



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr. Roger Goodell
Commissioner
National Football League
345 Park Avenue
New York, NY10154

2nd February, 2016

Dear Commissioner Goodell,

It was recently announced that one of the team's taking place in this year's NFL International Series game at London's Wembley Stadium would be the franchise from Washington. While the expansion of the NFL and American Football to the UK is something to be commended and will surely delight the many fans of the sport based in Britain, we have serious concerns about the league's exportation of a racial slur that comes alongside this. As one of the US' biggest cultural exports finds success in the UK the sport's values and standards come with it. Unfortunately, it is apparent that within these values there is a deliberate insensitivity and apparent hostility to a prominent minority group.

In Britain there has been a concerted effort to remove racism from our national sport, football, with grassroots campaigns such as Kick It Out and Show Racism the Red Card working hard to ensure equality and respect both on and off the pitch. We were shocked to learn of the derivation of the term 'R*dskin', pertaining as it does to the historic abuse of native Americans, including the production of a piece of flesh as proof of kill by bounty hunters. The exportation of this racial slur to the UK this Autumn when the Washington team is due to play, directly contravenes the values that many in Britain have worked so hard to instill. Indeed, Wembley stadium itself has strict regulations against the use of racial slurs and chanting at its events and is owned by the Football Association which has taken a strong stance against racism in sports and has stated that such terms are prohibited even when those using it insist they are promoting such terms in a positive manner.

The NFL has recently stated its commitment to having a UK franchise in operation within the next six years, yet the arrival in Britain of such a fierce controversy threatens to overshadow the work being done to achieve *this*. Given the level of public and political support the campaign to change the Washington team name has received in America, it is certain that the issue will be of increasing interest to the British media and overshadow any attempts to communicate the sport's positive features to a new audience.

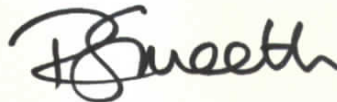
It is noted that there is a critical mass of support building both within and outside of the US for changing the Washington team name. We find it telling that the United Nations has already signaled its agreement with the Change the Mascot campaign alongside American politicians from across the political spectrum, ranging from City Councilors to President Obama himself. Sport has the rare ability to act as a unifying force in the world, yet the issue of the Washington team name is inherently divisive. It is both puzzling and alarming that the NFL is choosing to export this controversy to Britain.

Given that the team is due to play in the UK we are requesting that the NFL consider changing the name of the Washington franchise or, at a minimum, send a different team to our country to represent the sport, one that does not promote a racial slur.

We hope you will consider our request,



Ian Austin
MP for Dudley North



Ruth Smeeth
MP for Stoke-on-Trent North & Kidsgrove