

**The Rt Hon Chi Onwurah - via e-mail only**  
**Member of Parliament for Newcastle Central and West**

**Copy to: Thomas Concannon, Premier League Network  
Manager, Football Supporters' Association**



**29th July 2024**

**Comments made by Mayor of London regarding playing Premier League games overseas**

Dear Ms Onwurah MP,

We are writing to you regarding our concerns at recent comments made by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, on the prospect of Premier League games being played overseas.

*"I think that's the way it is going. All 32 NFL teams have now played in London and all of them have had a great experience. We have some of the top baseball teams now playing in London.*

*"We've got seven Premier League clubs in London but when you look at the way the Premier League works, a lot of the revenue they receive is TV rights. Liverpool, the team that I support, are currently on tour in America. I think the point that the Premier League would make and some of the owners would make is, why can't their fans in those countries benefit from a competitive game?"*

*"The key thing for me is to make sure our fans don't lose out. The thing we've learned from American football is often when the players go back to America the next game is an issue because of time zone, because of diet and so forth." - Sadiq Khan, July 2024.*

This is in direct contrast to the Football Governance Bill, reintroduced by Labour, which states that one of its primary objectives is:

*'Heritage - to safeguard the traditional features of English football that matter most to the fans and local communities of clubs.'*

This endorsement by Mr Khan seems to completely disregard this objective and is hugely concerning for football fans across the country. His comments also seem deeply out of touch with your Party's policy on this.

English football clubs are deeply rooted at the heart of their communities. None more so than our own Newcastle United.



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With costs for the average supporter rising exponentially across all areas and many fans being priced out of their own community hubs, it is worrying to see such a prominent figure within the Labour party suggesting that Premier League fixtures be played abroad.

In speaking about the benefits of games being played abroad, Mr Khan completely disregards the negative impact this would have on our local communities. A prime example being the incredible amounts of money raised by the Newcastle United Fans' Foodbank at every home game. If home games are moved abroad, this does not happen and the impact on all our communities would be keenly felt.

If Premier League games are played abroad, fans lose out, local businesses lose out and communities lose out. It is therefore not an idea that should be entertained and should be opposed with stoic determination.

We represent our members, some of whom haven't missed a game for decades. It is their lives, their routines and their passion, which should not be taken away from them because of sheer greed of the super rich. The fact that Mr Khan is legitimising this possibility is insulting to supporters across the country.

It is also incredibly hypocritical that at a time when 'green' policies are at the forefront of government thinking (and indeed his own as Mayor of London), that Mr Khan is suggesting football clubs fly overseas to play against a team from down the road. The environmental impact this would have would be huge.

Football supporters have united recently in similar circumstances, whether that be to shut down the 'Game 39' proposal in 2008, or the European Super League plan in 2020. If it wasn't for fans using their voices then the English game could have been changed and destroyed forever. We know that with those running our game if you give an inch they will take a mile and that is why Mr Khan's comments seeming to endorse this idea appear misguided and could be so damaging. It is why supporters are so concerned and why we are writing to you today.



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In the infancy of your new Government's tenure, it is integral that you use your voice to stand up for supporters across the country and specifically your constituency. We urge you to use your position as a Member of Parliament to ensure that your party and this Government reject Mr Khan's views in the strongest terms possible, insist that he retract his comment, apologise, and commit to protecting our game for our local communities.

Going forward, the Football Governance Bill is vital for supporters across the country and you should view this situation as an opportunity to prove that you have the backs of fans and inspire confidence in your Government's ability to make this policy a success. If you do not take this opportunity, it could hugely damage the vast mandate you gained at the most recent General Election.

It will take all of us who care for the English game to push back as early and strongly as possible to ensure that when any such proposals that damage the tradition and heritage of our game in the name of financial greed are defeated.

It has never been more important to prove in the words of the Football Governance Bill, that the promise to '*safeguard the traditional features of English football that matter most to the fans and local communities of clubs*' is more than just words on a page.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Karter, Adam Stoker, Lisa Mole, Cliff Culley, Felicity Thow, Kevin Patterson, Pete Davey, Olivia Thomson  
Board  
Newcastle United Supporters Trust



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