of a mass incursion and contributed to the rapid escalation of disorder.

4.8 Supporter Coach Transport

Pre-operational meeting information indicated that between 100 and 110 Celtic supporter coaches were expected to arrive at Ibrox on 8 March. This intelligence was Celtic FC's 'gut-reaction' estimate. There is no pre-match communication between Celtic FC and coach operators, meaning there was no means of communicating with operators before the event and no capacity to manage matchday emergency situations involving coaches or their passengers. The lack of formal communications between organisers and coach contractors allows for Coach operators to work outside of the operational plan, as with the Celtic supporters coach described below. This represents a significant gap in the planning for a fixture of national significance.

A further layer to this high-risk traffic management operation is the 200-plus Rangers FC supporter coaches. The post-match incident on Helen Street, in which a Celtic Supporters Club coach passenger required considerable hospital treatment and extended care from the trauma, and three Rangers supporters were arrested - highlights the need to

have supporter coach protocols: registering the vehicle, the driver contact, and the route taken, with a dedicated Police Officer responsible for that liaison, as currently happens in England.

4.9 Medical

The Medical Plan in place for the match met the minimum medical requirements for both team and crowd care, including the provision of qualified personnel with life-support capability and the necessary equipment. Lead Crowd Doctor was recorded to be onsite at 9:55hrs allowing for the stadium to open. The first aid provision is pre-determined across all tribunes and levels, supported by three designated doctors and three medical rooms. As is standard at Ibrox Stadium, all fixtures are planned based on full stadium occupancy; medical resourcing and capability are therefore aligned to maximum attendance rather than the profile of the competing teams.

The match on 1 March was medically unremarkable and presented no concerns regarding the delivery of medical services for the subsequent fixture on 8 March. All planned arrangements were considered appropriate and proportionate and repeated for the match on 8 March.

At Hampden Park, Ibrox Stadium and Celtic Park, it is the same medical providers, Scottish Ambulance Service and St Andrew's First Aid, and they are coordinated from the Stadium Control Room. Scottish Ambulance Service and St Andrew's First Aid are regular attendees to Pre Op's and Glasgow City Council SAG meetings.

FOOTNOTE OBSERVATION Under Green Guide principles, stadium management must provide a dedicated and fully accessible First Aid Room that aligns with the Medical Plan. For capacities above 15,000, this should offer at least 25 m² of working space, two examination beds, and seating for casualties, other fixtures and fittings are detailed, such as Hot and Cold water, lockable cabinets. At multi-tiered venues (e.g. Ibrox, Celtic Park), satellite First Aid Rooms may be required unless effective mobile provision is in place. Where a Safety Certificate applies, the local authority should be consulted on suitability and compliance.

Match Occurrence - Injury to a Child in the Broomloan Stand

During interviews and in written statements, it was reported that a 10-year-old boy seated in the Broomloan Stand was struck on the head and face by a coin thrown from within the crowd. The child and his father sought immediate assistance from St Andrew's First Aid personnel located in the stand.

Three conflicting accounts – Rangers FC, Celtic FC, Police Scotland, and Medical lead interviewees - were subsequently provided regarding the follow-on care:

- That the Crowd Doctor declined to attend the child in the Broomloan Stand.
- That stewards and/or Police Scotland officers declined to escort the child to the Main Stand Medical Room for assessment by the Crowd Doctor.
- That the child and father declined to cross into the home section, where the medical room is located.

According to the Stadium Medical Care Lead, the normal and expected procedure in such circumstances is that stewards and/or Police escort first aiders and the injured party from their seating area to the nearest medical room for further assessment. For reasons that remain unclear to the Medical Care Lead, this process did not occur on this occasion. The child and his father subsequently left the stadium at half-time to seek further medical attention elsewhere.

Key Findings

- The Medical Plan met minimum statutory requirements and was proportionate for a full-capacity fixture.
- Abnormal number of in stadium First Aid treatments, set amongst some of the most difficult conditions Scottish Ambulance Service and St Andrew's First Aid have had to work in.
- The management of a child injured by a thrown coin during the match was inadequate, as suggested by the Medical Care Lead. Three conflicting accounts of what happened and why normal escort procedures were not followed have not been reconciled.
- The failure to follow standard medical escort procedures represents a duty of care gap that must be addressed. The Medical Care Lead acknowledging the learning from the events of the day. The wellbeing of an injured child should never be contingent on which section of the stadium he is seated in.
- The incident reinforces the review's observation that objects thrown from the stands represent a direct risk to life and wellbeing and must be treated as such in any future sanctioning framework.

4.10 Post-Match

- At 16:39 a Celtic supporter bus was attacked on Helen Street; a supporter was left unconscious in the road and in need of emergency hospital treatment and care; three RFC supporters arrested.
- Operation Moonglint (Police Scotland) is the ongoing criminal investigation: 31 arrests to date, plus one steward (Gate 31). Rangers FC response to Police Scotland's assistance was speedier than Celtic FC's.
- In April 2026, Rangers FC introduced a formal Supporter Conduct and Sanctions Policy in direct response to the events of 8 March. The framework operates on the basis of individual accountability: every person is assessed on their own conduct and the available evidence. Seventeen individuals have been contacted under the policy. The majority fall into Tier 4 (Very Serious) or Tier 5 (Gravely Serious), reflecting the fact that most cases arose directly from police action and involve serious criminality at the fixture. Tier 4 and 5 cases carry guideline sanctions of two to five years and indefinite ban respectively, with immediate suspension of the individual's ticketing account pending determination. The policy's introduction is noted by this review; application, and timely outcomes, will be the measure of its effectiveness.

5. Match-Specific Observations - 8 March 2026

Directed primarily at Rangers FC, Police Scotland and the Scottish FA as competition organiser.

OBS 01

Police Scotland raised no concerns about the 8,042-away allocation (a figure not seen at Ibrox in eight years), despite the reduced twelve-day planning window. The absence of any risk-based challenge is a surprise.

OBS 02

A multi-agency tabletop exercise should be conducted for all matches of national significance. None was conducted for 8 March. As a comparison - in the month leading to Sunderland v Newcastle FAC3 6 Jan 2024 six multi agency meetings chaired by Sunderland City Council SAG and included Newcastle United FC, that included two tabletop exercises.

OBS 03

For high-risk matches, where risk of a mass pitch incursion is foreseeable/likely, Police and stewards should conduct a physical practice of the pitch incursion plan on the pitch before fans arrive - particularly for officers and stewards unfamiliar with the stadium layout.

OBS 04

The Rangers FC Risk Assessment was near-identical to the 1 March league fixture despite 5,600 additional away supporters and penalty jeopardy. Pitch incursion rated 'Unlikely'. This did not reflect foreseeable risks.

OBS 05

There were an insufficient number of search lanes installed for 8,042 supporters; seven lanes were used for 5,600 fewer supporters on 10 May. No fan-flow calculation was carried out. This must not be repeated. Consideration should also be given to specific lanes for females – allows for designation of female searchers - children and elderly, improving the search lane control, management and environment.

OBS 06

Contingency for 8,000 away fans must include the staff car park adjacent to Loverose Way Broomloan ramp for additional search-lane capacity and a second fan entry point – removal of perimeter wire fence and knee-high tubular barriers will allow for a clear second ingress way off Broomloan Road. The Police carrier van and horse deployment narrowed the Broomloan Road ramp with no fan dispersal route if crushing occurred. Fan-flow design must not create a containment without an escape route..

OBS 07

No plan existed for ticketless fans attempting entry by doubling-up, forgery or forcing gates. This must be a standing element of contingency planning for high risk matches and an integral part of the Safety Officer's match risk assessment.

