

Police urge semi-final fans to unite and to 'focus on the football'



Police Scotland has called for football fans to unite and to 'focus on the football' whilst issuing a stark warning to those intent on causing disorder ahead of the highly-anticipated Scottish Cup semi-finals played at the National Stadium, Hampden Park, on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 April 2016.

Chief Superintendent Brian McInulty is appealing to supporters 'not to let the side down' and to get behind their teams so that everyone can enjoy the two great games of football without being spoiled by off-pitch disorder.

The double-edged appeal comes as preparations for the forthcoming matches kick-off with a nation-wide operation targeting known football offenders, domestic abusers and disorder, alcohol over semi-cup-final weekend.

Chief Superintendent Brian McInulty, the local policing commander for Greater Glasgow, said: "Like sports fans across Scotland, I'm really looking forward to both games. There's a real sense of excitement ahead of big games like these.

"As a police officer my priority will always be public safety. The planning for both games, especially the Rangers v Celtic match, has been ongoing for weeks now. They are well rehearsed plans and are focused firmly on making sure fans enjoy the games in a safe environment, without fear of experiencing hate crime, violence or alcohol-related disorder.

All divisions across Scotland have plans in place to minimise

disruption relating to the games and officers will be carrying out high-visibility patrols at the stadium, in Glasgow and throughout the country. Police are warning minority of those intent on causing disorder to beware.

Chief Superintendent McInulty continued: "If you are intent on causing trouble, or indeed cause trouble at the stadium, in your city or town, your local pub, your home or even online, you will be caught. Don't think because you haven't been caught at the time you've got away with it. Retrospective enquiries will also be carried out to identify those responsible for any crimes committed.

"Anyone with a Football Banning Order will already have been contacted to remind them of their terms and conditions. If they try to flout their ban, they will be arrested.

"The same goes for anyone trying to smuggle pyrotechnics – such as flares, fireworks or smoke bombs, into the ground. Specially trained flare detection dogs will mix with the crowd outside the venue looking for any devices.

"With regard to the game on Sunday, this is the first meeting of Rangers and Celtic for just over a year and, as we can see from the build up to the game especially in the media – locally, nationally and even internationally, the interest and excitement is massive.

"Let's remember the game for the right reasons; as an exciting game of football. Get behind your team and help make it the spectacle it can be and for it be remembered for the football on the pitch.

"Glasgow can be very proud to have built up an international reputation as a world class host for major events. Let us make sure we enhance that reputation over the course of the weekend."

It may be the first time for some fans to have been in Glasgow

or visited Hampden Park. Fans are advised to get to know the routes to the stadium, plan their journey and get to the ground in plenty time to avoid congestion.

As well as working with officers from British Transport Police, additional Police Scotland officers will be on duty in the city and will be patrolling the roads to minimise disruption and congestion on major routes.

Drinking alcohol in public is illegal as is drinking on a coach, minibus or train travelling to the game. It is an offence to enter or even attempt to enter the stadium whilst drunk. Police and stewards will be looking out for anyone who is drunk or is intent on causing disruption.