



## 24 Hour Licensing. Or not?

## BRIEFING

### Introduction

Gordon Brown yesterday announced at the Labour Party Conference that Labour will "ban 24 hour drinking".

The DCMS (The Department of Culture Media and Sport) has followed this up by saying that Councils will have new powers to impose a ban on 24 hour licences in a particular area. Councillors will be given the power to call for a licence review, even in the absence of any complaint from local residents.

The above changes would require primary legislation and it is expected that a consultation will now follow.

### The current law

Any person may apply for a licence. There is no limit to the hours that may be applied for. There are, in fact, relatively few 24 hour licences and those that do exist are generally in respect of hotels and supermarkets. Many of those operators that have the benefit of 24 hour licences do not operate them, or if they do, not all of the time. The hours are treated as a framework of hours to operate within.

We question whether "24 hour licensing" is, in fact, the cause of anti social behaviour.

### Concerns

A curfew imposed generally by a Licensing Authority could well impact on hotels and supermarkets and also on licensed premises that trade late but cause no disorder issues.

A curfew could also return us to the "chucking out" time which the experts told us was the cause of so much disorder.

We also have grave concerns about Councillors being able to instigate licence reviews. We have previously questioned whether licence holders get a fair hearing when a Councillor makes a representation but for a Councillor to bring a review that will be judged by Councillors, is extremely worrying.

We will await the consultation paper with interest and will keep you informed.

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