OBS 08	For high-risk matches, Police Scotland Event Police Lead should attend and contribute to the RFC Stand Managers briefing. The RFC SO should attend and contribute to the Police pre-match briefing. These are not optional.
OBS 09	Neither the RFC SO nor the Police Event Police Lead had discussed which end to use for penalties. The choice of penalty end could be a safety issue, not a football preference, as 8 March demonstrated. Permissible within IFAB Laws of the Game Rule 10.3
OBS 10	During high-tension moments (goals, disallowed goals, penalties), Police and steward resources in front of both Ultra groups must be increased. The five-metre gap between officers during the shootout was insufficient. The number of Police Officers deployed pitch side facing both Ultra groups was insufficient and there would have been expectation to incrementally increase as the match went from 90 minutes – extra time – penalties.
OBS 11	Increased police presence is required both outside and inside the away turnstiles at fixtures where non-compliance, forgery or forced entry is foreseeable.
OBS 12	Covering face/wearing masks is contrary to the stadium Ground Regulations and the RFC Ultra group who invaded the pitch were predominantly wearing masks. Sale of face coverings outside the stadium should be prevented. Enforcement by Glasgow City Council as a Ground Regulations breach must be significantly more robust.
OBS 13	RFC music audible in the stadium from 10:30am when Celtic supporters were the only occupants: a basic failure of atmosphere management and a preventable provocation.
OBS 14	At the Police Scotland offsite Control Centre, where Gold / Silver Command was operational on 8 March, there was no visual imagery of events at the stadium: no inside CCTV feed and no Premier Sport subscription broadcast feed. Gold Command was therefore managing a major public-order incident without real-time visual situational awareness of the ground. Explained by Police Scotland in interview that this was a hot debrief concern that would be discussed further.
OBS 15	Conditions in the Broomloan Stand appeared visually congested and, in parts, potentially overcrowded. The Rangers FC Safety Officer's assessment, based on live turnstile ingress data confirming no more than 8,000 entrants, and the existence of gaps at the sides and rear of the tribune, countered the visual picture. However, this interpretation carries two significant limitations. First, it does not account for the possibility of unlawful entry through Exit Gate 31 and other means. Second, gaps at the sides and rear of a stand are of limited safety value if the aisles, walkways and vomitories serving that stand are blocked. It is the flow and evacuation capacity of those routes, not aggregate seat availability, that determines whether a stand is safe. The blocking of aisles, walkways and vomitories is recognised by UEFA as a serious safety risk and is subject to a financial penalty in European competition. Scottish football should apply the same standard domestically, and football supporters deserve nothing less!
OBS 16	The Away Club Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO) is responsible for engaging with all relevant stakeholders and ensuring that travelling supporters are fully prepared for their arrival. This includes providing accurate, detailed communication on the host club's ingress and egress arrangements, as well as all in-stadium requirements, restrictions and behavioural expectations. At the pre-ops meeting, and in follow-up communications, Rangers FC made explicitly clear that streamers, banners and tifos requested by Celtic supporters would not be permitted entry. Interview with Police Scotland identified a notable absence of authoritative instruction from Rangers FC staff, and insufficient supporting direction from the Celtic SLO and stewards at the point of entry. This responsibility should not default to Police Scotland to enforce what is fundamentally a home club ruling. Effective and firm pre-match

communication between Rangers FC, Celtic FC and the Celtic SLO to their supporters would have removed the need for police involvement in what is fundamentally a club-to-club operational matter.

6. Additional Relatable Observation

- At the Scottish Cup Final at Hampden on 23 May 2026 (Scottish football's most prestigious occasion), a Celtic supporter group displayed a large 'All Cops Are Bastards' banner in plain sight of tens of thousands of supporters and television cameras. It should embarrass Scottish football that this happened on its showcase day. Police Scotland officers were present in significant numbers doing precisely what the banner sought to demean. In the stands were their fathers, mothers, sons and daughters - football supporters who came to celebrate a cup final and were made witness to a public declaration of contempt for their families. The wider Scottish football-supporting community deserved better.

At the SPFL fixture on 1 March, it was recorded by the SPFL Match Delegate, that a Tifo was unfurled the full length of the lower tier of the Copland Road Stand with the phrase 'All You See Is Crime In The City'. Prior to kick-off 4 persons wearing all-white forensic suits left the tribune and walked on to trackside and with spray cannisters replaced the word 'Crime' with 'Rangers'. They then returned to the tribune, under the large Tifo de-clothed to prevent identification; not found. Police Scotland opened a crime report.

It was stated in interview that "fans must be given an opportunity to express their views, and that striking the right balance is a consideration."

Whilst recognising the operational challenges clubs face - including groups evading search procedures and the difficulties of removing displays once unfurled - there is insufficient club control over tifos and banners, and an inconsistent application of entry conditions across Scottish football - each stadium operating its own policy that, in practice, goes largely unread by supporters - creating avoidable embarrassment for Scottish football at a time when it is actively promoting itself to a global audience. This is evidenced by the Directors' protest banners displayed regularly at Celtic Park, the four white forensic suits displayed at Ibrox on 1 March - described elsewhere in this Report - and the banner aimed at Police Scotland at the 2026 Scottish Cup Final.

This is a solvable problem. UEFA and the Premier League require mandatory pre-approval of all banners and large displays before they reach the stands. Scottish clubs are required to comply with that standard in European competition and should do so in domestic Scottish football. The Scottish FA and Scottish Professional Football League should review their current approval and access protocols and introduce a centralised approval system that delivers a consistent standard across all clubs and stadiums in Scotland. Such a system would also provide supporters with clear, consistent conditions governing the entry of banners and tifos - removing ambiguity, establishing a consistent application of entry conditions, and reducing the potential for confrontation at the point of entry.

- At the conclusion of what had been a hugely dramatic end to the SPFL season, and at a moment when international attention was focused on Scottish football-there was a further escalation in disorder across multiple fixtures. Whether these incidents represented spontaneous copy-cat behaviour or something more deliberate is a matter for further assessment; however, given that Celtic Ultra groups and associated supporters were involved in two other pitch incursions during the same period, the pattern is more consistent with coordinated. In response, the Scottish Professional Football League opened disciplinary investigations into five matches, three of which occurred outside the Premiership.

FOOTNOTE OBSERVATION Fan behaviour of this nature does not exist in isolation, nor is it confined to any single competition or regulatory framework. Accordingly, the Review has drawn upon a broad range of observational sources - including broadcast footage, print media and the direct testimony of those present - and the evidence gathered points clearly to an established pattern of conduct that demands a structured and consistent response.

7. Ticketing - Recommendations and Observations

The following recommendations and observations were gathered from interviews with the Heads of Ticketing at Hampden Park, Ibrox Stadium and Celtic Park. They are presented collectively and reflect shared professional judgement on the operational lessons arising from the events of 8 March 2026 and the wider ticketing environment in Scottish football.

7.1 Digital and Physical Ticketing

- Increased use of digital Away ticketing should be explored where operationally appropriate.
- Unique visual ticket differentiation should be introduced between major fixtures where paper tickets remain in use.
- Wider use of digital ticketing could improve:
 - Ticket cancellation capability
 - Real-time operational control
 - Audit visibility
 - Supporter traceability
 - Supporter communication capability
- Wider operational use of dynamic barcode or rotating QR code technology should be explored.
- Scottish football should consider whether existing operational caution regarding digital Away ticketing remains proportionate to the technical and operational capability now available.

7.2 Traceability, Audit and Ownership

- Greater consideration should be given to ticket ownership traceability, customer-level audit visibility and transfer visibility during high-risk fixtures.
- Greater consideration should be given to how Supporters Club allocations are distributed, monitored and audited.
- Consideration should be given to whether high-risk fixtures should require a more consistent minimum standard of ticket holder visibility and operational reporting capability across participating clubs.

7.3 Operational Integration and Planning

- Greater operational integration between Ticket Offices, Safety Officers, Match Operations teams and Police should be considered.
- Greater consideration should be given to the role of ticketing, and especially experienced ticketing staff, within wider crowd safety planning and Away fixture operational planning.
- Additional contingency planning should be developed for:
 - Ticketless supporters
 - Forged tickets
 - Tailgating
 - Perimeter breaches

7.4 Standards and Governance

- Consideration should be given to whether existing Scottish Professional Football League operational toolkits and unacceptable conduct guidance should contain clearer operational expectations and minimum ticketing standards relating to:
 - Ticket traceability
 - Customer-level audit visibility
 - Supporter group allocation accountability
 - Information sharing capability
 - Ticket transfer controls
 - Digital reporting capability
- Scottish football may benefit from reviewing operational approaches already more commonly utilised within England, UEFA competition environments and Hampden Park where digital ticketing is more widely used than at Celtic or Rangers.

8. Disciplinary Framework

The Scottish FA is the primary regulatory body responsible for the governance of supporter conduct at Scottish Cup and other Scottish FA-governed fixtures. Its disciplinary framework, operated through the Judicial Panel Protocol, sets the standard against which club accountability for unacceptable conduct is measured. The Scottish Professional Football League operates a parallel framework covering all league fixtures. Both frameworks are now structurally aligned. Their sanctions are not. This section examines the Scottish FA framework in detail. Whilst not within the original scope of the review, as set out in the Terms of Reference referred to in section 2 of this report, it is felt valuable and worthwhile to draw a comparison between the Scottish FA disciplinary framework and the Scottish Professional Football League framework, in order to identify where both must strengthen.

8.1 The Frameworks

The Scottish FA's framework is the senior accountability mechanism for supporter conduct at Scottish Cup fixtures. It operates under Article 28 of the Scottish FA's Articles of Association and Disciplinary Rule 37 of the Judicial Panel Protocol. The framework imposes three express duties on clubs:

- to prevent supporters from engaging in Unacceptable Conduct;
- to identify supporters who engage in Unacceptable Conduct; and
- to take proportionate disciplinary measures against those supporters.

