



**MANAGEMENT OF
STANDING SPECTATORS AT
THE CARDIFF CITY STADIUM
UPDATE REPORT TWENTY-TWO
POLICY STATEMENT FOR 2026/27**

**Version 1.1
Report
6 May 2026**

For ease of reference, changes from 2025/26 are in blue font

Report by
Wayne Nash, Head of Operations, Cardiff City FC
Dr Steve Frosdick, Consultant, IWI Associates Ltd

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This document has been drafted as the policy statement for the management of standing spectators by Cardiff City Stadium (the Stadium) for the season **2026/27**.
- 1.2. The document applies to domestic and international football matches played by Cardiff City Football Club (the Club) and the Football Association of Wales (FAW).
- 1.3. The policy statement for **2026-27** is the **twenty fourth document** in a series of previous reports on the same subject and can be read in conjunction with those documents. The previous reports are available to download from the link at <https://tiny1.co/3W6O>.
- 1.4. The policy statement for **2026-27** supports:
 - The renewal of the Club's licence to admit spectators for the **2026/27** season. This licence is issued annually by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) and the Club cannot admit any spectators whatsoever to the ground without holding such a licence;
 - The licensing by the SGSA of two standing areas, each comprising the installation of *seats with independent barriers*^{1 2}
 - Having made a small increase for **2025/26**, the licensed **home** standing area for **2026/27** has **2,770** seats/spaces across **Blocks 103 to 109** of the Canton Stand, a substantial addition of **792** (covering **Blocks 104 to 107**) from **2025/26**;³
 - The licensed **away** standing area has **2,302** seats/spaces in **Blocks 119 and 121** and **Block 122** above the vomitory, and in the back seven rows of **Block 123**.
 - The Stadium Operations Manual against which the club is issued with a ground safety certificate by Cardiff City Council. This certificate specifies the maximum safe capacity of the stadium.
- 1.5. The policy statement for **2026-27** is intended to be read by the SGSA, members of the local Safety Advisory Group, fan representatives and any other stakeholders to whom the club chooses to circulate it.
- 1.6. This policy statement for **2026-27** is structured in six sections:
 - The rationale for issuing the policy statement;
 - The risks around standing in seated areas;
 - Standing in the Ninian Stand and other home areas;
 - Standing in the Canton Stand; and
 - Standing in the Away Quadrant.

¹ See Sports Grounds Safety Authority (2018) *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Sixth Edition)*. London: Sports Grounds Safety Authority, page 175, paragraph 12.19 and Figure 26.

² See also Sports Grounds Safety Authority (2021) *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Sixth Edition) Supplementary Guidance 01: Safe Standing in Seated Areas*. London: Sports Grounds Safety Authority.

³ Note that the numbers of seat with independent barriers has been audited against the ticketing manifest.

2. THE RATIONALE FOR ISSUING THE POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1. The detailed rationale set out in the policy statements for previous seasons has been superseded by the publication in June 2021 of the CFE Research report for the SGSA on the safe management of standing in seated areas at football stadia.⁴
- 2.2. This CFE Research report followed on from their rapid evidence assessment on standing at football published in October 2019.⁵
- 2.3. These two CFE Research reports are significant for the Stadium because of the Club's own contribution to them:
 - The Club was invited to be one of six case study sites for the research;
 - The rapid evidence assessment made 19 positive references to the work already undertaken by the Club and its consultant;
 - The final report included three quotes from Club spectators and made 12 positive references to the work of the Club and its consultant.
- 2.4. Understandably therefore, the Stadium completely endorsed the CFE Research findings. In the light of them, the Stadium installed the *seats with independent barriers* and became an 'early adopter' for the licensed standing areas pilot scheme.
- 2.5. The Stadium then operated with two licensed standing areas for the season 2022/23.

3. THE RISKS AROUND STANDING IN SEATED AREAS

- 3.1. The CFE Research summary⁶ produced for the Club's internal use in August 2020 set out the nine risk behaviours found by CFE Research to be associated with persistent standing, together with the CFE Research findings on those risk behaviours at the Stadium. The table from the research summary is reproduced below.

