

**IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
APPEALS COMMITTEE**

**In the matter of an appeal by St. Mary's YCFC ("the Appellant") against a decision
taken by the Mid Ulster Football League ("the Respondent")**

Appeals Board:

Leona Gillen BL (Chair)
David Lennox
Peter Clarke

St. Mary's YCFC (Appellant)

Paul McKeown
Daniel Robinson
Tom Mallon

Mid Ulster Football League (Respondent)

Maurice Johnston
Paul Suckling
Matthew Holmes

Decision

This is the unanimous decision of the IFA Appeals Committee which was reached following a hearing on Monday 20 April 2026. The Panel considered a significant volume of material and written submissions in addition to hearing from representatives from St. Mary's YCFC and the Mid Ulster Football League. The Appeals Committee are grateful to both parties for their comprehensive and detailed submissions, both orally and in writing.

For the reasons set out below, the Appellant's appeal is rejected but St. Mary's YCFC will be refunded their £100.00 appeal fee.

Issue

1. This appeal was brought by St. Mary's YCFC against the decision of the Mid Ulster Football League Committee ("MUFL") on the 2 March 2026 arising out of the postponement of a planned fixture of the Appellant versus FC Mindwell, which was scheduled to take place on the 14 February 2026. This was to be a Saturday match.
2. The specific alleged breaches of the Mid Ulster Football League Rules are as follows:

Rule 14.1.1 which states that clubs must play on all available Saturdays except in the case of exceptional circumstances, when permission to postpone a match must be sought from the secretary.

Rule 14.1.3 which states (where relevant) that, "*No fixture may be arranged, altered or amended, later than 12 noon on the Thursday prior to a Saturday fixture ... without prior agreement between both clubs and the fixtures secretary or any appointed assistant.*"

Rule 14.1.3, which states that clubs must play fixtures on dates arranged by the MUFL except where the ground is declared unplayable by a referee or by Senior or Parent Associations.

Rule 15.2, which states that the home team responsible for notifying the visiting team, notifying the appropriate referees appointment secretary and notifying the league and fixtures secretary.

3. FC Mindwell was not found to be in breach of the rules. The Appellant argue that they should have been, and that St. Mary's YCFC should have been awarded 3 points as a result.

Relevant findings of fact

4. On the 6 February 2026, there was an incident at Holm Park (Armagh City Football Club's ground) during the MUFL Premier Cup Final, in which a section of the pitch perimeter wall failed.
5. On the 7 February 2026, an FC Mindwell match went ahead, with the affected area cordoned off and signage in place, which Armagh City FC felt at the time addressed the issue. With hindsight, they accept that this was not sufficient to address the risk fully.
6. An inspection took place at Holm Park on the 10 February 2026.
7. Following discussions between the IFA, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council ("ABC Council"), Armagh City FC were advised to cease all spectator games at the facility until they had the chance to meet relevant stakeholders and agree a safe way forward.
8. On the 11 February 2026, St. Mary's YCFC were advised via text message that there was a possibility that the Saturday 14 February 2026 would not be going ahead.
9. The 13 February 2026 was the first opportunity for Armagh City FC, the IFA and ABC Council to meet following the inspection. On this date, Armagh City FC was served with a Prohibition Notice pursuant to The Safety of Sports Grounds (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, which restricted use of the facility. The exact wording of the notice is that the perimeter wall "*involves a risk to them [spectators] so serious that until steps have been taken to reduce it to a reasonable level the admission of spectators to that part of the ground is prohibited.*" The club agreed with all stakeholders at the meeting on a safety management plan, which would be implemented forthwith if the pitch was in use.
10. In respect of matches fixed for the following day, those involving Armagh City FC and those Youth League matches at which Armagh City FC members would be in attendance to provide supervision were able to proceed. Armagh City FC explained that there was insufficient time to have the formal policy in place and advise third parties of the detail of it prior to the 14 February 2026 fixture. Armagh City FC made contact with FC Mindwell to advise them of the outcome of the meeting, and that regrettably,

third party use was not then permitted at Holm Park, meaning the match could not proceed.

11. At approximately 4:45pm on the 13 February 2026, St Mary's YCFC were notified by the IFA Comet Support Team that the match would not be proceeding.
12. It does not appear that there was any interrogation by the MUFL regarding whether there was any way the match could proceed within the parameters of the Prohibition Notice. St. Mary's YCFC took issue with this, and say that the policy could have been explained to them to allow the match to go ahead. They also made the point that the relevant section of the perimeter wall could have been cordoned off.
13. St. Mary's YCFC made a call at 16:48 to MUFL Fixtures Secretary Paul Suckling. Paul advised he had received a phone call from Sean O'Neill (FC Mindwell), "*advising that Holm Park was closed.*"

FINDINGS

14. It isn't in dispute that there was a Prohibition Notice in place which inevitably restricted the circumstances in which matches could be played at Holm Park. This was served on the 13 February 2026, which was the day before the planned St. Mary's YCFC v FC Mindwell match. Armagh City FC have advised that they did not have sufficient time to advise third party users of Holm Park of the Safety Management Plan for usage and there would not be an appropriate member of Armagh City FC in attendance to supervise the game. Regrettably, the match was cancelled with short notice. The Panel accept the explanation put forward by the MUFL that there was a distinction between matches involving or supervised by Armagh City FC and those concerning third parties.
15. On this basis, the appeal is rejected. However, this was a finely balanced decision and the Panel note that it would have been preferable if MUFL had made further enquiries of Armagh City FC of the nature of the restrictions on the pitch to fully probe whether the game could have proceeded. In the circumstances, while they have not succeeded in their appeal, the Panel find that it is appropriate that St. Mary's YCFC receive their £100.00 appeal fee in order to deal with the matter justly.

Leona Gillen (Chair)
David Lennox
Peter Clarke