The Scottish Professional Football League's framework operates through Rules H36 and H37, mirroring the same three duties (prevention, identification and proportionate sanction) at the same standard of obligation. The structural alignment of the two frameworks is a positive development, achieved progressively over recent seasons. The critical divergence is not in what is required of clubs, but in the scope of application and, more significantly, in the severity of the sanctions each body is prepared to impose.

The Scottish FA framework applies to Scottish Cup and all other Scottish FA-governed fixtures. The Scottish Professional Football League framework covers all 38 league match days across the four divisions. Where the Scottish FA holds jurisdiction, it applies the more severe sanction regime. That gap is the central finding of this section.

	SCOTTISH FA - Article 28 / Rule 37	SCOTTISH PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE - Rules H36 & H37
Primary rule	Article 28 + JPP Rule 37	Rules H36 and H37
Duty to prevent UC	✓ Expressly stated	✓ Expressly stated
Duty to identify	✓ Expressly stated	✓ Expressly stated
Duty to sanction	✓ Expressly stated	✓ Expressly stated
Standard	Reasonably practicable	Reasonably practicable
Strict liability	✗ Not adopted	✗ Not adopted
Scope	Scottish Cup and Scottish FA fixtures	All Scottish Professional Football League Official Matches
Proven in practice	✓ Three cases: 2025/26	✓ Multiple cases: 2024/25 and 2025/26

8.2 Scottish FA Disciplinary Outcomes - Season 2025/26

Three clubs were charged with Rule 37 breaches in Scottish Cup fixtures in season 2025/26. All three admitted.

Club	Match / Date	Charge	Sanction
Clydebank FC	Stranraer v Clydebank 29 Nov 2025	Prevention only	Suspended: entire ground closure on further SCup Rule 37 breach. No financial penalty.

Falkirk FC	Stenhousemuir v Falkirk 8 Feb 2026	Prevention only	£500 fine (£250 immediate). Suspended: 25% covered seating closure on further SCup breach.
Greenock Morton FC	Stenhousemuir v Morton 17 Jan 2026	Prevention + identification + sanction	£500 fine (£250 immediate). Suspended: 50% uncovered standing closure on further SCup breach.

Greenock Morton's Cappielow holds 11,589 yet averages around 2,800 (barely 24% utilisation). A 50% section closure does not punish the club meaningfully; a largely empty ground, the capacity buffer absorbs the reduction without significant financial consequence. As a deterrent, the sanction lacks teeth; sanctions against the average attendance rather than spare stadium capacity could have greater impact.

8.3 Scottish Professional Football League Disciplinary Outcomes - Season 2025/26

Following the orchestrated illegal pyrotechnic displays at the 2024 Scottish League Cup semi-finals and final at Hampden-which delayed kick-off-the Scottish Professional Football League commissioned proceedings involving Celtic, Rangers and Motherwell. That action led to a more robust response to subsequent incidents, resulting in 11 disciplinary cases involving eight clubs in 2025/26. The cases covered pyrotechnics, thrown objects and pitch incursions across all four divisions.

Match	Date	Sanction	Type
Celtic v Aberdeen (SF)	2 Nov 2024	Commission SF & F	See below
Motherwell v Rangers (SF)	3 Nov 2024	Commission SF & F	See below
Motherwell v Rangers (SF)	3 Nov 2024	Suspended: reduction of 800 tickets at Hampden Cup tie	Suspended
Rangers v Celtic (Final)	15 Dec 2024	Suspended: reduction of 800 tickets at Hampden Cup tie Immediate: 500 tickets at Hampden Cup tie	Suspended / Immediate
Rangers v Celtic (Final)	15 Dec 2024	Suspended: reduction of 800 tickets at Hampden Cup tie Immediate: 500 tickets at Hampden Cup tie	Suspended / Immediate
Ayr v Partick Thistle	9 May 2025	Suspended stand/area closure on further breach	Suspended
Aberdeen v Celtic	14 May 2025	Suspended: reduction of 200 tickets (affected area)	Suspended
Celtic v St Mirren	17 May 2025	Suspended: reduction of 200 tickets (affected area)	Suspended
Motherwell v Rangers	2 Aug 2025	Suspended: reduction of 50 away tickets	Suspended
Motherwell v Hibernian	25 Nov 2025	Financial penalty + reduction of 50 away tickets	Financial / Suspended
Falkirk v Motherwell	3 Dec 2025	Financial penalty reduction of 50 away tickets	Financial / Suspended
Dundee v Aberdeen	6 Dec 2025	Financial penalty + reduction of 50 away tickets	Financial / Suspended
Kilmarnock v Rangers	6 Dec 2025	Triggered prior suspended sanction: immediate reduction of 50 away tickets	Triggered
Rangers v Motherwell	27 Dec 2025	Suspended reduction of 100 away tickets	Suspended

In May 2026 the Scottish Professional Football League opened further investigations in five matches:

- Inverness Caledonian Thistle v Hamilton Academical
- Motherwell v Celtic
- Hamilton Academical v Clyde
- Celtic v Heart of Midlothian
- Stenhousemuir v Alloa Athletic

8.4 Observations

Scottish football is dealing with an upward trajectory of recorded unacceptable conduct by fan groups and individuals. The volume and variety of incidents documented across seasons 2024/25 and 2025/26 - pyrotechnics, objects thrown, pitch incursions, anti-social behaviour and targeted intimidation of players and officials - is not a statistical fluctuation. It is a trend. The disciplinary frameworks exist to reverse that trend. The evidence of this section is that, in their current form, they are not doing so. The sanctions are too modest, too deferred and too inconsistently applied to alter the behaviour of the clubs, groups and individuals they are designed to deter.

Nine observations, with the Scottish FA position stated first in each:

- The Scottish FA has not yet imposed an immediate crowd restriction as a first-response measure; all venue-closure sanctions in 2025/26 were suspended. The Scottish Professional Football League position is no different. Neither body has moved beyond the suspended sanction as a default. The trajectory of incidents across season 2025/26, including the title-deciding fixture at Celtic v Heart of Midlothian on 16 May 2026, makes clear that suspended sanctions alone are not generating the deterrent effect required. The Scottish FA, as the senior regulatory body, should lead the move to immediate first-response sanctions.
- The Scottish FA's maximum immediate financial penalty applied in 2025/26 was £250, a figure that is not a credible deterrent for any club operating in professional football. The Scottish Professional Football League's cash equivalent for suspended ticket reductions is of similarly low financial consequence. Again, the Scottish FA should lead a move to significantly increase the financial element of first sanctions, scaled to club revenue.
- The Scottish FA applied the full three-limbed charge (prevention, identification and sanction) in only one of its three 2025/26 cases (Greenock Morton FC). The other two were limited to the prevention duty alone. The Scottish Professional Football League, by contrast, applied the three-limbed charge consistently across its proceedings. The Scottish FA must match that consistency; selective application of only one limb understates the nature of the breach and weakens the deterrent message.
- The Scottish FA does not publish a formal escalation tariff. The variation in venue closure scope across the three 2025/26 cases (100%, 25% and 50% respectively) is unexplained in the published determinations. Without a published tariff, clubs cannot predict consequence, stakeholders cannot scrutinise consistency, and the Scottish FA cannot demonstrate proportionality. The Scottish Professional Football League is in the same position. A jointly published escalation framework, covering both bodies, based on average attendances, should be considered.
- A charge of unacceptable conduct brought by the Scottish FA in a cup competition and a charge brought by the Scottish Professional Football League in a league fixture are, at present, treated as entirely separate proceedings, governed by separate bodies, with no mechanism for one to draw on or compound the other. This review considers that position to be structurally inadequate. Where a club carries a suspended sanction in one competition and then commits an equivalent offence in another, the later charge should not be treated as a first breach in isolation. The frequency of misconduct is the relevant fact, not the competition in which each incident occurs. At a time when Scottish football is confronting an upward trajectory of unacceptable conduct and both bodies have expressed a commitment to zero tolerance and strengthened sanctions, the continued independence of the Scottish FA and Scottish Professional Football League sanctioning regimes produces an outcome that is neither coherent nor credible. The alignment of sanction policy across both bodies, so that a club's full disciplinary record across all competitions is considered at the point of charge, is a structural reform this review regards as necessary.
- The Scottish FA's sanction of a 50% uncovered standing closure at Greenock Morton FC illustrates a structural weakness in the current framework. Cappielow holds 11,589 but averages around 2,800 (barely 24% utilisation). A section closure at a near-empty ground carries no meaningful financial or operational consequence for the club. Sanctions must be calibrated against actual impact, not nominal capacity. The Scottish FA should consider revenue-based financial penalties as the primary deterrent at low-attendance clubs where physical closures lack teeth.
- The Scottish FA, the Scottish Professional Football League and the Scottish Football Safety Officers Association have each engaged fully in the Scottish Government's consultation on football banning orders - a shared recognition that legislative reinforcement is required to give the disciplinary frameworks the reach

and consequence they currently lack. That engagement must continue as part of the advocacy for the legislative changes set out in REC 13.

