

# SPIRIT OF SHANKLY

SPECIAL NEWSLETTER FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE INDEPENDENT PANEL REPORT INTO THE 2022 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL IN PARIS

16 FEBRUARY 2023



## SOS welcome Independent Panel Inquiry report

Eight months after it was commissioned, the report into what happened at the UEFA Champions League Final in Paris on 28 May 2022 has been published. And it clears Liverpool supporters of blame and responsibility for the horrendous situations that occurred in and around Stade de France that night.

What should have been the highlight of the season for travelling supporters of Liverpool and Real Madrid – in UEFA's words a 'festival of football' – turned out to be a maelstrom of chaos and alarm that led to some fans fearing for their life.

The blame game began even before a ball was kicked, and in the immediate aftermath those supposedly in charge – UEFA and the authorities – had no hesitation in pointing the finger at supporters.

**But now with the publication of the report it is clear, the fans bear no culpability, the panel concluding "overarching organisational failures" were the root of what went so badly wrong.**

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### The Report identifies EIGHT factors that caused or contributed to conditions which almost led to disaster

1. A substantially larger number of Liverpool fans were directed to train line RER D, compared to the volume of people attending other major events at the stadium by that route.
2. Defective route planning between RER D train and the stadium, resulting in too many people being directed to Additional Security Perimeter entrance 3 (ASP3).
3. Defective access arrangements at ASPs. The effect of this was particularly acute at ASP3 because of the increased pressure created by the flawed routing, and that it was positioned on a restricted access ramp: a bottleneck.
4. The use of two different forms of tickets without extra measures to maintain throughput rates.
5. Defective turnstile arrangements, which failed to guarantee safe entry.
6. The activities of large groups of locals, some involved in attacks on fans and attempts to breach the turnstiles to gain entry to the stadium, and a failure to police them.
7. The use of tear gas and pepper spray in the confined space on the concourse.
8. A lack of contingency relating to additional perimeter and turnstile access: there was no Plan B when things went wrong.

# SOS welcome Independent Panel Inquiry report

## Continued from previous page

A remarkable absence of joint working between the major stakeholders – UEFA, the French authorities and French Football Federation – from when the final was moved to Paris, in February last year, up to and including the day of the match itself, resulted in pandemonium.

This action of putting order above safety led to a situation where there was real danger of a fatal crush. Scores of fans continue to suffer from PTSD as a result and the panel did not shy away from drawing parallels with Hillsborough.

The crush outside the stadium perimeter where thousands, including many of Liverpool's disabled supporters, were held in a bottleneck started hours before the game. In fact, the inquiry notes that at 3.30pm, a UEFA security officer began an inspection of the security and ticket check perimeter and found entrance ASP3, where the majority of Liverpool fans were directed, was "not fit for purpose". Nothing was done about it.

As for the idea that problems were caused by thousands turning up ticketless, it has been roundly dismissed. While it is accepted some did try to gain access without a ticket, there are no firm numbers and the panel adjudged it to be no more than is usual at a major sporting event, such as the Champions League final.

Systemic failings from directing thousands to take just one mode of transport – RER D, rather than also utilising RER B – to ticket checks not working, having no plan for dealing with a large local influx, commonplace and expected at events at Stade de France, and removing signage that would have made it easier for fans to know where they were going, combined to turn UEFA's showcase finale into a near disaster.

Once a city agrees to host such an event, travelling supporters, the Panel state, should assume they will be welcomed and treated as any other visitor. In Paris, last May, they were not. They were corralled in fan zones, not knowing the game would even be shown there until it was announced at 4pm, barred from wearing club colours in parts of the city and seen as a crowd to be controlled.

**The fans have been exonerated. A breakdown in communication on the day, the failures of UEFA, the French police and authorities were to blame. The shame – beginning with the stadium billboard announcing kick-off was delayed due to fans arriving late, supporters being tear gassed and pepper sprayed, pick-pocketed and attacked, people frightened they were going to die – is on them.**

**We would like to thank the Panel for their forensic approach, dedication and analysis in finding the truth. They finish their report with twenty-one recommendations for hosting and organising future events. We would expect UEFA and the authorities to act upon each of these. We also expect an apology for the lies and smears UEFA so quickly aimed at supporters, without whom their competition and showcase final would be nothing.**

If you wish to read the Report in full [you can find it here](#).



## **Joe Blott, SOS Chair, on the UEFA Independent Panel Report into events in Paris**

**I welcome the findings of the Independent Panel Inquiry into events surrounding the UEFA Champions League Final in Paris on 28 May 2022. I particularly note and welcome that Liverpool fans have been cleared of blame and responsibility for the horrendous situations that occurred in and around Stade de France that night.**

I would like to thank the Panel, led by Dr Tiago Rodrigues, for their diligence and tenacity in seeking the truth and laying the foundation for justice. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank Ian Byrne, MP for Liverpool West Derby, whose determination led the French Senate to allow Liverpool fans to give testimony to them in person and whose ongoing demands for a full retraction and apology for the lies told about the role of the fans, especially by UEFA, are testament to his commitment and persistence on behalf of the people he represents.

