

Belfast City Council 2015 response to the Entertainment Licensing Review consultation from the Department of the Environment.

Recommendation 19

Where regulated entertainment is provided at a place which has an alcohol licence, the entertainment licence should be valid only until the last permitted time for consumption of alcohol on the premises.

This change should be made at the earliest available opportunity.

The Council would disagree with this recommendation and would not be supportive of synchronising the hours during which alcohol could be consumed on premises with the hours during which entertainment could be provided.

Whilst it may afford the PSNI some comfort that licensee's will not have the opportunity to breach liquor licensing legislation it does not permit any flexibility for a Licensee, with good and justifiable intentions, to provide entertainment beyond the hours of their liquor licence. As stated above, the Council is keen to promote tourism, the night time economy and generally providing as wide a variety of entertainment possible for citizens and tourists alike. There is clearly a demand for entertainment past 1.30am which is evidenced by the increasing number of licensed premises which have recently sought an extension of their entertainment licence to 2am, as well as the numerous city centre venues which currently hold a 3am licence.

It appears that this is an attempt to deal with PSNI concerns in relation to premises selling alcohol past the latest permitted hour. The Council would respectfully suggest that it is for the PSNI to enforce liquor licensing through their own licensing regime and resources and not through the prism of entertainment licensing and the resources of local district councils.

In addition, the Council notes that no rationale has been provided as to why this recommendation be implemented at the earliest available opportunity and would welcome clarification on the basis for this recommendation.

If the Department is minded to align the hours of entertainment and liquor licensing, the Council notes that the recommendation does not address the provision in the 1985 Order which states that a Licensee will not be guilty of providing entertainment after their permitted hours if they are licensed to sell alcohol past that time. The Council would therefore request that the Department remove that anomaly so that where the Council has restricted hours for the provision of entertainment that those hours apply regardless of the latest hour in respect of which liquor is sold.