- The Scottish FA, as the primary regulatory body responsible for the governance of supporter conduct at Scottish Cup and all other Scottish FA-governed fixtures, and as the commissioning body for this Report, is best placed to assume a lead position in opening structured dialogue with the Scottish Professional Football League. This should seek to reinforce a zero-tolerance approach to unacceptable fan behaviour, bring the respective disciplinary sanctions into even closer alignment, and establish a formal mechanism for sharing data and findings across all cases of club discipline - demonstrating a joined-up approach to what is a demonstrably increasing trajectory of 'serious' unacceptable conduct. Where recommendations within this Report reference the SPFL, ownership and responsibility for driving those changes must remain with the Scottish FA and its officers, leading by mandate and working collaboratively with others to effect lasting reform.
- It must also be noted that supporter behaviour does not change according to the competition format in which a match is played. Fan conduct observed across league and cup fixtures forms part of a continuum, and patterns of behaviour are evidenced consistently across competitions. It follows that both the Scottish FA and the Scottish Professional Football League should have full regard to the established conduct record of clubs, supporter groups and individuals when determining sanctions - drawing on the breadth of available evidence across all competitions rather than treating each case in isolation, as present sanctioning practice appears to do.

9. The Players

The following reflects evidence from the Chief Executive of PFA Scotland, on the safety concerns of professional players and what they are calling for.

9.1 The Workplace

The pitch is a place of work. The obligation to provide a safe working environment is not suspended at the touchline. The increasing frequency of pitch incursions, pyrotechnic incidents and threatening conduct has eroded that safety - and players are no longer prepared to accept it as an occupational hazard.

An Aberdeen player was struck on the head by a thrown seat at Dundee United game in May 2025, requiring hospital treatment. An individual prosecution followed.

9.2 Pitch Incursions and Player Safety

Instances of pitch incursions towards the end of the League season, where players were photographed amongst goading fans on the pitch. A player's emotional response to that provocation is human. The risk that the player's reaction becomes the story while the incursion is a footnote is one PFA Scotland regards as profoundly unjust.

The PFA Scotland position is unambiguous: Scotland should move towards the standard that already applies in England and Wales, where entering the playing area at a designated football match without lawful authority or excuse is a criminal offence under section 4 of the Football (Offences) Act 1991. In Scotland, no equivalent stand-alone offence currently exists.

9.3 What Players Are Calling For

PFA Scotland calls for:

- Strict liability; consequences on Ultra groups through their clubs.
- Harsher immediate sanctions.
- Increased campaigning for the criminalisation of pitch incursions, tailgating and wider Football Banning Orders: PFA Scotland, Scottish FA and Scottish Professional Football League have already communicated this to the Scottish Government.
- Wider use of Football Banning Orders covering racism, online abuse and sectarianism.

9.4 Lord Advocate's Guidance and Player Briefings

- PFA Scotland recognises that player conduct, such as the goal celebration of CFC number 22 and other actions that may heighten emotions, can create risks for both players and fans alike, including those arising from pyrotechnics.
- PFA Scotland has never been involved in the delivery or messaging of the Lord Advocate's Instructions to players.
- PFA Scotland would welcome formal involvement in pre-season briefings and in-season refresher programmes. This review endorses that without reservation.

10. Recommendations

Recommendations (REC) are structural, operational, legislative, physical and cultural changes for adoption going forward. These are in addition to the match observations (OBS) in Section 5 above.

PART A STRUCTURAL & GOVERNANCE

REC 01 SANCTIONS - IMMEDIATE & COLLECTIVE

Move away from suspended sanctions towards immediate consequences. Increase use of section and stadium closures. Advance the debate on club accountability for supporter behaviour.

NOTE Pitch incursions, Pyrotechnics, doubling up at turnstile, overcrowding within tribunes whilst wearing face coverings to prevent detection have become normalised at certain fixtures. Individual sanctions alone will not change the incentive structure for clubs or Ultra groups.

REC 01A SANCTIONS: ALIGNMENT AND STRENGTHENING

The structural alignment of the Scottish FA and SPFL frameworks is acknowledged. Both bodies now expressly impose the three-limbed duties of prevention, identification and proportionate sanction on clubs, at the same standard of obligation. The following steps are required to translate structural alignment into operational equivalence: (1) introduce immediate sanctions - section or ground closures - as the default first-response for any confirmed breach, displacing the current regime of suspended-only measures; (2) scale financial penalties to club revenue and league tier rather than applying flat nominal amounts; (3) apply the full three-limbed charge consistently across all eligible cases in both frameworks; and (4) publish a formal escalation tariff covering the progression from first to subsequent breaches, applicable to both Scottish FA and Scottish Professional Football League proceedings. It is acknowledged that this report was commissioned by the Scottish FA, and that these recommendations are therefore directed at the Scottish FA, in the first instance. Nonetheless, the Scottish FA, as the governing body for football in Scotland, should discuss the alignment referred to above with the SPFL.

NOTE The Scottish FA & Scottish Professional Football League has publicly acknowledged that disciplinary action within the game must be reinforced by legislative intervention, specifically on Football Banning Orders, Pitch incursions, Pyrotechnics, doubling up at turnstile. This review endorses that position. See also REC 13.

REC 01B SCOTTISH FA - INTRODUCE A WORKABLE CHARGING STANDARD

Identify a charging standard between 'reasonably practicable steps' and clubs taking more accountability for supporter behaviour. Examine the UEFA standard as a workable precedent.

REC 01C SCOTTISH FA - REBALANCE TOWARDS IMMEDIATE SANCTIONS

Section closure, not ticket reduction, should be the standard first-response for confirmed unacceptable conduct. Suspended sanctions reserved for genuinely isolated first incidents. Seek alignment with SPFL on this matter.

REC 01D SCOTTISH FA - PUBLISHED ESCALATION TARIFF

An escalating tariff of sanctions should be introduced, based on a rolling 3-year period, that includes section or stadium closure. Published in advance; no discretion. Seek alignment with SPFL on this matter.

REC 01E SCOTTISH FA- SCALE FINANCIAL PENALTIES TO REVENUE

Penalties banded by annual revenue / league tier; current fines are not a credible deterrent for many clubs. Seek alignment with SPFL on this matter.

REC 01F ULTRA GROUP ACCOUNTABILITY

Where incidents are linked to Ultra groups, clubs must formally sanction those groups as a condition of continued stadium access. Failure to act should itself constitute a breach of rules regarding unacceptable conduct.

REC 01G SCOTTISH FA- TRANSPARENCY OF DISCIPLINARY OUTCOMES

All outcomes (rule breached, sanction imposed, any suspended element) to be published in full to allow external scrutiny. Seek alignment with SPFL on this matter.

REC 02 ESTABLISH A JOINT SAFETY & SECURITY (JSS) BODY

Scottish FA should lead consideration of the establishment of a Joint Safety and Security (JSS) body to assume a formal oversight role in the governance of safety and security across Scottish football. The JSS will:

- Lead safety and security discussions between clubs, Police Scotland, SAGs and government.
- Appoint an Executive Head of Safety and Security for Scottish football to advise within the JSS and liaise strategically with Police Scotland.
- Lead the review and delivery of Independent Review recommendations, and recommendations arising from past associated reports – appendix C
- Represent Scottish football in central government football safety and security discussions.
- Create and maintain momentum for structural change across Scottish football.

JSS Structure (proposed)

- **Independent Chair** - proven experience in policing football and strong understanding of Green Guide best practice.
- **Scottish FA nominee** - former committee member with Safety & Security experience.
- **Scottish Professional Football League nominee** - former committee member with Safety & Security experience.
- **Executive Head of Safety & Security (Scottish Football)** - appointed by the JSS; accountable to the Independent Chair; responsible for day-to-day delivery of the JSS work programme.
- **Police Scotland and the Football Safety Officers' Association Scotland** - specialist advisers to the panel.
- **Fan Representation** - Scottish football to discuss the accommodation or non-accommodation within the JSS.

REC 03 SAG - REFORM & ENHANCED ROLE

Align Scottish SAGs with the model in England and Wales; local authorities to hold equivalent enforcement powers. Independent Chairs with football safety expertise. SAG representatives in the Stadium Control Room for all Cat C and C('ir') fixtures. SAG to have powers to enforce decisions and act as independent adviser in operational disputes.

FOOTNOTE - REC 03 DCC Mark Roberts 2019 Report on Football Policing in Scotland called for reform.