<i>Risk behaviour</i>	<i>Findings</i>
Intra-area migration	Some intra-area migration resulting in minor overcrowding in the back central rows observed in the Canton Stand. Extra ticket checks implemented on these aisles to manage this. Some migration between blocks and rows in the away area (which was rarely at maximum capacity). Different coloured tickets for each block and selling tickets across several blocks to spread spectators out are strategies to mitigate this.
Inter-area migration	No evidence of inter-area migration in either home or away areas. The away area is isolated with stewarded gates. Tickets are checked on entry to each stand.

⁴ Welford, J. *et. al.* (2021) *The Safe Management of Persistent Standing in Seated Areas at Football Stadia*. Leicester: CFE Research.

⁵ Welford, J. *et. al.* (2019) *Standing at Football*. Leicester: CFE Research.

⁶ Welford, J. and Stutz, A. (2020) *The Safe Management of Persistent Standing in Seated Areas at Football Stadia. Club Summary for Cardiff City FC*. Leicester: CFE Research (marked 'for internal use only').

<i>Risk behaviour</i>	<i>Findings</i>
Falls over seats	Some isolated instances reported by spectators leading to minor injuries resulting from falls during goal celebrations. One incident observed involved a small group of spectators falling over seats and each other in the Canton Stand – this did not result in a crowd collapse or falls on other spectators.
Progressive crowd collapse	Modelling shows a low risk of crowd collapse in the Canton Stand and the away blocks where spectators persistently stand and the maximum rake is 23 degrees.
Blocking aisles, gangways and exits	Minor evidence of encroachment observed and reported by spectators. More extensive at higher risk games, less extensive where regular steward patrols are undertaken. The presence of stewards at the top of gangways seems to be an effective strategy for keeping aisles as clear as possible.
Standing on seats, seat backs and barriers	Minor instances of standing on seats in all home and away areas, most commonly during moments of excitement. Regular instances in the Canton Stand of children standing on seats during normal play for extended periods in order to view the game.
Conflict due to standing	No conflict observed between spectators in the Canton Stand. However, minor level of conflict reported the Ninian Stand when stewards ask spectators to sit. No conflict observed between spectators in the away area. Seating option for away spectators on the front rows enforced during observations and well used by families and elderly spectators to sit.
Anti-social behaviour and/or disorder	Isolated instances observed, primarily in the away sections during high profile matches. No arrests observed or reported.
Persistent standing elsewhere in the stadia	Observed on a minor scale among home spectators. Persistent standing observed in one block of the Ninian Stand which was acknowledged by staff. Incidence tends to vary according to nature of fixture. Spectators ejected from this area during one observation for persistent standing and resultant conflict.

- 3.2. The Stadium agreed with the nine risk behaviours listed and accepted the CFE Research findings shown. Experience since the early adopter pilot began in January 2021 has been as shown in the table below.

<i>Risk behaviour</i>	<i>Experience</i>
Intra-area migration	Some limited intra-area migration has been witnessed and this has occasionally resulted in minor overcrowding in the back central rows of the Canton Stand, which is dealt with by ticket checks and stewarding. Away fans have been very pleased to have a licensed standing area and no intra-area migration has been observed. Fans who want to sit have been able to relocate forward of the vomitories at most matches. Away clubs are encouraged to sell their tickets intelligently but this is problematic when the away club sells through a ticketing agency.

<i>Risk behaviour</i>	<i>Experience</i>
Falls over seats	No injuries have been reported.
Progressive crowd collapse	The seats with independent rails were installed in the areas where the angle of rake was just over 23 degrees. No progressive crowd collapses have taken place.
Blocking aisles, gangways and exits	The presence of stewards at the vomitories and in the gangways remains effective in keeping aisles, gangway and exits clear.
Standing on seats, seat backs and barriers	Minor instances of standing on seats continue in all home and away areas, most commonly during moments of excitement.
Conflict due to standing	None. The introduction of the licensed standing has removed a previously difficult touchpoint between fans and stewards.
Anti-social behaviour and/or disorder	Nothing causally connected to standing.
Persistent standing elsewhere in the stadia	In the central bays of the Canton Stand forward of the licensed standing area where the angle of rake is below 23 degrees and the risks are very low, mitigated by the existing 1,978 seats with independent rails and the addition of 792 such seats for 2026/27. Very occasional at high profile games in the very back row of Blocks 116, 117 and 118 in the Ninian Stand.