With chilling echoes of Hillsborough and other tragic events, many fans who attended the Champions League Final in Paris - be they young, old or disabled, remain traumatised by the events they experienced there.

We know too that trauma has been triggered in some fans who also attended, survived, lost loved ones or witnessed the tragic events at Hillsborough and that they are further traumatised by the narrative of blame peddled for 30 years and inexcusably rolled out again after Paris.

UEFA and all authorities must now accept all 21 recommendations cited in the report and act upon them. They must apologise for the lies and smears they used to shift responsibility from themselves to innocent fans and they must formally retract the untrue statements made about supporters.

UEFA must ensure that this never happens again and do everything in their power to enable all supporters to attend football matches secure in the knowledge that their safety is paramount and will not be compromised.

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## Joe Blott, SOS Chair, comments on Panel Report

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President Macron must acknowledge that it is not acceptable to treat people visiting his country for prestigious sporting events in such a dismissive and challenging way. It was his policing policy that led directly to unprovoked attacks on supporters by police and locals alike and this cannot be allowed to happen again. Nor should Macron allow ministers in his Government to hide their failings and lack of responsibility and accountability by deflecting blame.

The Football Association (FA), whilst not named in this report, nonetheless represents English football within UEFA and must take note of these findings. The FA's silence last year makes them culpable in the blame game of 2022, just as they were in 1989. They must heed the findings of this report and act upon them, for the sake of English football and its supporters.

Sadly, few fans of other clubs reached out to us following Paris and when the current season started in August 2022, the fingerpointing and blame-shifting continued: "Always the victims, it's never your fault" they sang - and sing still. The irony of course is that they are all entirely correct, as this report proves beyond any doubt - football fans were the victim and it wasn't their fault.

I am proud and feel thoroughly vindicated that the fight we took to UEFA and a nation state and its authorities was the right thing to do, not just for our supporters who were in Paris last May, but for all supporters across the whole of Europe. We walked on with hope in our hearts and now no one will walk alone in future when they attend a Champions League Final.

**Joe Blott, Chair, Spirit of Shankly**

### SOS vindicated

**The Report is a full vindication of what I wrote on 31 May last year, six days after those awful events at Stade de France:**

*"From the moment UEFA displayed the "reason" for the delay to kick off as the late arrival of fans, we all knew what was happening. The blame shift, the UEFA and French Authorities media excuse machines were going into overdrive, but we knew differently.*

*"Witnessing it ourselves, receiving powerful testimonies from our members and through the power of social and mainstream media, they were quickly exposed. So, the narrative changed to ticketless fans and forgeries. Again, not true. This was another example of UEFA and the national and local authorities' failure to prepare.*

*"The past 48 hours though has seen a powerful shift. With ourselves, positive support from Football Supporters Europe, media and LFC, we have seen UEFA crumble and agree to a first-ever independent inquiry and to strategically shift away from the narrative of the French authorities. What has happened now is that French people are also exposing the lies and mistruths of their government and even calling for resignations - again this is ground-breaking."*



## Statement from Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association

The Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association (LDSA) welcomes and supports the findings of the Independent Inquiry Report into events at Stade De France on May 28th, 2022, at the Champions League Final. From the outset we had confidence that Dr Tiago Rodrigues and his panel of experts would follow the facts and we believe that this faith has been proven correct with the publication of this hard-hitting report.

Our journey to establish the truth started on 28 May 2022, whilst still in the stadium, when UEFA, for reasons known only to themselves, put a notice on a screen inside the stadium which read: "Due to the late arrival of fans, the match has been delayed." Our immediate concern was for our supporters outside the stadium, many of whom were fearing for their lives. By contrast, UEFA's concern seemed to be protecting their own reputation.

**We knew at the time this message was false and we knew where they were going with it! Like so many Liverpool fans, we had been down this road before and from that moment inside the stadium in Paris, we were determined not to allow them to take us down that same road again.**

We formulated a plan of action with our friends and colleagues at Spirit of Shankly, led by the indefatigable Joe Blott. We all felt that speed would be of the essence if we were to stop the lies and falsehoods spewing from the mouths of those in authority. They had ultimate responsibility for the safety and security of our fans, and we had to act quickly if we were to stop these false accusations from being accepted as "the Truth". Liverpool supporters are aware of the pain and anguish that these lies and falsehoods cause and they had to be challenged immediately.