As recorded by Police Scotland in season 2025/26, there were 35 Category C fixtures and 9 Category C 'increased risk' C('ir') fixtures. All 9 Cat C('ir') fixtures took place in Glasgow or Edinburgh.

REC 04 AWAY FAN ACCESS & TICKET ALLOCATION

Review 20% Scottish Cup rule; SPFL requires a 'reasonable number', around 5% has been judged reasonable. Scottish FA and SPFL must align to 'appropriate, workable, safe to operate', with safe to operate as a primary consideration for elevated-risk fixtures; home clubs to express and evidence Safety & Security risks.

REC 05 MATCH DELEGATE - ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

For all Cat C and C('ir') fixtures, appoint a second Match Delegate with safety officer or policing experience. Match Delegate 1 and 2 (MD1 / MD2) pre-match: with access all area accreditations jointly cover home and away external entry, tunnel and technical area. During match: MD1 in main tribune; MD2 in Control Room or elevated vantage point. MD1 files the report to Scottish FA or Scottish Professional Football League (and or JSS).

PART B OPERATIONAL

REC 06 PRE-OPERATIONAL MEETING FRAMEWORK

Minimum expectation - Pre-Op No.1 (3–4 weeks): both clubs' Safety & Security reps, Police Match Commander, JSS rep. Away club SO must have input to the away ingress plan before it is agreed. Pre-Op No.2 (MD-7): full multi-agency. Pre-Op No.3 (MD-3): commercial and operational.

NOTE No SAG involvement before 8 March; Celtic FC was not invited to any.

REC 07 COMMUNICATIONS - PRE MATCH TRIPARTITE

Pre-match communications must be tripartite: Led by Home Club, Away Club, Police Scotland. LED boards must switch to safety and stewarding instructions during active disorder. Routine commercial content during a pitch incursion is prohibited. There was no use of stadium PA during the incursion!

REC 07A COMMUNICATIONS - IN MATCH EMERGENCY AND LED MESSAGING

LED boards must switch to safety and stewarding instructions during active disorder. Routine commercial content during a pitch incursion is prohibited. There was no use of stadium PA during the incursion!

REC 08 TICKET CONTROLS & DIGITAL TICKETING

Profile-based and/or conditional ticket sales for high-risk fixtures. Dynamic digital ticketing with ID-based entry. Unique ticket colouring to distinguish league from Cup matches. Restrict resales and transfers to prevent banned individuals accessing allocations. Prevent rightful ticket holders being displaced by unmanaged supporter group movements.

REC 09 CCTV - AUDIT EXTENSION & LOW-LIGHT STANDARDS

Extend the Scottish Professional Football League CCTV audit to (1) cover temporary installations including search lanes and soft ticket-check areas. All CCTV effective in low-light conditions. No CCTV covered the search lanes on 8 March, and (2) how football can assist Police Scotland in their visual awareness needs (REC09A).

REC 09A GOLD COMMAND - VISUAL SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

For all Category C and C('ir') fixtures, Police Scotland Gold / Silver Command at the offsite Control Centre must have access to: (1) explore the technical possibility of a live CCTV feed from the stadium control room; and (2) where the fixture is broadcast, the live television feed (Premier Sports or equivalent). These are not enhancements - they are basic operational requirements for effective command at distance. The absence of both on 8 March left Gold / Silver

Command without real-time visual situational awareness during an escalating incident. This must be treated as a non-negotiable requirement, with confirmed access arrangements noted at Pre-Op No.1.

REC 10 SAFETY OFFICER - GREEN GUIDE CALCULATIONS

The SO is personally responsible for Green Guide compliant fan-flow calculations across all ingress and egress routeways. This responsibility cannot be delegated to Police Scotland. For an 8,000-capacity away allocation, lane numbers must be calculated against flow rate - not replicated from a 2,500 configuration.

REC 11 MANDATORY MATCH OFFICIAL BRIEFING PROTOCOL

Within 5 days of matchday: formal safety and security briefing document circulated to referee. On matchday, 60 minutes before KO: in-person briefing with SO and Police Match Commander. In the case of any match that has the potential of 'Determining the Outcome of a Match' by penalty shoot-out (IFAB Law 10.3) the briefing must address which end is used for penalties, requiring a joint club and police contingency plan in place – a safety issue, not a football preference.

REC 12 COACH OPERATOR REGISTRATION

Operators transporting supporters to designated matches must register with Police Scotland: company name, registration numbers, driver details and passenger numbers. Non-registration exposes operators to criminal liability and regulatory action against their licence, as in England Coach Operator's standard.

PART C LEGISLATIVE & REGULATORY

REC 13 LEGISLATIVE CHANGE - ALIGN WITH ENGLAND & WALES

Football Banning Orders: broaden grounds beyond violence to include threats to safety. Pyrotechnics: statutory possession/use offence at designated events. Tailgating: specific offence for gaining entry using another person's ticket. Face coverings: statutory power to prohibit at football event. Pitch incursions: explore statutory offence equivalent to Football (Offences) Act 1991 s.4. Supporter Club Transport: Scotland should push to match England - notification of travel to a locally dedicated Police Officer should be adopted as the minimum expectation.

REC 14 SCOTTISH FA/SPFL DIRECTIVE APPROACH TO MATCH DAY OPERATIONS

Expand Scottish FA/SPFL toolkit directives to cover match day delivery standards following a UEFA and Premier League model. Scottish FA/SPFL approvals for tifos and banners – fan group, via club submission no later than seven days before the fixture. Unapproved banners such as seen at the Scottish Cup Final should fall within the Unacceptable Conduct chargeable protocols.

REC 15 STRUCTURED ENGAGEMENT WITH ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS

Scottish FA, Scottish Professional Football League and Police Scotland to increase with invested engagement with the Premier League Observer Programme and the NPCC / UK Football Policing Unit partnership - directly supporting readiness for Euro 2028.

PART D PHYSICAL & INFRASTRUCTURE

REC 16 NETTING & PHYSICAL DETERRENTS

Extended netting to prevent objects thrown between sections. Netting on the front three rows of the away and ultra sections to deter pitch incursions and allow a permanent trackside police/steward presence, as seen in most UEFA club matches, and at Tynecastle, Edinburgh. Each club's safety and security will determine practicality and proportionality given the layout of the sector and the stadium.

PART E CULTURE, PEOPLE & SAFE WORKPLACE

REC 17 CLUB MINDSET - SAFETY OVER SPORTING ADVANTAGE & OTHER INTERESTS

Sporting advantage, Commercial or Ultra-group interests must not override safety. Host clubs must provide a genuinely welcoming away environment. Pre-match music playlists actively managed at high-risk fixtures. Club mascots must not antagonise the away support. Home and away clubs to cooperate on concourse content.

REC 18 EMPOWERING THE RESPONSIBLE MAJORITY

Increase supporter engagement in reporting unacceptable conduct via reporting tools. Club supporter bodies to be given a formal voice in safety discussions.

REC 19 DUTY OF CARE - STEWARDS, STAFF & OTHERS

Stewards must not be deployed beyond their training. Catering staff in away sections must wear neutral clothing. Ball attendants, broadcasters, and photographers must be subject to safety policies covering risk zones such as pyrotechnic awareness, and trackside and pitch access

REC 20 PLAYER CONDUCT - CELEBRATORY BEHAVIOUR & CROWD SAFETY

Clubs must brief all players, in relevant languages, on the safety and legal consequences of celebratory conduct directed at supporter sections. FBO consequences must be explained. A prior pattern of such behaviour is an aggravating factor in any subsequent disciplinary assessment.

REC 20A PFA SCOTLAND - FORMALISE INVOLVEMENT IN LORD ADVOCATE'S GUIDANCE AND PLAYER BRIEFINGS

The exclusion of PFA Scotland from the Lord Advocate's guidance process is a structural gap. PFA Scotland's involvement in pre-season and in-season player briefings on safety, conduct and the Lord Advocate's Instructions should be formalised as a standing arrangement, not left to individual club discretion. Scottish FA, Scottish Professional Football League and Police Scotland should be invited to engage directly with PFA Scotland as part of any review or reissue of the guidance.

***NOTE** This structural gap sits alongside the broader finding of this review that Scottish football has not been sufficiently joined up in its approach to safety and security. See also Section 9 - The Players.*

PART F TICKETING

REC 21 DIGITAL AWAY TICKETING

Increased use of digital Away ticketing should be explored where operationally appropriate. Scottish football should consider whether existing operational caution regarding digital Away ticketing remains proportionate to the technical and operational capability now available.

REC 22 UNIQUE VISUAL TICKET DIFFERENTIATION

Unique visual ticket differentiation should be introduced between major fixtures where paper tickets remain in use, to reduce forgery risk and improve steward recognition at the point of entry.

