



Sunderland Association Football Club

Sunderland AFC (SAFC) is one of the largest football clubs in the country and is currently well established in the English Premier League under the shrewd stewardship of Chairman Niall Quinn and his team. The club is based at the impressively named Stadium of Light in the heart of the city and draws support from Wearside, County Durham and far beyond. It remains rooted in its community and has strong links with the grass roots of the game.

Objectives

Appointed by SAFC and Sunderland City Council, Press Ahead managed the media, communications and public engagement elements of Sunderland's campaign to be one of the host cities in the FA's bid to hold the World Cup in England in 2018 or 2022.

Approach

From the start, Press Ahead ensured that it was an integral part of the bid team and over time was given additional responsibilities relating to the project. As well as managing the PR campaign and playing a central role in the business and public engagement activity, Press Ahead was also handed the task of collecting content for, and then editing, the final bid document that was delivered to the FA. This huge document consisted of 20 chapters covering a wide range of issues relating to the hosting of a major sporting event. Press Ahead ensured that language and tone of voice was consistent throughout, and that Sunderland's 'Hosting Concept' (Lighting up Lives) appeared as a binding thread that linked every chapter.

Results

Sunderland was the first location to be announced as a host city in the FA's bid to bring the FIFA World Cup to England. The city's bid (and bid team) was widely recognised as a benchmark against which the others were judged and Sunderland certainly enhanced its reputation as a location that is ready, willing and very able to host major sporting and other events.

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