- 3.3. This policy statement has been drafted to make sure those risks continue to be reduced to a level which is as low as is reasonably practicable.

4. STANDING IN THE NINIAN STAND AND OTHER HOME AREAS

- 4.1. For [2026/27](#), as with previous seasons, the Stadium does not anticipate any persistent standing from Club or FAW fans in the Ninian Stand upper tiers (Levels Four and Five), the Main Stand or the Grange (Family) Stand. The Stadium policy will remain unchanged and no persistent standing will be allowed in these areas.
- 4.2. In the Ninian Stand lower tier, where there had been a previous history of persistent standing in Blocks 116 up to 118, the Stadium policy will remain unchanged and no persistent standing will be allowed in this area. This policy will be enforced through the following arrangements, which remain unchanged from previous seasons.
- 4.3. Where considered necessary, a number of seats may be taken off sale so as to reduce the crowd density in those areas.

- 4.4. The Stadium briefs stewards around the need to encourage fans in the Ninian Stand lower tier to sit in the seats provided. This point is reinforced at the management briefing for each match.
- 4.5. The Stadium also ensures that stewards are active in carrying out this instruction during the match when persistent standing takes place. If persistent standing is observed, the stewards respond and take the appropriate action. This ranges from a word of advice, through to a more formal warning, through to ejection and consideration for a club ban for a number of matches.
- 4.6. To provide the stewards with lateral as well as radial gangways through which to make their interventions, rows of seats in Blocks 116 to 118 may be taken off sale and left vacant for lateral patrol by stewards.
- 4.7. If a spectator is seen to be persistently standing and not responding to advice from the stewards, the spectator's seat number is noted and communicated to the Control Room. The spectator's identity is verified using CCTV and the Club or FAW databases and/or Club season ticket roster. Thereafter a text message is sent to their mobile phone giving advice about the consequences of their persistent standing.
- 4.8. FAW and international matches where tickets are not sold to tournament ticket holders require a match specific risk assessment to determine the risk and identify control measures to reduce any identified risk. This may include the removal of end of row seats and/or additional seats.

5. STANDING IN THE CANTON STAND

- 5.1. In respect of the risk of a progressive crowd collapse, the club accepted the crowd modelling work undertaken by Professor Keith Still and published in the CFE Research final report.⁷

There is a present but relatively low risk of a progressive crowd collapse occurring in areas with a shallower rake; the lower the rake, the less likely a collapse would occur following a trigger.

*At a 23 degree rake, the maximum rake where clubs in this research tolerate standing in areas without barriers, a collapse only occurred in simulations with that were triggered by a significant push (20Kn, equivalent to **more than one person falling forwards at the same time**). When a collapse did occur, the number of people involved was low when compared with tests at a steeper rake.*

As the rake is increased, the risk of collapse increases and the number of people involved in a collapse increases, even with a smaller initial thrust.

⁷ *Op. cit.* 5, Appendix 2, pp. 61-69.

- 5.2. Measurements of the seating row depths and riser heights showed that the back five rows of the Canton stand have a rake of 23.03 degrees. The club therefore accepted there was a theoretical risk of a progressive crowd collapse in these rows and that this risk must be mitigated.
- 5.3. Professor Still concluded his crowd modelling work with the statement that, “*Rail seating eliminated all progressive crowd collapses in the simulation*”.⁸ In order to eliminate the risk of progressive crowd collapse in the back five rows, the club therefore successfully applied to be an ‘early adopter’ for the licensed standing pilot and subsequently extended the number of seats with independent rails in the stand.



Seats with independent barriers licensed for standing in the back of the Canton Stand.

- 5.4. With the elimination of the risk of progressive crowd collapse and the approval of the licensed standing area, which has **three times** been extended by the addition of new seats with independent rails, the remainder of the Canton Stand no longer meets the definition of what was described by CFE Research as a “tolerated standing area”, i.e.

*An area of a stand or stadium where persistent standing occurs in large numbers and safety management teams accept that enforcing sitting is impossible, usually a discrete area where safety risks are low.*⁹

- 5.5. Referring to the SGSA’s enforcement approach for the all-seater policy for the season 2023/24¹⁰ (**now subject to a consultation**), including its risk categorisation matrix, the Canton Stand is considered to be an area of **lower risk** but **sufficient compliance**.

