

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL AND REGULATION COMMITTEE

Meeting date: 19 January 2021

From: Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure

SAFETY AT SPORTS GROUNDS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 *This annual report is intended to update the Committee on the current situation at the seven Sports Grounds which require Certification, either wholly under the Safety of Sports Ground Act 1975 (as amended), or in part under the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 (as amended).*

1.2 *This report informs the Committee of the work of the Safety of Sports Grounds Team carried out during 2020. It explains the County Council's statutory obligations under the relevant legislation and outlines the activity carried out to ensure that these duties have been met.*

2.0 POLICY POSITION, BUDGETARY AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS, AND LINKS TO COUNCIL PLAN

2.1 *The County Council's policy is for annual renewal of the General Safety Certificates following receipt of satisfactory reports from the Safety Advisory Group. Recommendations contained in this report adhere to the County Council's policies regarding spectator safety at sports grounds.*

2.2 *There is no resource or value for money implications.*

2.3 *There are no equality implications arising from this report. Safe access and movement within venues, particularly in the event of an emergency for all users is considered as part of the safety team's inspections. The Safety of Spectator inspections take into consideration the safety of all spectators, particularly those with disabilities, the elderly, families and children.*

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 *That the annual report be received and noted by Members.*

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Cumbria County Council is responsible for administering the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (as amended), and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 (as amended), in respect of sports grounds in Cumbria.

4.2 The Local Authority is responsible for issuing safety certificates for designated grounds which are sports grounds with a capacity of over 10,000 (5,000 for football). The county has two such designated grounds, Carlisle United Football Club (capacity 17,300 maximum) and Barrow AFC (capacity 5,465 maximum).

4.3 Sports stadia which are not designated but contain covered stands with a capacity of 500 or more standing or seated spectators require a safety certificate under the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 (as amended), granted by the local authority. Cumbria County Council has responsibility for the following five regulated stands:

- Carlisle Racecourse – horse racing
- Workington Town RLFC - rugby
- Workington AFC – football
- Whitehaven Rugby League Football Club – rugby
- Barrow Rugby League Football Club - rugby

4.4 The primary purpose of the safety certificate is to set a limit on the safe capacity of a designated ground or regulated stand. The capacity of a sports ground or stadium is calculated on the physical condition of the stadium (the P factor) and the level of safety management (the S factor)

4.5 The safety certificate will also detail conditions in respect to safety matters with which the certificate holder must comply if that capacity is to be maintained.

4.6 Normally every club listed has an audit and a during event safety of sports grounds inspection, and a members' inspection annually. With the advent of Covid-19 this process has been somewhat disrupted this year.

5.0 GROUNDS

5.1 **Carlisle United** - Brunton Park, Warwick Road, Carlisle.

Brunton Park is one of only two designated stadia in Cumbria. Its maximum capacity is 17,300. It has a P factor of between 9.5 and 1.0, and an S factor of 1.0. Carlisle United play in Sky Bet League Two and its season runs from August 2020 until May 2021.

Carlisle United's annual audit was carried out on 25 August 2020. Due to COVID 19 and on the advice of the SGSA (Sports Grounds Safety Authority) this was a reduced audit, which concentrated on the club's records, policies

and safety certificates which were found to be in good order with only a few minor matters to address. Improvements to the ground and in particular the work undertaken on the West Stand roof last year has meant that the structural engineers report was satisfactory.

Currently matches are being played behind closed doors due to the Pandemic but prior to restrictions being tightened, the club were able to host a test event with the approval of the SAG (Safety Advisory Group) having developed procedures that were approved by the EFL (English Football League) and the SGSA. The SAG Chair and a SGSA representative were in attendance and both were of the opinion that the event was well organised.

Carlisle United's during performance inspection (DPI) was carried out on 23 November 2019 and it was found that the stewards were very good in their knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

5.2 **Barrow AFC** - The Furness Building Society Stadium, Wilkie Road, Barrow-In-Furness.

The Furness Building Society Stadium has recently become the County's second designated stadium. The ground has a maximum capacity of 5,465. It has a P factor of 1.0 and an S factor of 1.0 (0.7 Wilkie Stand). Barrow AFC play in the Sky Bet League Two and its season runs from August 2020 until May 2021.

Barrow AFC's audit took place on Friday 2 October 2020. Due to COVID-19 and following the advice of the SGSA this was a reduced audit which concentrated on the club's safety certificates which were found to be in good order with only a few matters to address, these were: electrical tests, CCTV, emergency lighting for the remainder of the ground, Legionnaire assessment and lightning protection. All these issues were addressed and followed up within reasonable and agreed timescales. There have been several improvements to the ground and in particular the Holker Street stand which now has a roof and new safety barriers.

Currently matches are being played behind closed doors due to the pandemic.

Barrow AFC's DPI was not carried out this year because it had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

5.3 **Workington Town** - Derwent Park, Workington.

Derwent Park, after capacity recalculation, has now ceased to be a designated stadium but has two regulated stands. The Popular Stand with a capacity of 2640 and a P factor of 1.0 and S factor of 1.0. The Grandstand has a capacity of 978 (seated) and 594 (standing) and a P factor of 1.0 and S factor of 1.0 and 0.9. Workington Town play in Betfred League One and its season runs from February 2020 until September 2020 but was ended prematurely due to Coronavirus outbreak.

