



MCLOUGHLIN HOSTS FANS' EVENT - Watching Football Is Not A Crime! [IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

Former Pompey, Saints and Republic of Ireland legend Alan McLoughlin will host an open meeting in Portsmouth on Thursday 20th October asking whether football fans are treated fairly by the legal system. The event is open to fans of all clubs.

The event, titled Watching Football Is Not A Crime!, gives fans the chance to question a panel of experts including Supt Rick Burrows, in charge of policing at Fratton Park and St Mary's, and barrister Stephen Field. Alex Gask from the prestigious Doughty Street Chambers and a representative from the Football Safety Officers' Association will also be in attendance.

Almost 40m fans head through football's turnstiles every season with only one fan in every 10,000 arrested for any crime. Seven out of 10 games during 2009-10 passed without a single arrest and Home Office figures showed a 10 per cent drop in football related arrests [see Notes to Editors].

But the event's organisers argue that fans are all too often characterised as mindless thugs despite the vast majority being law abiding citizens. This perception can in turn lead to excessively harsh policing and stewarding.

Portsmouth fan Ken Malley is a board member of the Pompey Supporters' Trust who are organising the event with national fans' group the Football Supporters' Federation (FSF).

He said: "Two weeks ago Pompey fans found themselves in a sticky situation at Elland Road when an innocuous incident was aggravated by 'in your face' policing. Regular match-goers will be familiar with hearing complaints about the way supporters are often treated by the authorities.

"The FSF hopes that Watching Football Is Not A Crime! can act as a forum for fans, police, and stewards to better understand one another's points of view. This is the fans chance to question our panel of experts on this very subject."

Amanda Jacks, case worker at the FSF, said: "Following tremendously successful events in London and Sheffield we are looking forward to hosting an equally successful evening in Portsmouth. We're sure supporters from the south coast will be just as passionate and provide a challenging and interesting evening for the panellists."

The FSF argues that football fans in the UK are discriminated against thanks to a whole host of laws and ground regulations which apply to them and no other group in society.

Almost one-third of all football arrests relate to alcohol and many of these laws would not apply in a non-football context. Examples include laws banning drinking in sight of the pitch or on travel to and from games.

Other laws ban the resale of match tickets from fan-to-fan while ground regulations prevent football fans from standing in their seats. Both of these actions are allowed at other sporting or music events but could see you arrested, or thrown out of the ground, at a football match.

Watching Football Is Not A Crime! takes place at The Rifle Club, Goldsmith Avenue, Portsmouth, on Thursday 20th October 2011 (7pm). Entry is free but registration is required – email your name and club to register@fsf.org.uk or call 0330 44 000 44. All those registered receive a free drink on arrival.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

- The FSF is the national supporters' organisation for all football fans from England and Wales comprising more than 180,000 individual fans and members of local supporters' organisations from every club in the professional structure and beyond. For more info: www.fsf.org.uk
- Fans can join the FSF free of charge and it only takes a minute, simply visit: www.fsf.org.uk/join
- Figures referenced in paragraph three refer to the Home Office's "Statistics on football related arrests and banning orders, 2009-10".
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CONTACT DETAILS: Ken Malley on ken.malley@fsf.org.uk / 07976 034242 / 01288 381259