

**From:** Simon Preston <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** 07 April 2026 16:52  
**To:** 'Mark Harris' <[REDACTED]>  
**Cc:** 'Angie Firth' <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** RE: FCUM v STOCKTON TOWN RE-ARRANGED FIXTURE - REQUEST FOR NPL BOARD TO RECONSIDER ORIGINAL DECISION

Dear Mark,

Thank you for your email.

We are writing to confirm that we do not intend to appeal the Board's decision to the Football Association, noting your comments regarding the limited prospects of success. In the spirit of co-operation, we attach a proposal for the joint public statement to be published.

At the same time, we feel it is important to formally record our concerns in the strongest possible terms regarding how the decision was reached and the process followed.

### **Decision-Making Process**

We accept that the number of times this fixture has been postponed is unusual, and we expressed our apologies to Stockton Town's officials following the March 24 postponement.

However, we were not made aware of Stockton Town's complaint when it was first submitted, nor were we informed at the point we were encouraged to put forward a counter proposal. We were only notified once both outcomes had been decided. Given that this is our home fixture, with significant financial and sporting implications for the Club, we are extremely surprised and disappointed that we were not given the opportunity to provide input before any decisions were made.

Correspondence indicates multiple rounds of discussion between the League and Stockton Town, including their initial request to move the fixture to their home ground (outside league rules) and subsequent request for a neutral venue. The Club's input was only sought after the initial decision, meaning the process necessarily started from a presumption that the decision had already been made, rather than being part of an original deliberation.

We note that the full NPL Board, including individuals affiliated with clubs in the same division as FC United, participated in the decision. Whether this is permissible under league rules or not, we believe it raises questions of good governance.

Decisions with clear potential conflicts of interest risk creating a perception of unfairness, which is felt not only by FC United but by other member clubs. Transparency and careful management of such conflicts are essential to maintaining confidence in the League's decision-making processes.

### **Suitability of Broadhurst Park**

We accept that the number of fixture postponements is unusual. However, many of these were due to extreme weather events, including:

- November 18 – Winter Storm Claudia
- January 6 – Frozen pitch, affecting games nationally
- January 27 – Winter Storm Chandra

At the time of the February 24 postponement, FC United had played 15 home fixtures, the same as fifteen other clubs and more than four others in the division.

We note part of the Board's decision appears influenced by Stockton Town players having arranged time off work. While we have sympathy for this, Rule 8.7.2 relates solely to ground suitability, not the internal circumstances of visiting players. We assume that this decision was based on that rule but if different, please can you clarify and update within the joint statement.

### **Precedent and Sporting Integrity**

We would also appreciate clarification on any **precedents** the League has applied in relation to:

1. **Requests to play on a 3G pitch** – particularly where the requesting club's home pitch is 3G and the home team's pitch is natural grass. We believe this has a material impact on sporting integrity and would like to understand how such decisions have been approached historically.
2. Complaints by visiting clubs leading to fixture relocation – specifically where the League has upheld a complaint and moved a game to a neutral venue. We would be grateful for any examples or precedents to better understand how these decisions are consistently applied.

This will help ensure transparency and provide context for member clubs, including FC United, regarding the League's approach to these types of requests.

### **Rejection of FC United's Proposal**

Finally, we request further clarification regarding the decision to reject our proposal of scheduling the fixture at Broadhurst Park, with Curzon Ashton (The Tameside Stadium, Ashton-under-Lyne) as a guaranteed backup and a joint final decision to be made on Monday 20 April.

Both grounds are Grade B with grass pitches, three miles apart, and equally convenient for visiting supporters. We do not see how our proposal would cause any additional detriment to Stockton Town, and it would have ensured a fairer solution while avoiding significant sporting and financial disruption.

### **Next Steps**

We look forward to your confirmation regarding:

1. Approval of the joint statement, and agreement to release at 6.00pm tonight.
2. Responses to the concerns outlined above regarding the process and decision rationale.