REC 23 DYNAMIC BARCODE AND ROTATING QR CODE TECHNOLOGY

Wider operational use of dynamic barcode or rotating QR code technology should be explored to prevent ticket duplication, screen-sharing and unauthorised transfer at high-risk fixtures.

REC 24 TICKET OWNERSHIP TRACEABILITY AND AUDIT VISIBILITY

Clubs to implement ticket ownership traceability, customer-level audit visibility and transfer visibility during high-risk fixtures. Scottish FA, in discussion with SPFL (or the JSS), should give consideration to whether high-risk fixtures (Cat C and Cat C(ir)) should require a more consistent minimum standard of ticket holder visibility and operational reporting capability across participating clubs.

REC 25 SUPPORTERS CLUB ALLOCATION ACCOUNTABILITY

Clubs must be able to demonstrate visibility to how Supporters Club allocations are distributed, monitored and audited. Clubs must be able to demonstrate visibility of who holds tickets within group and affiliation allocations at risk fixtures. Cannot assume the supporters' club acts in the club's best interests. Scottish FA, in discussion with SPFL (or the JSS), should give consideration to whether high-risk fixtures (Cat C and Cat C(ir)) should require a more consistent minimum standard of ticket holder visibility and operational reporting capability across participating clubs.

REC 26 OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION - TICKETING, SAFETY AND POLICE

Greater operational integration between Ticket Offices, Safety Officers, Match Operations teams and Police Scotland should be considered.

REC 27 TICKETING STAFF IN CROWD SAFETY PLANNING

Ticketing expertise should be represented at all pre-operational meetings for high-risk Category C and Category C (ir) fixtures. Modern ticketing solutions carry an integral safety and security function that cannot be discounted, particularly at fixtures of national significance.

REC 28 CONTINGENCY PLANNING - TICKETING FAILURE SCENARIOS

Additional contingency planning should be developed for: (1) ticketless supporters; (2) forged tickets; (3) tailgating; (4) perimeter breaches. Each scenario should have a defined response protocol agreed between the host club Ticket Office, Safety Officer and Police Scotland at Pre-Op No.1.

REC 29 SCOTTISH FA / SCOTTISH PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE OPERATIONAL TOOLKITS - MINIMUM TICKETING STANDARDS

It is the opinion of the Review that Scottish FA / Scottish Professional Football League unacceptable conduct guidance toolkit should contain clearer operational expectations and minimum ticketing standards relating to ticket traceability; customer-level audit visibility; supporter group allocation accountability; information sharing capability; ticket transfer controls; and digital reporting capability.

REC 30 REVIEW OF ENGLISH AND UEFA OPERATIONAL APPROACHES

Scottish football may benefit from continuing to review operational approaches already more commonly utilised within England and UEFA competition environments, including digital access management. It is noted that Hampden Park leads the way in Glasgow stadia use of digital access management.

10.1 Scotland Has Led Before

SCOTLAND HAS LED BEFORE *An Observation from the Independent Lead*

For many years, Scotland has quietly led Europe in the modernisation of football stadia, setting benchmarks that influenced UEFA policy and practice. The foundations were laid by the late Ernest Walker (former Scottish FA General Secretary) whose leadership of the UEFA Stadia Committee helped drive a new era of safety, infrastructure improvement and professional standards across the continent. Ernie's work was complemented through the work of Kenny Scott (former Strathclyde Police Chief Superintendent) Head of Safety & Security, who championed a shift away from traditional public-order models towards a more progressive, fan-engagement approach rooted in partnership, communication and trust.

Now, however, Scotland must find its own reforming Ernie and Kenny once again - leaders willing to confront today's challenges with the same clarity, courage and modernising ambition - and address the issues that can no longer be left unresolved.

11. Pathway to Full Away Allocation

Ibrox / Broomloan Stand

7,000 – 8,000

Celtic Park / South East Corner

7,200

The 8 March fixture at Ibrox has set the immediate tone: away allocations between the two Glasgow clubs will remain restricted in the near term. But as in Edinburgh, supporters and clubs of Glasgow alike will look to the coming years for a collective commitment from football authorities, the clubs, Police Scotland and Glasgow City Council to chart a pathway back to full allocations.

This pathway cannot be declared by one party alone. It requires an all-stakeholders agreement, governed by the JSS or SAG if effective and empowered - on the conditions to be met and the evidence that they have been met.

This review, and the pathway it proposes, is where that discussion journey begins.

01**Independent oversight in place**

The JSS must be operational, with safety and security at the primacy of its mandate, not just established on paper.

02**Minimum number of multi-agency meetings - Cat – 'C' increased risk**

Mandatory minimum number of multi-agency planning meetings for all high-risk fixtures. For Cat C('ir') games, tabletop exercises are standard practice, not an exception.

03**Ticketing embedded in safety planning**

The ticket office is part of the safety function.

04**Conditional point-of-sale and no transfer**

Tickets sold subject to supporter identity conditions. Profile selling; enclosure season ticket holders prioritised over 'behind the goal' sections. No transfer. Everyone in the ground must be accountable.

05**Joint communication plan agreed**

Led by the home club, an agreed and shared communications plan with the away club and Police Scotland before any fixture. No unilateral changes after it is agreed.

06**Zero tolerance demonstrated, not declared**

Both clubs must show, through action and disciplinary records, that zero tolerance to unacceptable conduct is an operating reality. Visible removal of in stadium offenders 'has to be actioned' Words are not enough.

Dr T Smith Nov 2016

research 'Pyrotechnics in Stadium' indicates smoke devices to be acute/chronic effects. We remove or censor cigarette smokers and or vaping, so why do we stand back in these instances and do nothing?

07

Immediate sanctions - no more suspension as default

The framework of immediate, non-suspended sanctions must be in force. Clubs seeking larger allocations must have a clean or improving record under it.

08

Education campaigns in support of the 99%

Both clubs invest in credible education campaigns that put the safety and security risks caused by the 1% squarely in front of the genuine majority.

09

Legislative change - championed by Scottish FA and SPFL

Legislative change championed by the Scottish FA and Scottish Professional Football League directly to central government, to have increased visibility and momentum by clubs, fans and football authorities. The 99% are the moral and political argument.

Must be with the PFA, FSOAS, Police Scotland and the genuine fans of Scottish football.

12. Interviewee Reflections and Review Notes

The following reflections were gathered from interviewees across the review and are presented as direct observations rather than formal recommendations. They capture aspects of the cultural, operational and organisational reality that structured recommendations alone cannot fully convey. The review notes that follow represent the independent assessor's own conclusions.

G.1 ULTRA CULTURE - POWER OF THE MINORITY

Ultra groups exercise a power over clubs and the wider supporter base that is disproportionate to their size. The majority of supporters - law-abiding, genuine football fans - are being held hostage to the behaviour and demands of a disorderly, vocal and at times threatening minority. Clubs have demonstrated a reluctance to confront this dynamic, in part because of the atmospheric value Ultra groups provide, and in part through fear of the consequences.

It is noted that Celtic FC on one recent occasion imposed a banning order upon circa 200 identified members of the Green Brigade for the period November 2025 to April 2026, preventing access to Celtic Park and access to away match tickets.

G.2 ULTRA GROUPS - ORGANISED LIKE SERIOUS CRIME GROUPS

Interviewees independently described the organisational characteristics of certain Ultra groups in terms more commonly associated with organised crime groups. These groups exhibit internal hierarchy, coordinated planning, operational security awareness, and the use of intimidation in securing 'best position'. The implication for football authorities and Police Scotland is significant: these are not spontaneous groups of disorderly fans but organised entities that require an intelligence-led, multi-agency response.

G.3 ULTRA GROUPS - FORENSICALLY AWARE

Members of certain Ultra groups are acutely aware of evidential thresholds and investigative processes. The widespread use of face coverings - balaclavas, masks and hoods - on 8 March was not accidental. It represents a deliberate, coordinated attempt to defeat identification and avoid accountability. This forensic awareness directly undermines CCTV effectiveness, post-event investigation and the Football Banning Order process. It must be treated as an aggravating factor, not merely a style choice, and addressed through the legislative changes recommended in Part C.

G.4 TRIBAL FAN BEHAVIOUR - THE PITCH AS CONTESTED TERRITORY

Once Celtic supporters moved onto the pitch, Rangers supporters came on to confront them and reclaim what they perceived as their territory. This is a well-understood dynamic in tribal crowd psychology: the pitch at Ibrox is not neutral space to Rangers supporters. The incursion by celebrating away fans is experienced as a provocation and an occupation, triggering an immediate retaliatory response. Any operational plan for a derby fixture between the two Glasgow clubs at a home ground must treat a pitch incursion by the away support as the probable trigger for a counter-incursion by the home support, not as an isolated event.

