

Chelsea v Liverpool to be first football match to trial safe standing in England and Wales on 2 January

Football fans will be able to stand in some of the biggest stadia in England and Wales from tomorrow (2 January), as the Government launches its landmark trial of safe standing for the remainder of the domestic football season.

Supporters attending Chelsea against Liverpool at Stamford Bridge will see new facilities in use within the Matthew Harding Stand lower tier and Shed End upper and lower tiers.

It follows Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston recently visiting the stadium to inspect the arrangements put in place, and meet with fans and club representatives.

Safe standing at football grounds – Stamford Bridge

Five clubs – Cardiff City FC, Chelsea FC, Manchester City FC, Manchester United FC and Tottenham Hotspur FC – will be the first in the top two tiers of football to have licensed ‘safe standing’ in designated seated areas for home and away fans, as the Government works towards fulfilling its manifesto commitment.

The grounds have been selected following an application process, open to all grounds covered by the all-seater policy, led by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA).

The clubs involved in the pilot will have to adhere to [strict conditions](#) including enhanced use of CCTV, improved steward training, and fans utilising licensed safe standing areas being strictly limited to ‘one person, one space.’

Each supporter will occupy the same area that they would take up if they were sitting, with a traceable, numbered ticket. Barriers will be in place behind and in front of every individual. Seats must not be locked in the up or down position, so fans can choose to sit if they wish to, and the standing areas must not affect the views of other fans.

Standing areas are already commonplace in Germany’s Bundesliga and there are similar examples across the rest of Europe, the United States and Australia.

Nigel Huddleston, Minister for Sport, said:

Fans have long campaigned for the introduction of safe standing, so I’m pleased that Stamford Bridge will launch this pilot programme that will allow us to carry out an in-depth trial at some of our biggest stadia over the remainder of the season, and inform a

decision on a widespread roll-out.

Safety will be absolutely paramount at all times. Detailed work is being carried out to monitor these early adopters, and the SGSA will work hand-in-glove with football clubs, supporters groups, local authorities and the police.

The introduction of licensed standing areas follows [research conducted during the 2019/20 season](#), prior to the onset of the pandemic, which found that seats with barriers/independent barriers helped reduce the safety risks related to standing in seated areas.

Over the remaining part of the season, research will be carried out at the grounds by CFE Research, to evaluate the implementation of licensed standing areas at early adopter grounds.

This research will be provided to the Government to inform its decisions about the potential wider roll-out of licensed standing from the start of the 2022/23 season for Premier League and Championship clubs that wish to introduce it and have met the strict conditions.

Ken Scott, Head of Inspectorate of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), said:

The focus of the SGSA is the safety of all fans at sports grounds. We know there is a safety risk arising from fans who persistently stand in seated areas, demonstrated in independent research. The advent of new engineering solutions and the findings from our research has shown this can be managed safely. The early adopters programme will enable us to properly test and evaluate licensed standing areas and advise the Government in its next steps.

Kevin Miles, Chief Executive of the Football Supporters Association, said:

This is a huge step forward. This is something we've been campaigning for 30 years on. It's great to see people now being offered the choice on whether to sit or stand at a football match. I will feel more secure having that safety rail in front of me there. I think that will make a difference to the confidence of fans in the stands about their own safety.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- This announcement affects clubs subject to the Government's all-seater policy. That is, clubs in the Premier League and Championship, or any who have been for three or more seasons since 1994/95, along with the

Wembley Stadium and the Principality Stadium.