



# Strategic Plan 2020-24



# Foreword

We are pleased to present the Sports Grounds Safety Authority's (SGSA's) Strategic Plan 2020-24.

Sport is a central part of our national culture. Every week millions of people in the UK attend football, rugby, horse racing and other sporting events. Thanks to the dedication and commitment of all those who work in stadium safety, the UK is one of the safest places in the world to watch sport live. The SGSA's priority is to maintain and build on these high standards and to help spread best practice around the world. We do this through our regulatory role within football and our advisory work with other sports and in other countries.

The SGSA was born out of tragedies which struck football grounds in the 1980s. Its predecessor, the Football Licensing Authority, was created as a result of Lord Taylor's report into the tragic events of Hillsborough, which took place 30 years ago. Through our work over the subsequent decades, we have helped ensure that such tragedies are now a thing of the past, at least in the UK, although, of course, we need to guard against complacency.

It is now nearly 10 years since the SGSA replaced the Football Licensing Authority, and the organisation is at a critical stage in its development. We have taken great strides in recent years, for example:

- Developing our licensing and policy functions and entering into strategic partnerships to bolster, or in some cases create, capacity and capability;
- Investing in the development of a new (2018) edition of the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Green Guide), previously updated in 2008, which provides an ongoing source of income and reaffirms our position as a world-leading authority on sports grounds safety;
- Expanding our training and advisory services in Northern Ireland, with the England and Wales Cricket Board and with international organisations such as FIFA and Interpol;
- Adopting a widened interpretation of safety to include all people within the grounds and issues such as anti-social behaviour and terrorism; and
- In 2019-20, making use of our reserves and year-end flexibility, enabling investment in areas such as primary research to ensure we remain a robust regulator and thought leader.

Our reach and impact are now extraordinary. But evolving safety risks, increasing demand for our services, and forthcoming changes to the regulatory regime that governs our work mean that we must re-think our aims and how we operate.

We must not rest on our laurels and, as a public body, the SGSA needs to keep pace with developments in the wider public sector. Our £100 licence fee, unchanged since its introduction in the early 1990s, does not reflect the cost of regulation or the varying risk at grounds we licence. Our partners in local government and the police also face severe resourcing challenges which can lead to difficult choices. Our regulatory work requires greater transparency and more robust evidence. We have started this journey with the commissioning of new independent research on the nature and scale of standing at football, associated safety risks and how to mitigate them. The results will be provided to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help inform Government's consideration of the all-seater policy.

Furthermore, the risks to football and sports spectators continue to change. The threat level of terrorism is substantial with sports grounds, as with other crowded places, now recognised as potential targets, and new threats are emerging, for example from load-carrying drones. The football economy outside of the Premier League is increasingly challenging, with many clubs experiencing financial difficulties which in turn put pressure on resources available for spectator safety.

A programme of modest investment and reform can see the SGSA adapt to the challenges of ensuring the future safety of football fans, help to maintain and raise standards in other sports, grow our commercial services and enhance the UK's soft power through our international activities. This is the purpose of our Strategic Plan.

We look forward to an exciting five years as we implement our new strategy.



**Alan Coppin**  
Chair



**Martyn Henderson**  
Chief Executive

# About the Sports Grounds Safety Authority

The SGSA is the safety regulator for football grounds in England and Wales and the UK Government's independent advisor on sports grounds safety.

## What we do



## Our Values



# Strategic Objectives

**Our overall aim for the next five years is to improve the safety of the sector, both domestically and internationally.**

To deliver this, we have developed a set of strategic objectives and goals, outlined in the following pages. Our annual business plans, supported by a new corporate plan, will drive delivery of the strategy.

Inevitably, the scale of ambition in delivering the strategy is linked to resources, which will largely be determined by the Government's Spending Review. We will evaluate our strategic priorities relative to our available resources during each business planning cycle. We will also review this Strategy annually to ensure we are responding to events and developments that affect our organisation.





# Objective 1: Improve performance

**Continuously improve our performance as the safety regulator for football grounds in England and Wales.**

## How we will do this:

Develop and maintain a robust evidence base.

Make targeted and risk-based use of our statutory powers.

Identify and promote good practice, including through our suite of world-leading guidance.

Improve the training and qualifications available to the sector.