We requested to participate in the French Senate hearing convened by the French Culture Committee to investigate events at Stade De France on 28 May 2022. We requested to take part more in hope than expectation, as those in authority often ignore the voices of football supporters. However, to our surprise, our proposal was accepted, and Joe Blott, Chair of Spirit of Shankly and Ted Morris, Chair of Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association, were invited to represent non-disabled and disabled supporters from LFC at the hearings in Paris on 21 June 2022.

Careful planning went into our historic appearance in the Senate and we thank Ian Byrne MP, Anthony Barrett and David Conn for their valuable assistance and support with our presentations to the Senators.

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# Statement from Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association

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Our approach was two-pronged; Joe would forensically challenge the falsehoods and demonstrate how "facts" told to the public and worldwide media were in fact lies. Ted would highlight the shocking and, at times, terrifying experience of disabled supporters who had travelled to Paris to participate in a festival of football but found themselves in the middle of a carnival of horror, fearing for their lives. We attended the Palace De Luxembourg, home of the French Senate in Paris and were given a fair hearing. It is a day that Joe and I will never forget as we believe that our evidence went a long way to establishing "The Truth" regarding what happened on 28 May.

**The final report from the French Senate, "An avoidable fiasco, "completely exonerated Liverpool FC supporters and laid the blame firmly and squarely at the door of those responsible for our safety. The same people who had placed us in danger. It was a stunning but correct victory for supporters of Liverpool Football Club who had endured that horrifying and traumatic day. We would like to thank Senators François Noël Buffet and Laurent Lafon for their hospitality and compassion and for giving us a voice when so many in authority ignore us.**

When UEFA announced that there was to be an Independent Inquiry, we feared that it would not be as transparent, open, accurate and honest as that by the French Senate. This concerned us and we made our feelings known to those responsible for the investigation and report. However, our fears were dispelled at an early stage when we were contacted personally by Dr Tiago Rodrigues who was honest with us from the outset. He said with conviction that he would follow the facts wherever they led. Tiago was true to his word and kept us informed at every stage. He and his team should be proud of their approach.

The report's conclusions and recommendations show how much emphasis they placed on listening to supporters' voices, especially those of disabled supporters. We do not seek recrimination or blame; that is for others to address. We do, though, ask UEFA to take on board the panel recommendations and make the necessary adjustments to allow disabled supporters to follow their chosen team in Europe without having to overcome so much prejudice and navigate so many hurdles.

**One of the lessons that must be taken from this report is that in terms of making European football accessible, UEFA has much work to do. We ask them to work with us and seek our expertise to address these injustices and give young disabled supporters from all corners of Europe hope that one day they can follow their football team in the same way that non-disabled children can. Equality and fairness should not be a fight; it must be a right. In 2023 and with the knowledge of the terrifying experiences disabled supporters experienced in Paris, this is not and should not be an impossible dream.**

I want to thank our disabled supporters for providing their powerful and, at times, harrowing testimonies. We know this was not easy and we applaud their courage.

**Ted Morris, Chair, Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association**

# Ian Byrne MP calls on UEFA, French and UK Governments and FA to act

SOS committee member Ian Byrne, Member of Parliament for Liverpool West Derby, has been working on behalf of Liverpool fans in regard to the chaos in Paris since the day of the match. Ian was in Paris with family and friends and spoke passionately to media in the immediate aftermath of the near-disaster in defence of supporters and to give an overview of what really happened.

This week Ian has urged UEFA, the French and UK Governments and the FA to act; he has called on UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin to consider his position and on UEFA to implement in full the 22 recommendations in the panel report. He has urged our Government to intervene and back his calls and the FA to do the same. He has also submitted an Early Day Motion regarding the complete exoneration of Liverpool fans by the report and applied to ask an Urgent Question regarding the Panel Report in the House of Commons next week.

**Across the next few pages, you can find a selection of interventions that Ian has made following publication of the Independent Panel Report.**



## Ian Byrne MP Liverpool West Derby

### Statement 14.02.2023

The report by the Independent Panel into the near-disaster at the Champions League Final in Paris on 28 May 2022 is a complete exoneration of Liverpool supporters from any blame for the terrifying situation that unfolded at the Stade de France last May.

Rather, the blame is laid firmly at the feet of UEFA and the French authorities for shambolic organisation of the final. The panel finds that “overarching organisational failures” caused the problems and identifies eight key contributing factors to a near-disaster, including a “securitised approach” to the game adopted by French authorities, which compromised the safety of those in attendance and ultimately led to a situation where there was a very real danger of a fatal crush.

It is clear that were it not for the magnificent efforts of the Liverpool supporters present, events could have led to a disaster comparable to Hillsborough.