G.5 MASS PITCH INCURSION - DETERRENCE OVER PREVENTION

Interviewees were candid on this point: a mass pitch incursion involving hundreds of people cannot be physically stopped once momentum builds. The realistic operational objectives are deterrence before the event - through physical infrastructure, visible policing, credible sanctions and clear messaging - and effective, rapid containment and control once an incursion has occurred. Planning must reflect this honestly. Contingency plans premised on preventing a mass incursion are inadequate; plans must include what happens in the four minutes and twenty-eight seconds after the first supporters reach the pitch.

G.6 INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT - MARKING YOUR OWN HOMEWORK

Whether matches are played at Hampden Park, Celtic Park or Ibrox Stadium, there seems to be no independent external scrutiny of the clubs' or Police Scotland's operational plans for high-risk fixtures. The Risk Assessment for 8 March was produced by the host club and rated foreseeable risks as Unlikely. The ingress plan was jointly devised by the Rangers FC Safety Officer and Police Scotland match command, signed off by the host club's Safety Officer alone - with no away club input and, in the case of a significant operational change of this scale, no independent verification of flow-rate calculations. The SAG had no pre-match role. The result is a closed planning loop in which those responsible for delivery are also those assessing whether their plans are adequate. The JSS and reformed SAG proposed within this Review are the structural answer to that problem.

G.7 COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

The current sanctions framework holds individuals accountable but largely insulates clubs from the consequences of their supporters' behaviour. Several interviewees noted that this produces a perverse incentive structure: clubs face limited organisational risk from the disorder associated with their Ultra groups and therefore have insufficient motivation to confront or curtail them. Collective responsibility - where clubs bear measurable consequences for the actions of their supporters - is the mechanism that realigns those incentives. It is not a punishment for the innocent majority; it is a pressure on club leadership to exercise the authority they have but have been reluctant to use.

G.8 MORE SEVERE SANCTIONS REQUIRED

Across interviewees, there was a consistent and strongly expressed view that the Scottish FA and Scottish Professional Football League have the disciplinary powers to act more severely than they have done but have chosen not to use them. The existing rulebook - which every club signs up to - provides for financial penalties, points deductions, and expulsion. The observer's characterisation of this as a Trust Gap between fans and football authorities was independently validated by several interviewees from within the sport itself. The question is not whether the tools exist. It is whether there is the will to use them.

NOTE 1 A MATCH OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE. *The 8 March fixture was not a routine derby league match between the two Glasgow clubs. It was a Scottish Cup Quarter-Final, a knockout tie at a home ground, broadcast live, between the two most significant clubs in Scottish football, at which Celtic won a cup tie at Ibrox for the first time in 69 years. The jeopardy of extra time and penalties, the scale of the away allocation, and the historical resonance of the occasion combined to produce a risk profile that bore no meaningful resemblance to the 1 March league fixture against which it was planned. It must be designated and planned as a match of national significance in future, with all the additional resource, oversight, and contingency planning that designation demands.*

Baroness Casey's Review of Euro 2020 - Wembley Stadium (2021) refers to games of National Significance, and the Glasgow city derbies are of National Significance for the global audience it brings to Scotland and its commercial value (Broadcast and Sponsorship) to Scottish FA and Scottish Professional Football League.

NOTE 2 A NEAR MISS ON TWO FRONTS. *As bad as the scenes of 8 March were, the review assesses this as a near miss on two distinct fronts. On the pitch: the confrontation between both sets of supporters, with masked home fans armed with poles and reinforced gloves, came within a very small margin of becoming a violent mass confrontation. The four minutes and twenty-eight seconds it took to establish control was a period in which serious, potentially life-threatening violence was possible. Outside the stadium: the failure of the search-lane operation, caused by non-compliant Ultra group fans surging past police and stewards, created conditions in which a crushing incident was a real and foreseeable risk. Both near misses must be treated with the same seriousness that actual casualties would have demanded.*

NOTE 3 FORESEEABLE, PREDICTABLE - AND YET. *Hindsight makes analysis easy. But the Review is compelled to note that a significant number of the issues that materialised on 8 March - including non-compliant Ultra group behaviour, pitch incursion risk, ticketing irregularities, the tension of a penalty shootout, and the reaction to a Celtic win at Ibrox - were not unforeseeable. They were foreseeable. Several were predicted. The risk assessment rated them as Unlikely. That the 1 March fixture was characterised by one interviewee as unremarkable, and that the host club drew satisfaction from an event that passed without major incident, may point to a degree of complacency in the planning for 8 March - evidenced by the production of a risk assessment that was, at best, near identical to that of the previous fixture, and wholly insufficient for the materially different conditions the Cup tie presented.*

NOTE 4 INEXPERIENCE - 8,000 AWAY FANS AT IBROX. *Neither Rangers FC nor Police Scotland had key leads on the ground with experience of managing an away allocation of 8,000 Celtic supporters at Ibrox. The last comparable allocation was in 2018 - eight years prior. In the intervening period, away allocations ranged between 2,000 and 2,500, with a two-year period of no away fans at all. The institutional knowledge of what 8,000 away supporters requires - in terms of search-lane capacity, flow-rate calculations, stewarding numbers, police deployment and contingency planning - had not been maintained. This is not an excuse; it is an explanation of one of the root causes, and one the pre-operational planning framework recommended in this review is specifically designed to address.*

NOTE 5 AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF BRAVERY. *This review is critical of planning failures, risk assessment shortcomings and structural weaknesses. It is equally important that it records what this review observed on 8 March at the level of individual human conduct. The majority of stewards and police officers present that day faced the highest level of non-compliance, intimidation, threats and violence from individuals with disorderly and criminal intent - and they held the line. Some were physically assaulted. Two required hospital treatment. Several have indicated they will not return to Ibrox. Their bravery and unwavering commitment, in conditions that no one working in a professional capacity at a football match should ever face, deserves explicit and unequivocal recognition in this review.*

Appendices

A - Independent Review Team

Lead

Mark Blackbourne - Sports Event Consultant; UEFA Match Delegate and UEFA Stadium Inspector

Mark is a Durham-based sports event consultant with extensive experience in match operations at the highest levels of domestic and international football. He continues to lead on match operations at major club and international competitions under UEFA and FIFA jurisdiction, operating as a UEFA Match Delegate - the role UEFA describes as the highest sporting authority at any match under its jurisdiction, responsible for ensuring that competition regulations and safety and security requirements are observed before, during, and after the game. In that capacity, Mark has worked across UEFA club competitions and international fixtures, providing independent oversight of stadium operations, crowd safety, and the conduct of clubs and their officials. His appointment as Independent Lead for this review reflects both the depth of his operational experience and his standing as a trusted, neutral figure within European football governance.

Specialists

Steve Storey - Former Chief Superintendent, Northumbria Police; Head of Safety and Security, Newcastle United FC

Steve brings a rare combination of senior law enforcement experience and front-line football safety management to this review. A former Chief Superintendent with Northumbria Police - the force responsible for policing one of the most high-profile and emotionally charged fixture environments in English football, including the high-risk Tyne-Wear derby - as the lead Match Commander at both clubs, he developed deep expertise in public order, major event planning, and the policing of large-scale sporting occasions. Following his police career, Steve moved into professional football as Head of Safety and Security at Newcastle United, holding direct operational responsibility for supporter safety at St James' Park and working in close partnership with Northumbria Police and other agencies to deliver safe and secure matchday and event operations.

On leaving St James' Park, he played a role in the early years of the Premier League Safety and Security Observer Programme - a scheme that deploys independent observers across all 20 top-flight clubs to work alongside each club's Ground Safety Officer, producing collaborative assessments that capture good practice, identify areas for development, and provide expert narrative analysis of every safety and security incident at a fixture. His career arc - from commanding football policing operations, to leading a Premier League club's safety function, to helping establish the independent assessment framework within which the entire top-flight is now evaluated - gives him a uniquely informed, dual-perspective view of the responsibilities and tools available to both police and clubs in managing crowd safety.

Jonathan Buck - Rightreal Ltd

Jonathan is a specialist ticketing consultant based in the northeast of England, operating through Rightreal. He works across UK sport ticketing with suppliers operating in or entering the UK market, and with clubs at key points of change, advising football clubs and sports organisations on ticketing strategy, supporter management, and best practice across the full ticketing lifecycle - from season ticket structures and pricing models to digital access and customer experience.

Starting at Newcastle United FC implementing a fully integrated computer system, which led to managing the design, development and implementation of an in-house software solution covering Ticketing, Membership, Marketing, Merchandising and CRM. Continuing his career in ticketing systems has seen Jonathan work with Wembley Stadium, Liverpool FC, Fulham FC and Manchester City FC.