Our first priority will always be to fulfil our regulatory remit, as set by the UK's Parliament. Advances in stadium technology, resourcing challenges across our safety partners, the governance within the domestic game, and the threat from terrorism mean that the SGSA's role is more important than ever.

As a modern regulator, it is vital that we have a robust evidence base on which to base our policies, procedures and the targeting of our resources. Over the course of the next five years, we will develop our capability, improve the quality of our data, and invest in new research, working in partnership with others wherever possible.

Supporting our regulatory work, we will continue to provide world-leading guidance on safety for both sporting and non-sporting stakeholders who manage large crowded spaces. We will also enable the sector to respond to changing demands by supporting the continuing professional development of safety professionals, improving access to high-quality learning opportunities and qualifications.

# Objective 2: Raise safety profile

**Raise the profile and status of sports grounds safety in the UK and internationally.**

## How we will do this:

Drive a strong partnership approach to sports grounds safety.

Deepen our engagement with fans.

Develop long-term campaigns to promote safety at sports grounds.

Champion the sports grounds safety sector.

The safety of our sports grounds relies on a strong partnership between governing bodies, clubs, local government, the police and other emergency services, as well as fans themselves.

We will use our unique position as a national safety body to encourage co-operation and collaboration.

A key focus for our organisation will be deepening our engagement with fans to better understand their concerns and desires, and to increase awareness of the work being undertaken across the country to keep them safe.

Supporting this engagement will be long-term safety campaigns which will be delivered with and through our partners.

The safety of fans should always be the top priority for clubs, sport governing bodies and national governments; however, the UK's strong safety record in sport can lead to complacency. We will champion the work of sports grounds safety sector and ensure it has a strong voice in future.

# Objective 3: Partner of choice

**Become the strategic safety partner of choice for governments, sports governing bodies and the organisers of major events.**

## How we will do this:

Support major events, prioritising those taking place in the UK.

Enhance the range and impact of our training and advisory services.

Set and drive up standards internationally.

Promote our work with and through the UK Government.

The SGSA has many strengths, including our knowledge and experience accumulated over three decades of regulation, our close relationship with Government and the reputation of our guidance.

Foremost however is our independence and our ability to operate across many disciplines to ensure safety is considered at a strategic level. We want to maximise our value to the UK taxpayer and to sports fans around the world, we will therefore have a new focus on major events where we can benefit the greatest number of people.

In order to thrive and extend into new markets, it will be critical to improve the range and impact of our training and advisory services, building on our successful work with the England and Wales Cricket Board, FIFA and others.

Internationally, we will continue to work across Africa to build capacity and support the development of a stronger safety culture. Working with the UK Government and other sports bodies, we will also showcase the importance and reach of our work, helping to support the Government's soft power strategy.

# Objective 4: Increase efficiency

**Improve our efficiency and performance as a non-departmental public body.**

## How we will do this:

Invest in our workforce

Ensure that we have or can access the full range of professional capabilities and competencies.

Increase our digital capability and skills.

Secure value for money for the taxpayer.

The SGSA is a small organisation. We must be lean and efficient in our operations to both discharge our statutory duties and meet the growing demand for our services.

Our biggest asset is our people but we need to do more to support their professional development and equip them with the best tools to do their jobs if we are to reach our true potential.

Because of our size, investment in our workforce is not enough. We must work creatively, including through sharing services and making use of Government frameworks, to ensure that we have access to the full range of professional competencies required by a public authority.

