



PRESS RELEASE

The Football Supporters' Federation

For Immediate Release – 11.06.09

Stoke City supporter awarded £2,750 compensation following unlawful police action [Immediate release – 11.06.09]

Stoke City fan Lyndon Edwards, 38, has been awarded £2,750 in compensation following unlawful police action in Manchester last year.

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) used section 27 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act to round up more than 80 Stoke City fans prior to their club's Premier League tie with Manchester United at Old Trafford on Saturday, 15 November, 2008.

Even though Stoke's fans had been well-behaved - the pub landlord made no complaints and has since invited them back - supporters were detained for up to four hours and forcibly transported by the police back to Stoke-on-Trent on coaches, missing the game.

Deprived of toilet facilities on the coach, Lyndon and his fellow supporters were instructed to urinate into cups, which spilled over the floor of the bus so that they had to sit with urine sloshing around their feet for the 40-mile journey back.

Stoke City fan Lyndon contacted the Football Supporters' Federation (FSF) to complain about his appalling treatment at the hands of the GMP.

The FSF teamed up with civil-rights organisation Liberty and took GMP's use of section 27 to judicial review. GMP have conceded that the legislation was never intended to be used on large groups of people.

Its original purpose was to target individuals or small groups displaying drunken behaviour – something the police showed no evidence for in this case.

The case has huge implications for all football supporters across England and Wales. The FSF had heard of an increasing number of police forces using this illegal tactic to effectively impose football banning orders at will across entire counties.

In a remarkably similar case South Yorkshire Police has also agreed to compensate Plymouth Argyle fans unjustly served section 27 orders following their team's visit to Doncaster Rovers on Saturday, 6 December, 2008. The level of compensation is still being negotiated.

Lyndon Edwards, Stoke City fan, said:

"I am very pleased that the GMP has conceded they were in the wrong and satisfied with the compensation awarded. Hopefully the forthcoming judicial review will have a positive outcome for football supporters too and prevent section 27 from being used in this manner again.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank the FSF and Liberty for all of their hard work and support which has been absolutely vital to a satisfactory outcome."

Malcolm Clarke, chair of the FSF, said:

"We are delighted that as a result of the FSF and Liberty Stoke fans who suffered this appalling treatment are now receiving financial compensation. Police need to think very carefully in future before ever using this legislation inappropriately on football supporters ever again.

"This is an important victory for football fans everywhere – not just those at Stoke City. We were of hearing more and more similar cases from fans across the country but since Lyndon's case went to court these seem to have stopped."

"I'd also like to thank Stoke City who offered to underwrite £20,000 of Lyndon's legal costs, great credit should go to both Tony Scholes and Peter Coates at Stoke."

James Welch, legal director at Liberty, said:

"This is yet another example of overly broad powers being used inappropriately. If you give the police powers that are not tightly defined, they are going to abuse them. Congratulations to the FSF for raising this important issue."

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. A picture of Lyndon is available but is copyright the Stoke Sentinel. Contact them on photographic@thesentinel.co.uk or 01782 602525 to ask for Pete Stonier. See today's Stoke Sentinel: http://www.whyclillah.co.uk/news/11_Jun_2009/Potters+fan+wins+compensation+from+Greater+Manchester+police.html

2. The Football Supporters' Federation (FSF) is the national supporters' organisation for all football fans from England and Wales comprising more than 142,000 individual fans and members of local supporters' organisations from every club in the professional structure and many from the pyramid. For more info <http://www.fsf.org.uk/about-the-fsf.php>

3. Liberty is a human rights and civil liberties organisation. Liberty campaigns through the media, undertakes pioneering legal casework, lobbies Parliament and provides advice and assistance to members of the public and voluntary groups. Liberty is an independent membership organisation. The 'Common Values' campaign aims to broaden understanding and respect for human rights values. For more info <http://www.liberty-humanrights.org.uk/issues/human-rights-act/index.shtml>

4. Section 27 from the Violent Crime Reduction Act of 2006. No offence needs to have been committed for the legislation to be enforced and it gives police the power to move on people who they deem pose a risk of alcohol related disorder from a specific locality. Section 27 allows police to move someone from a specified area for a period of up to 48 hours. For further information on Section 27 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 visit: <http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/operational-policing/directionsto-leave-locality?view=Binary>

5. Supporters who have been unjustly served a section 27 are advised to send a full account to the FSF (via section27@fsf.org.uk) and lodge a complaint with the relevant police force, the Independent Police Complaints Commission, and their local MP. For further information: <http://www.fsf.org.uk/news/Section-27-been-served-on-you.php>

6. The account of Stoke City fans served with a Section 27 last year: <http://www.fsf.org.uk/news/Policing-of-Stoke-fans-raises-seriousconcerns.php?id=added|desc|10>

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