- 5.6. **Lower risk but sufficient compliance** means:

- *Persistent standing [i.e. outside the licensed standing area] is small scale/infrequent. Typically characterised as taking place: at a minority of the matches hosted by the ground each season; in only one stand or only one distinct area of one stand; and/or involving 10s rather than 100s/1000s of spectators.*
- *Effective management is in place for any residual risk.*
- *Ground management enforces the all-seater licence conditions effectively.*

⁸ *Ibid.* page 69.

⁹ *Op. cit.* 5, page 2.

¹⁰ See Sports Grounds Safety Authority (2023) *All-Seater Policy – SGSA Enforcement Approach 2023/24 Football Season*. London: Sports Grounds Safety Authority at <https://tinyt.co/3W6U>.

- 5.7. The SGSA anticipated approach:
- *Unlikely to need to take any additional action.*
- 5.8. Without being complacent regarding the measures taken, the Club policy for the Canton Stand below the licensed standing area continues to be to take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance with the all-seater licence conditions, always providing that these are practicable and do not create unacceptable risks to other aspects of safety, security and service. Where all reasonable steps have been taken, but spectators still choose to stand, the Club uses appropriate additional steps to manage residual safety risk for those spectators who still choose to stand.
- 5.9. Ongoing dialogue is maintained with fans through the Cardiff City Supporters Club, Cardiff City Supporters Trust, FSE Cymru and travel clubs meetings.
- 5.10. Tickets for the Canton Stand continue to be sold primarily as season tickets with seats in the front and wings sold on a match by match basis, thus largely the same persons occupy each seat at each match. It is accepted that fans who cannot attend a particular match may choose to pass their season ticket for that match on to another person, which they are free to do, always accepting that they will be held accountable for that person's behaviour.
- 5.11. The club gives written alerts to season ticket holders and home supporters that sitting is a condition of entry to the seating areas, and that deliberate failure to do so may result in withdrawal of ticket and refusal of entry. Conspicuous signage to this effect is placed throughout the concourses.
- 5.12. Where risk assessment determines the need, for example at FAW matches, stewards are deployed in the radial gangways to prevent radial migration backwards and lateral migration across. Two additional stewards are deployed in six of the radial gangways at the entry points into the licensed standing area. These stewards check tickets to prevent radial migration backwards.
- 5.13. Ongoing monitoring of the licensed standing area will continue to review whether the capacity provided meets the demand for standing accommodation. Where it transpires that it does not, further budget approval will be sought to install additional rows of seats with independent barriers, as indeed has been done for 2025/26 [and 2026/27](#). Over time, the intention will be to reach the point where there is no further demand for standing and all remaining persons in the rows below are content to remain seated.
- 5.14. To avoid potential triggers for forward movement, the Cardiff City players are warned not to celebrate directly in front of standing supporters at the annual players briefings. Wales players are similarly advised.
- 5.15. Although the audience for FAW matches are a different group of fans, there is the 'same ownership' of the Canton Stand as for Club matches. Fans of the 'Red Wall' also choose the Canton stand as their singing section and, as with Club games, the central blocks are sold out even when the Stadium is not. The arrangements set out in paragraphs above therefore apply equally to both Club and FAW matches.

- 5.16. As in previous seasons, the Stadium will commission an independent inspection of these arrangements at one or more matches during the [2026/27](#) season. The reports of these inspections will continue to be provided to the local safety advisory group, published on the Internet and widely circulated to other stakeholders.

