

Hearts' top-flight status in danger as reconstruction talks end in failure

Hearts place in the top-flight of Scottish football is hanging by a thread tonight as Scottish football's reconstruction talks ended with insufficient support for any plan to reconfigure the leagues.

A 15-strong panel had been set up to look at proposals in the wake of the SPFL's ballot to end the season, but a meeting of the Premiership sides plus Dundee United today concluded when the majority were against changing the current 12-10-10-10 format.

The SPFL Board have the authority to call the season with Celtic handed the title and bottom of the table Hearts relegated to the Championship.



Ladbroke's Scottish Premiership – Heart of Midlothian v Hibernian. Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh, Midlothian, UK. 26/12/2019. Pic shows: Hearts' Centre-Forward, Uche Ikpeazu, breaks through the home defence as Hearts go down 0-2 to Hibernian in the Ladbroke's Scottish Premiership, Edinburgh Boxing Day derby at Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh. Credit: Ian Jacobs

When football was suspended the Gorgie side had 23 points from 30-games, four behind Hamilton Academical, and six behind Ross County and St Mirren.

They missed chances to move off the bottom by drawing with 10-man Hamilton at Tynecastle before losing to St Mirren.

Had Hearts beaten the Saints in their last game they would have leapfrogged the Paisley side.

Worryingly, the indications are that only Premiership football may be played next season with matches played behind closed doors and streamed live on TV. It would not be cost effective for lower league games to take place without fans and if that was the case there would obviously be no promotion and relegation leaving Hearts stranded for at least two years.

Many Hearts fans are insisting that Chair Ann Budge challenge any decision that would see them relegated in court. She has already indicated that she would be taking legal advice.

Aberdeen chairman Dave Cormack, speaking on behalf of the group said: "The strong feeling of the group was that we must focus all of our energies on emerging from the crisis we face, due to the pandemic, on getting back to playing football safely and getting fans back into grounds as soon as practicably possible.

"Whilst the group sympathises with the plight of the situation the relegated teams are faced with, it concluded that this is not the right time to consider immediate reconstruction in the midst of a crisis.

"But the group is willing to engage in and pick up on these discussions once we are through Covid-19."