

2nd February 2007

Department of Social Development,
Liquor Review Team,
Level 1, James House,
2/4 Cromac Avenue,
Ormeau Road,
Belfast BT7 2JA

Dear Sir/Madam,

Draft Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment)
(Northern Ireland) Order 2007

I am writing to ask you to ensure that the Draft Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 be withdrawn. Existing laws foster a culture of social and binge drinking to an unprecedented scale. This order will only make a bad situation worse.

It especially concerns me that this legislation is being proposed when binge drinking is costing our nation an excess of £20bn per year, according to the official cabinet office report. Furthermore this same report makes clear that the cost to the nation exceeds 300% of the tax revenue gained from the sale of alcohol. This evidence calls for a reduction in licensing hours not an increase.

While the effects of alcohol are not fully understood yet even the media point out that:-

- People who binge drink could be causing rapid damage to their brain cells, research suggests.
- A new study on rats has shown that just two days of binge drinking is enough to cause damage to an area of the brain called the 'olfactory bulb', which is responsible for smell. Damage to other regions of the brain occurred after just four days of binge drinking.

Professor Michael Collins, of Loyola University Chicago, has said "It is possible that neuronal degeneration after a couple of days of heavy intoxication in the rat might translate to the human drinker who is not even a chronic alcohol abuser."

I would appeal to the Department of Social Development to withdraw this order and work with charities, such as Hope NW, to promote a healthier and drug-free lifestyle.

Yours faithfully,

Jean Porte