B - Organisations Interviewed

- **Scottish FA**
- **Scottish Professional Football League**
- **Rangers FC**
- **Celtic FC**
- **Police Scotland**
- **Glasgow City Council**
- **Scottish FA Match Delegate**
- **Scottish FA Match Officials**
- **Scottish Ambulance Services**
- **Sports Grounds Safety Authority**
- **PFA Scotland**
- **Former Safety Officers (FSOA-Sco)**
- **Scottish Football Supporters Association**
- **PGMOL Match Officials**
- **Premier League**
- **Newcastle United FC**
- **Sunderland AFC**
- **Sunderland City Council**

C - Reference Documents and Earlier Reports

Earlier Reports - Lessons for Changing Social Times

Previous incidents of public disorder at football matches have produced a number of reports and reviews, many of which remain directly relevant. This review reflects on, and reminds the football community of, the findings of those documents - including the uncomfortable question of whether governing bodies have been reluctant to act, or whether certain measures have been judged inappropriate to adopt.

In the changed social context of 2026, each of the following deserves to be re-read and its recommendations re-tested for implementation.

- **The Lord Advocate's Instructions to Chief Constables (1996)**

The Lord Advocate's Instructions regarding incidents during sporting events set the prosecutorial framework within which football-related offending in Scotland is reported and pursued. They remain the backdrop against which decisions on charging, reporting and the use of common-law and statutory offences are taken, and they should be revisited in light of the disorder seen at Ibrox.

- **The Bowen Report (2016)**

Commissioned following the disorder at the Rangers v Hibernian Scottish Cup Final of 2016, the last comparable scenes inside a Scottish ground before 8 March 2026 - the Bowen Report examined the planning and management failings that allowed a mass pitch incursion and confrontation to occur. Many of its observations on segregation, contingency planning and the management of celebratory incursions are echoed by the events of this review.

- **The Roberts Report (2019) - Football Policing in Scotland**

Commissioned by the Chief Constable of Police Scotland, the Roberts Report addressed the policing model for football in Scotland, the relationship between clubs and the police, and the resourcing and command arrangements for high-risk fixtures. Its conclusions on the division of responsibility between clubs and police, and on intelligence-led deployment, bear directly on the questions raised by the 8 March operation.

- **Baroness Casey's Review of Euro 2020 - Wembley Stadium (2021)**

Baroness Casey's review of the disorder at the Euro 2020 final at Wembley provides learnings and recommendations from which Scotland can draw. Her analysis of mass unauthorised entry, the failure of containment, the behaviour of organised disorderly groups, and the gap between planning assumptions and the reality on the day is strikingly relevant to the breaches and incursions documented in this report.

D - Sequence of Events - 8 March 2026

Drawn from the Ibrox Stadium Control Room log, the Police Scotland Stadium log and evidence gathered by the review. RFC - Rangers FC; CFC - Celtic FC; UB - Union Bears; SO - Safety Officer; PS - Police Scotland; EPL - Event Police Lead; B'loan - Broomloan; Cop - Copland.

TIME	OCCURRENCE
8 Feb	Scottish FA R6 cup draw: Rangers v Celtic at Ibrox. KO time: Scottish FA request 3pm; PS decline (Anti-Social Behaviour risk); agreed 1pm. RFC hold two positions on allocation: club-to-club 2,400 vs Cup rule 20% / 8,042. CFC invoke Cup rules.
12 Feb	RFC informally ask Scottish FA President Mulraney: club agreement or Cup rule? Reply: Cup rule. 'Don't bounce it back to us; 20% is more than 8,000.'
18 Feb	RFC confirm full Broomloan Stand (8,042) to CFC and notify Police Scotland.
19-23 Feb	Ticket pricing discussed & agreed £53 / £43 concessions. Paper ticket printing commences.
24 Feb	RFC deliver away ticket allocation to CFC
1 Mar	SPFL league fixture - RFC v CFC at Ibrox. Away allocation 2,400. Uneventful.
4 Mar 09:31	RFC SO emails CFC SO with away support timings. CFC replies with concerns: timings, ingress, hold-back.
4 Mar 11:00–16:00	CFC SO meets Police Scotland - concerns about ingress plan change. Online meeting RFC/CFC: dispute unresolved; deferred to pre-ops.
5 Mar 11:30	Pre-Ops meeting. CFC concerns supported by Scottish FA Match Delegate Ricky Gray. No change to RFC/PS plan.
8 Mar 09:00	Control room operational. First Aid, Scottish Ambulance and Crowd Doctor at stadium by 09:55.
09:40	Police Scotland / Ibrox Control Room operational.
10:00–10:32	CFC fans begin arriving by bus. Broomloan Stand turnstiles opened 10:32. Person in site security jacket attempts to enter Blue Gates; refused (10:28).
10:39	Forged tickets already seized at soft ticket check. Bus of streamers/tickertape for away fans: permission refused. Three large tifo banners: entry refused.
11:18	CFC/Ultra groups force through bottom cordon at Broomloan Road, then ticket cordon, then search lanes onto Broomloan concourse. PS add extra resources. Simultaneous: fireworks noise from Edmiston Drive/Copland (Union Bears).
11:20–11:21	CFC fans breach soft ticket check. Shouts of crushing at soft ticket check - CCTV suggests not.
11:27	Two breaches of Gate 31 when Police open gate to admit fans with drum. Broomloan turnstiles closed by SO for 28 minutes.
11:30	UB fan march reaches Edmiston Drive/Copland junction. Police officer incident at Broomloan roundabout. Team coaches arrive.
11:34	Small fire in away coach park - tifo set alight.
11:39–11:55	Home turnstiles opened. Police called to disorder at away turnstiles. RFC fans attempt to rush Copland turnstiles; stopped. Away turnstiles reopened 11:55. Large-scale doubling-up continues.
12:01	Match officials briefed. Extra time and penalties discussed.
12:10–12:30	Forged ticket at Broomloan Stand detected. Two ejections for doubling-up. 14-year-old with firework hand injury treated - occurred before entering stadium.
12:42–13:00	Last CFC fans through soft ticket check. Away total: 7,934. ~100 ticketless outside. Sectarian singing from both groups.
13:00	RFC mascot observed antagonising CFC end - SO personally warns mascot.
13:01	KICK OFF - 0–0.
13:10	10-year-old struck by coin from away section (seen by first aid).
13:31	Flare deployed in Union Bears section at Copland Front Stand.
13:36	VAR rules out goal; green smoke pyro deployed. Vape devices thrown at match officials. 9-year-old child in wheelchair struck by 50p coin from away section (13:40).
13:47	HALF TIME - 0–0.

13:59	RFC mascot antagonises CFC end again. SO warns mascot again.
14:04	SECOND HALF. Official attendance: 51,215.
14:53	FULL TIME - 0–0 after 90 minutes.
15:07	Five flares deployed in Copland Front Stand by UB after disallowed goal.
15:13	Two vapes and a coin thrown at players from away end after disallowed goal. J Tavernier (RFC) reports racial abuse from away supporter.
15:17	SECOND HALF EXTRA TIME. Two smoke devices in Broomloan Stand (15:32). Full time 120 mins - 0–0.
15:37	PENALTY KICKS commence.
15:37	PS Track deployed East and West.
15:43	CELTIC WIN 4–2 ON PENALTIES.
15:43	CFC player No 22 runs to Broomloan Stand (second occurrence, same player) and swings on crossbar. 2–3 fans join from stand, followed by significant numbers.
15:43–15:44	Many CFC fans on pitch from Broomloan Stand - overwhelming steward and police numbers. LED board knocked over. RFC fan assaults CFC staff member from Main Stand Enclosure; arrested.
15:45	RFC Union Bears and fans leave Copland Stand for track and pitch. One fan throws pyro towards Broomloan Stand - goes back and forth six times. Players and staff go up tunnel; retractable tunnel not deployed. CCTV operator hit by flare on pitch.
15:47	PS/EPL declares control. Stand Manager assaulted by RFC fan - hospitalised. Deputy SO assaulted by a player. Steward reported struck by bottle.
15:48	Police and stewards establish cordon at 18-yard line (Broomloan end). RFC Union Bears return to Copland Stand. Pitch nearly clear.
15:52	PITCH CLEAR OF ALL FANS.
16:03–16:10	PS/EPL control returned to Ibrox. Away fans released from stadium.
16:39	CFC supporter bus attacked on Helen Street. CFC fan left unconscious in road; three RFC supporters arrested.
16:57	PS Control Room stand-down. Stand manager debriefs follow.
9 Mar	CFC SLO was refused permission to view reported Ibrox Stadium damage.

E – Independent Review Statement

All recommendations are for stakeholders' formal approval. The match specific observations are based on evidence gathered by the review team.

Independent Lead: Mark Blackbourne (Durham, England) | July 2026

- End of Review -