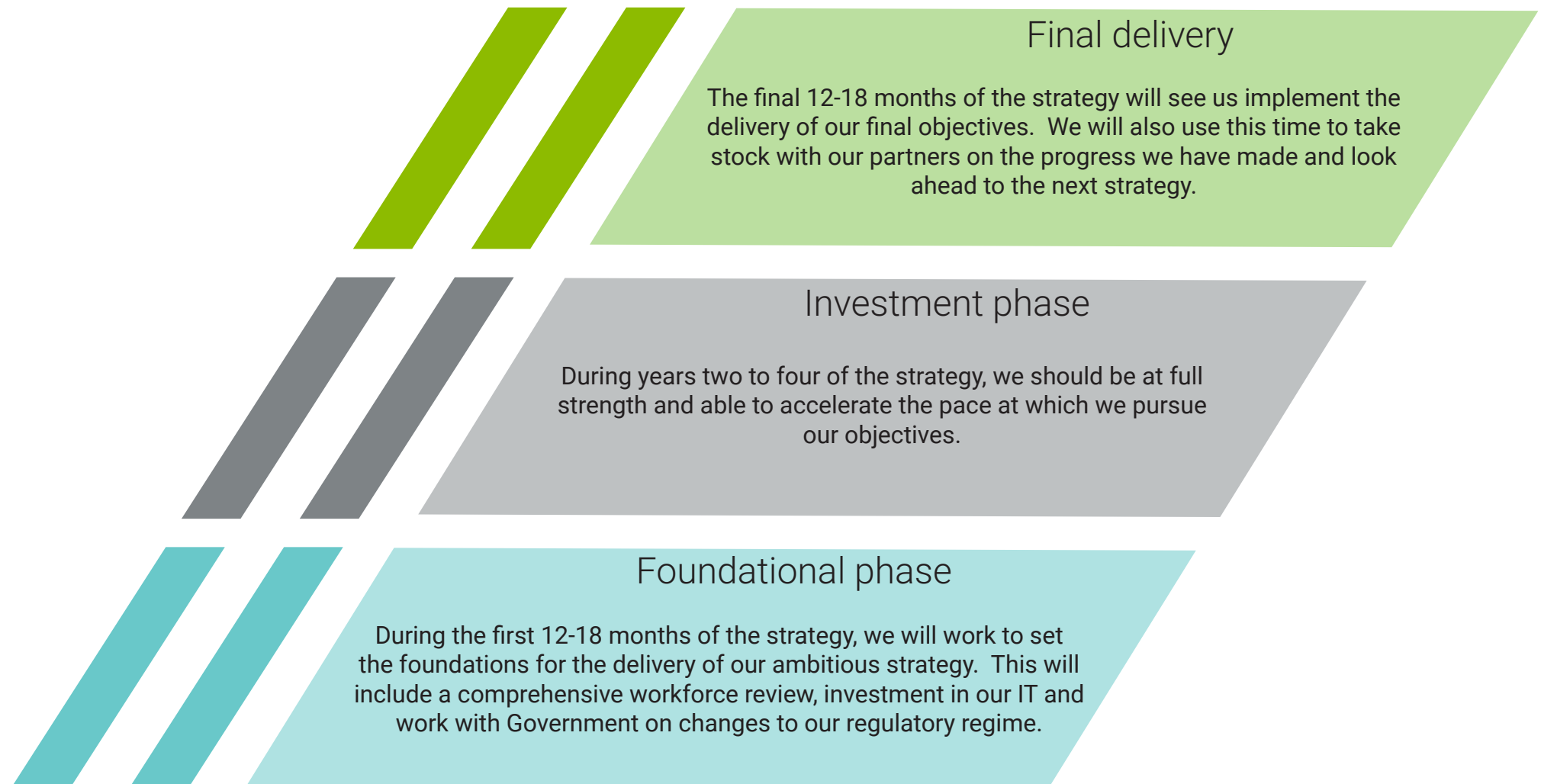
Like many organisations, we can drive efficiency through making greater use of technology. Putting the right infrastructure in place and supporting our staff to increase their digital capability will be a key priority.

We are always mindful that our core funding comes from the UK taxpayer. We will strive to achieve maximum value from every pound that we spend and offset our costs through the licence fee and our paid-for services.



# Phases of implementation

We are proud of how ambitious this strategy is. We also realise that it cannot be implemented overnight; in particular, we need to grow our capacity and capability as an organisation. Over the next five years, we will therefore take a phased approach to achieve our objectives, as outlined below.



# 2020 priorities

Prepare for potential changes to the Government's all-seater policy at football grounds in England and Wales.

Update our Safety Management guidance.

Strengthen engagement with fans in our work.

Work with partners to raise the profile of safety issues.

Develop a stronger safety culture in African football by working with FIFA and CAF.

Support the safe growth of women's football in partnership with the FA.

Review our workforce to ensure we maximise our resources.

Consider changes to our licence fee.

## Success measures

We will continue to publish and report against a suite of indicators, drawing primarily on SGSA's stakeholder and staff surveys, when we publish our annual business plans.



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