6. STANDING IN THE AWAY QUADRANT

- 6.1. Having been an ‘early adopter’ for the licensed standing pilot scheme with 583 *seats with independent barriers* across Blocks 121 and 122, the Stadium now has a licensed standing area of **2,302** seats/spaces in Blocks 119 and 121 and Block 122 above the vomitory, and in the back five rows of Block 123, which is used occasionally as an away area and is held for away use were the Club to return to the Premier League. This eliminates the theoretical risk of a progressive crowd collapse in those Blocks.
- 6.2. Stewards are deployed in the radial gangways to prevent radial migration backwards and lateral migration across.
- 6.3. The other seats in the away quadrant, mainly forward of the vomitory area, are set aside for family groups, the elderly, ambulant disabled and those who cannot or do not want to stand. This gives the Stadium the opportunity to work with visiting clubs and intelligently sell and populate the front rows with the aim of offering an improved customer service. Some clubs and associations co-operate with this initiative. Others do not, particularly those who sell their away ticket inventory through a third party.
- 6.4. Referring to the SGSA’s enforcement approach for the all-seater policy for the season 2023/24,¹¹ including its risk categorisation matrix, the Away Quadrant, like the Canton Stand, is considered to be an area of **lower risk** but **sufficient compliance**.
- 6.5. Without being complacent regarding the measures taken, the Stadium continues to take all reasonable steps in accordance with the SGSA’s enforcement approach, to ensure compliance with the all-seater licence conditions in the area forward of the licensed standing area, always providing that these are practicable and do not create unacceptable risks to other aspects of safety, security and service. Where all reasonable steps have been taken, but away spectators still choose to stand in the seated areas, the club uses appropriate additional steps to manage the residual risk.
- 6.6. This approach continues to comprise the following measures.
- 6.7. **Three colour-coded zones.** The Away Quadrant at the Stadium comprises blocks 119 to 123 as shown in the top right of the map below. Block 120 is a disabled viewing platform with its own level access route. The four other blocks are general seating areas, each of which is accessed by a correspondingly numbered vomitory.

¹¹ *Ibid.*



- 6.8. Apart from the disabled viewing platform, the Away Quadrant is divided into three colour-coded zones;
- Block 119 is the red zone;
 - Blocks 121 and 122 are the green zone; and
 - Block 123 is the yellow zone.
- 6.9. For most matches, block 123 is not taken up by the away club and remains empty.
- 6.10. **Ticketing.** Tickets for the Away Quadrant are printed on red, green and yellow stock with the ticket colours corresponding to the three coloured zones.
- 6.11. **Access controls.** All away fans continue to enter through the turnstile block at Gate 12. Primary access controls ensure that only away ticket holders are able to enter the stadium in this location.
- 6.12. Secondary access controls at the entrance to the vomitories ensure that ticket holders enter only the zone which corresponds to the colour of their ticket. These secondary access controls are carried out by stewards. Police officers are present nearby to preserve public order by providing any necessary support to the stewards. These controls reduce the risk of lateral migration.
- 6.13. **Stricter enforcement forward of the vomitories.** The Stadium adopts broadly the same approach **forward of the vomitories** as it does in the home Ninian Stand.
- 6.14. The radial gangways are kept clear and backwards migration prevented through the stewarding arrangements in place. Stewards occupy the radial gangways from before the gates are opened and check tickets in the gangways both to help spectators find their seats and to prevent migration.

- 6.15. If persistent standing is observed in the seats forward of the vomitories, the stewards respond and take the appropriate action. This ranges from a word of advice, through to a more formal warning, through to ejection and reporting the circumstances to the away club.
- 6.16. **Match-specific risk assessments.** The known persistent standing behaviour of the away club's fans are considered on a match by match basis.
- 6.17. Where there is a known risk of widespread persistent standing, the Stadium considers the following additional measures:
- Individual selected seats may be taken off sale so as to reduce the crowd density;
 - End of row seats may be taken off sales so as to provide space for the inevitable lateral migration of standing fans but without them encroaching into the aisles;
 - To provide the stewards with lateral as well as radial gangways through which to make their interventions, rows of seats may be taken off sale and left vacant for lateral patrol by stewards.
- 6.18. For fixtures where late entry into the bowl and congestion around the vomitories is reasonably foreseeable, the capacity of the Away Quadrant may be reduced by 20%.
- 6.19. The seats which are taken off sale are around the vomitories, providing accommodation for any late entries into the bowl by fans who are then unlikely to occupy their designated seats.
- 6.20. **Independent inspection.** As in previous seasons, the Stadium will commission an independent inspection of these arrangements at one or more matches during the 2025/26 season. The reports of these inspections will continue to be provided to the local safety advisory group, published on the Internet and widely circulated to other stakeholders.