

SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT BY: Director of Housing, Operations and Development

**TO: REGULATORY PANEL - LICENSING
OF 29 May 2025**

**SUBJECT: ANNUAL INSPECTION AND REVISED SAFETY CERTIFICATES
FOR SOMERSET PARK, AYR**

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To advise the Panel of the outcome of the annual technical inspection of Somerset Park, Ayr, and to seek approval for the issue of revised Safety Certificates for the ground.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Panel:

2.1.1 agrees that the current Safety Certificate remains in force until 30th June 2025, provided that no adverse reports are received at the meeting; and

2.1.2 agrees that the revised Safety Certificate will come into force on 1st July 2025, and that it will include the new Regulated Stand to the North Area.

3. Background

- 3.1 Under the Safety of Sports Ground Act 1975 Somerset Park is designated as a ground requiring a General Safety Certificate. In addition to the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 the ground is covered by the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987, and related Safety of Sports Grounds Regulations. Main guidance is given by the "Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds", (the "Green Guide"). Although the guide has no statutory force, many of its recommendations are made statutory by their inclusion in the General Safety Certificate.

- 3.2 Currently Somerset Park had a General Safety Certificate issued by South Ayrshire Council to Ayr United Football Club (AUFC). Under the terms of the Certificate AUFC are defined as "Holders" of the Certificate. The Certificate set the ground capacity of Somerset Park at 10,203.

- 3.3 The current Certificate is valid until 30th June 2025, unless withdrawn by the Council. The Safety Certificate states that all assessment, surveys and reports required should be completed by 28th February each year, with any remedial works carried out to the satisfaction of the Council by 14th July, prior to the beginning of the new football season.

4. Proposals

Technical Reports

4.1 Building Standards Services, South Ayrshire Council

4.1.1 The annual site inspection was made to Somerset Park on 26th March 2025. It can be reported that all the required assessments, surveys, certification, and reports are now in place. The annual Structural Report has been received by the Council along with required Structural Safety Certificate. Within the Report there is a number of maintenance works required and as such a schedule of works has been prepared and issued to AUFC for completion prior to 14th July 2025. A further inspection will be scheduled by Building Standards to confirm that all necessary works are completed by the 14th July 2025.

4.1.2 Major development works were carried out to the stadium with the completion of the new North Stand with seated area and hospitality suite to the rear in June 2024. The new North Stand and associated terracing to the front was included within the current Safety Certificate, issued on the 1st July 2024. This gave an amended ground capacity figure of 10,203.

4.1.3 An opening match of the new stand was played against Celtic on Friday 5th July 2024 with an attendance of 8,858.

The next highest attendance in the 24/25 season was against Hibernian in the Scottish Cup, on the 7th February 2025 with an attendance of 7,364

Match day inspections were carried out at both of these high profiles games, and multi-agency debrief meetings were also held following the matches.

Issues were raised mainly around the turnstile areas at the Railway End, both inside and outside the stadium. Several changes have been made to both the stewarding and the restricting of access to the North Stand area from Railway End turnstiles. This has resulted in an improved flow of spectators in this area. It should be noted that there are ongoing discussions with the club how to improve this further, with relocation of a temporary catering facility in this area.

- 4.1.4 One of the challenges for Somerset Park is that access can only be gained from sets of turnstiles, on two sides of the stadium (Somerset Road & Tryfield Place). This is due to the land adjacent to the stadium on other two sides of ground not being owned by the Club.

The area adjacent to the Railway End of the stadium has now been recently purchased by the Club, who currently have future development plans for a training facility and pitch. Several meetings have been held with the Club, and representations have been made to include additional turnstiles within any proposed plans for this area. This would not only improve access to the Railway End, but could also allow access to the North Stand area as well.

If any of the proposed plans affect stadium safety or capacity, then an update report will be provided to Panel on any alterations or amendments required to the Safety Certificate.

4.2 Environmental Health Services, South Ayrshire Council

No adverse comments received.

4.3 Scottish Fire & Rescue

No adverse comments received

4.4 Police Scotland

No adverse comments received

4.5 Scottish Ambulance Service

No adverse comments received

4.6 NHS & Arran

No adverse comments received.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The cost of staff time spent on inspections and on the preparation of revised Safety Certificates was met from existing Environment, Neighbourhood & Economy revenue budget.

7. Human Resources Implications

Not applicable.

8. Risk Implications of adopting the recommendations.

8.1 Risk Implications of adopting the recommendations.

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 Risk Implications of rejecting the recommendations.

8.1.2 Rejecting the recommendations may impact on the reputation of the Council.

9. Equalities

- 9.1 The proposals in this report have been assessed through the Equalities Impact Assessment Scoping Process, and there are no significant potential positive or negative equality impacts of agreeing the recommendations and therefore an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required. A copy of the Equalities Scoping Assessment is attached as Appendix 1.

10. Sustainable Development Implications

- 10.1 Considering Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

- 11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

- 12.1 This work contributes to Priority One Spaces and Places, Priority Two Work and Economy Priority Three Pride in South Ayrshire.

13. Results of Consultation

- 13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this paper.
- 13.2 Consultation has taken place with SAC Environmental Health Services; Scottish Fire and Rescue; Police Scotland; Scottish Ambulance Service; and the NHS and Arran.

Background Papers

Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975.
 Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987.
 Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (6th Edition) ("The Green Guide").
 Safety Certificate for Somerset Park, Ayr.

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