The panel finds too that UEFA and the French authorities shamefully sought to deflect responsibility for a near-disaster away from themselves and onto blameless fans; this began immediately with on-screen messaging inside the stadium, broadcast to a global TV audience, that the delay to kick-off was caused by the late arrival of fans. This was categorically untrue.

The panel criticises the false claims made by UEFA and the French government on the night of the match about a mass of ticketless fans and fans with fake tickets. The panel found no evidence of mass ticketless supporters and in fact found that more than 2,500 Liverpool fans were unable to register their legitimate tickets at the turnstiles.

Nothing short of a full public apology and retraction by French police authorities, French football authorities, the French Government and UEFA will suffice, due to the immense pain caused by this falsified narrative of blame. There is an urgent need for a full and unequivocal apology by all parties for this deeply hurtful and - for many Liverpool fans - triggering ploy to shift the blame.

We now need to see the full and transparent implementation by UEFA of the 22 key recommendations made in the panel report and I call on UEFA to implement them in full, with transparency and urgency.

I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to the panel for their rigour in reaching the truth and to Spirit of Shankly and Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association for their role in presenting it to the panel.







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## Early Day Motion (EDM) submitted 14.02.2023 by Ian Byrne MP Liverpool West Derby

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### Total exoneration of Liverpool fans at the 2022 Champions League Final in Paris

That this House welcomes the findings of the Independent Panel Inquiry into the near-disaster at the UEFA Champions League Final in Paris on 28 May 2022; notes further to EDM 131 tabled by Ian Byrne MP on this issue, the total exoneration of Liverpool supporters by the panel from any blame for the chaos and horror at the Stade de France; notes the panel's finding that "overarching organisational failures" caused the problems; supports the panel's identification of eight key contributing factors including a "securitised approach" to the game by authorities which compromised the safety and security of those in attendance; notes that the panel draws parallels between Paris and Hillsborough; notes the panel's finding that UEFA and French authorities sought to deflect responsibility for this near-disaster away from themselves and onto blameless fans; demands a full public apology and retraction from UEFA and the French authorities for announcing on screens inside the stadium and to a global TV audience that the delay to kick-off was caused by the late arrival of fans at the stadium, when this was categorically untrue; demands a full response from the FA in support of these findings; demands full and transparent implementation by UEFA of the 22 key recommendations in this report; acknowledges the panel's commitment to a fair and thorough inquiry and thanks them for hearing evidence from fans; commends Spirit of Shankly supporters' trust and Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association for their substantial contribution to the panel inquiry.

# CL Final 2022 chaos: Major failings by stakeholders

UEFA's Independent Panel Inquiry runs to 159 pages; a forensic piece of work detailing how and why the events of 28 May 2022 occurred. It concludes that a series of failures caused or contributed to the problems on 28 May 2022, but focuses on UEFA, French Football Federation, and Préfecture de Police because of their key roles - which should have ensured the safety of the final

The report summarises that "the UEFA 'model' created a lacuna, whereby no one had proper oversight of the full planning and operational picture, and a particular consequence of this was that there were substantial deficits in joint working between stakeholders, which were not picked-up and remedied."

An overriding factor - one repeated throughout the report and which the Panel found "remarkable" is the "absence of joint working between key stakeholders".

Some of the major failings by those stakeholders, published in the Inquiry, are outlined below.

**[You can find further analysis of the failings by stakeholders on our website.](#)**

**If you wish to read the Panel Report in full [you can find it here.](#)**

- At 15:30 on 28 May 2022, a highly experienced UEFA Security Officer appointed by UEFA to monitor safety and security measures arrived at Stade de France and began an inspection of the temporary additional security and ticket check perimeter surrounding the stadium. At Additional Security Perimeter entrance 3 (ASP3), he immediately noted arrangements were "not fit for purpose" and reported such to his UEFA colleagues.
- The similarities [with Hillsborough] include the fact both were preventable, and both were caused by the failures of those responsible for public safety. Neither was a 'black swan' event, or the result of a 'perfect storm'. Both events were foreseeable. In the judgment of the Panel, the different outcomes were a matter of chance: in one nearly a hundred died, the other none, but through no merit of those in charge.
- As the crisis in Paris unfolded, UEFA announced on big screens within the stadium and thereby via broadcasters to the world, that the delay in kick-off was due to 'late' arriving supporters. This claim was objectively untrue.
- On the night, and in the immediate aftermath, French Ministers, UEFA and others blamed Liverpool supporters, asserting that they sought to actively enter the stadium without valid tickets. The Panel finds no evidence to support these assertions and draws the inference that they were made to deflect from responsibility for planning and operational failures.
- Several key stakeholders have not accepted responsibility for their own failures but have been quick to attribute blame to others. Some have continued to make allegations based upon 'facts' for which there is no evidence.