Workington Town did not receive a full audit, during performance inspection or councillor visit in 2020. A new certificate was issued with added Covid-19 conditions. A new certificate was required to enable enforcement of the Covid-19 conditions, and in any case the club needed a new (General Safety Certificate) GSC to cover the new stands instead of the whole stadium. It is still unknown when the club will be able to allow spectators to attend events. The club has been clearly advised that prior to any event taking place an audit must first be carried out to ensure stands are safe for spectators.

5.4 **Barrow Raiders** - Craven Park, Duke Street, Barrow-In-Furness.

Craven Park has three regulated stands. The Main stand with a maximum capacity of 766, the Hindpool Road Terrace stand with a maximum capacity of 678 and the Clive Street Terrace stand with a maximum capacity of 497. Its maximum capacity is 2861. It has a P factor of 0.9 and an S factor of 0.9. Barrow RLFC play in BetFred Championship and its season runs from January 2020 until September 2020.

The audit of Barrow Raiders' has not taken place this year due to the pandemic. No events have taken place at Craven Park this year and the club are aware that no persons are to enter the ground for an event until an audit takes place.

Barrow Raiders' DPI was not carried out this year because it had to be cancelled due to the pandemic

5.5 **Carlisle Racecourse** - Durdar Road, Carlisle.

Carlisle racecourse has two regulated stands. The Jubilee Stand with a capacity of 882 and a P and S factor of 1.0, and the South Tote Stand with a capacity of 947 and a P factor of 0.8 and an S factor of 1.0.

Carlisle Racecourse's audit took place on Wednesday 23 September 2020. Due to COVID 19, a reduced audit was undertaken and prior to the audit the SAG were advised by the Racecourse Management that due to the Government furlough scheme and because horse racing had been suspended some works involving the certificates were outstanding. This was because those responsible for organising the work were not on site and it was also difficult to get contractors to attend.

A number of issues were highlighted during the audit in relation to the safety policies, records and certificates and the Racecourse Management are working to address them before a new General Safety Certificate is issued. Racing has recommenced but is behind closed doors in accordance with Government guidelines, so spectator safety is not being compromised whilst this work is being completed.

The Racecourse's DPI was not carried out this year because it had to be cancelled due to the pandemic,

5.6 **Whitehaven RLFC** - Recreation Ground, Coach Road, Whitehaven.

The Recreation Ground has two regulated stands. The Focus Stand which has a capacity of 252 and a P factor of 1.0 and S factor of 0.5, and the Kells End Stand with a capacity of 1275 with a P factor of 0.8 and an S factor of 0.5. Whitehaven RLFC play in Betfred League One and its season runs from February 2020 until September 2020.

As with Workington Town RLFC, Whitehaven RLFC did not receive an audit, during performance inspection or councillor visit in 2020. A new certificate was issued with added Covid-19 conditions. A new certificate was required to enable enforcement of the Covid-19 conditions. It is still unknown when the club will be able to allow spectators to attend events. The club has been clearly advised that prior to any event taking place an audit must first be carried to ensure stands are safe for spectators.

5.7 **Workington AFC** - Borough Park, Workington.

Borough Park has two regulated stands, Popular Stand and Town End Stand. The Popular Stand has a seated capacity of 409 and a P factor of 0.94, it also has a standing capacity of 320 with a P factor of 0.4. The Town End Stand has a capacity of 1124 with a P factor of 0.4 and all have an S factor of 0.7. Workington AFC play in the Northern Premier League and its season runs from September 2020 to May 2021.

Due to the club not being able to supply the SAG with a satisfactory structural engineer's report in 2019 the stands' capacity was cut to zero, this was appealed by the club and was due to be heard in March at Workington Magistrates' Court. This was suspended due to the Coronavirus outbreak. The club withdrew its appeal in May and consequently the capacity of the stands was set to zero. The chair of the club did approach SAG with a request to de-regulate the stands by reducing their capacity below 500. If the local authority becomes aware that a stand ceases to be a regulated stand then it has to cancel its safety certificate. The SAG has issues with the proposed changes to the seated stand and are seeking legal advice over the proposal to reduce the capacity to the Town End Stand. The club did produce a new structural engineer's report in September 2020 that satisfied the SAG that both regulated stands were safe and so a new GSC was issued and their capacity was increased.

A mini audit was carried out on 25 September 2020 the results of which were satisfactory.

6.0 **SPECIAL SAFETY CERTIFICATES**

None issued.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Safety of Sports Grounds Team fulfil the statutory responsibilities the County Council has under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (as amended), and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 (as amended), in respect of Sports Grounds in Cumbria. The primary purpose being to enable the issue of a safety certificate that shall contain such terms and conditions as the County Council considers necessary or expedient to secure reasonable safety at the sports ground when it is in use for the specified activity or activities, and the terms and conditions may be such as to involve alterations or additions to the sports ground. Section 2 (1) of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (as amended) and Section 27, subsections (1) and (2) of Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 (as amended) so refer.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 Cumbria County Council met its statutory obligations in respect of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (as amended), and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 (as amended) for 2020. It either carried out inspections or will carry out inspections, where required, at all designated grounds and regulated stands, and gave remedial advice where necessary.

Angela Jones
Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure

APPENDICES

No appendices

IMPLICATIONS

Staffing:	None
Financial:	None
Property:	None
Electoral Division(s):	All

PREVIOUS RELEVANT COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

No previous relevant decisions

CONSIDERATION BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Not considered by Overview and Scrutiny

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers

Contact: Carl Drakes, 01900 706026, carl.drakes@cumbria.gov.uk