While we are disappointed with the outcome, we remain committed to ensuring the fixture is delivered successfully and that our supporters can attend and enjoy the match.

We would appreciate a timely response so arrangements and communications can be finalised without further delay.

Kind regards,

Simon Preston  
Director  
FC United of Manchester Football Club

Broadhurst Park  
310 Lightbourne Road  
Moston

Manchester  
M40 0FJ

T: 0161 769 2005

M: [REDACTED]

[www.fc-utd.co.uk](http://www.fc-utd.co.uk)



**From:** Mark Harris <[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** 07 April 2026 11:15

**To:** Simon Preston <[REDACTED]>

**Cc:** Angie Firth <[REDACTED]>

**Subject:** FCUM v STOCKTON TOWN RE-ARRANGED FIXTURE - REQUEST FOR NPL BOARD TO RECONSIDER ORIGINAL DECISION

Dear Simon

Further to our telephone conversation this morning, I write to confirm the decision of the NPL Board of Directors in respect of FC United of Manchester's request to reconsider its original decision to require the FCUM v Stockton Town fixture at a neutral venue, on a 3G pitch, on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April.

Stockton Town originally requested the re-arranged match be played at Stockton, which is not permitted under the rules. Stockton then requested that:-

I understand we can't play it at our ground as we have already played there but hopefully, we can move it to a neutral ground and ideally centrally located between the 2 clubs. The majority of the team have had to put 7 half day holidays in for this fixture to be played and should not have to travel as far this time so people can leave work

In reaching its original decision, the Board took the following factors into consideration

- Six scheduled league fixtures at Broadhurst Park have been lost to the weather this season, more than any other club, reflecting the drainage issues with the pitch.
- Consequently, one short downpour could result in a further postponement.
- Broadhurst Park will host the Manchester Senior Cup a week prior, adding to the pitch-related risk.
- Although Stockton only travelled on one occasion, in each case their players had arranged time off work running into several days across the six postponements.
- April 21<sup>st</sup> being the only free date in the final week of the season, and the potential impact of the result on both championship and play-off positions.

In reconsidering the original decision, the directors took into consideration the information and pictures supplied by FCUM in respect of pitch works; the possibility of intervening games going ahead without weather-related interruption and any sporting integrity issues which might result.

Ultimately, the Board felt it would be unfair to leave it until the week of the fixture to determine where the game will be played. However, the Board recognised that FCUM had exhausted all avenues to source a 3G pitch and accepted Curzon Ashton FC as a suitable venue for the re-arranged fixture. The decision was unanimous.

As we discussed this morning, our preferred route going forward would be to agree a joint statement. However, if your board decides to issue an independent statement, then subject to that statement's content the League reserves the right to issue a formal response. I sincerely hope we can avoid that for reasons discussed previously. However, in the interests of transparency I would appreciate a heads-up on your intentions once you have consulted with your board.

Yours faithfully

Mark

**Mark Harris**

Chairman. The Northern Premier League.

Email: [REDACTED]

Mob: [REDACTED] Tel: [REDACTED]



This communication contains information which is confidential, which may be privileged, and which is for the exclusive use of the intended recipient(s). If you are not an intended recipient please note that any distribution, disclosure, use or copying of any part of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error please notify us by return email or by telephone on [REDACTED] and delete this communication and any copies of it. The Northern Premier League does not warrant that this email is free from error, viruses, malware or defects, or is compatible with your equipment or fit for any purpose and may monitor, intercept and block emails addressed to its users or take any other action in accordance with its email use policy.

Statements or opinions may be expressed in this communication that are personal to the sender and do not necessarily represent the views of The Northern Premier League Board. Unless expressly stated otherwise, The Northern Premier League is not bound by any contract or obligation purported to be created by this communication.

This communication has originated from the communications system of The Northern Premier League. The Northern Premier League Limited is registered in England and Wales. Company registration number 4116935, registered office Boardman Conway, 23a High Street, Weaverham, Cheshire CW8 3HA.

 **Please consider the environment and don't print this e-mail unless you really need to.**