



Newspaper House, 48 Bell Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1HX. Reg No. 382741 Wales  
[www.maidenhead-advertiser.co.uk](http://www.maidenhead-advertiser.co.uk)  
VAT 207 5127 87

**Alcohol Strategy Consultation**  
**Home Office**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Floor Fry**  
**2 Marsham Street**  
**London SW1P 4DF**

**January 21, 2013**

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing on behalf of Baylis Media Ltd, an independent newspaper publisher in East Berkshire, to oppose Home Office proposals for the removal of the requirement for alcohol licence applications to be advertised in the local and regional press.

Baylis Media Ltd believes such a change to the regulatory requirements would be damaging to the public interest and that the requirement must remain for those applying for new licences or a variation to a licence to advertise the fact in a local newspaper.

The proposed change would not help the Government's aim to cut alcohol fuelled crime and anti-social behavior but serve only to save the UK beer and pub industry up to £8m a year

Indeed, enabling the community to be as informed as possible about new licences and applications for variations - usually increased opening hours - is itself vital to those aims by enabling the community to raise concerns directly relating to these issues.

Removal of the notices from local papers will erode the public's right to know and damage local democracy. It will lead to licensing matters being decided without local knowledge and debate.

In addition to a notice on the premises, it is essential the whole community – not just the immediate 'neighbours' of a venue – are informed of proposals for new alcohol outlets or changes in licensing hours since these can frequently impact on the area as a whole.

Newspaper advertisements have long been used to ensure maximum exposure to the public, so to a large extent it is culturally ingrained for people to look to their local papers for this vital information. People expect to find public notices in their local paper and there is evidence they actively seek out and read this information.

Suggestions the notices could all be published online immediately disenfranchises a whole swathe of the population who do not have access to the internet.

Independent research by GFK NOP in 2012 shows local newspapers and their websites are by far the best media channel for public notices and remain the most effective, trusted and cost-effective way to ensure they reach the maximum number of people in a relevant area. They should therefore be the primary publication method.

The research found eight times as many people had read a newspaper in the past week than had looked at their council website (33million v 4million adults). In addition it found 29 per cent of adults had not used the internet at all in the last 12 months, meaning advertising licensing applications on online only would exclude 14million UK residents, including many poorer members of society.



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And according to the Office for National Statistics, in the third quarter of 2012 there were still 7.63million adults - 15 per cent - who had never used the internet.

Baylis Media publishes the Maidenhead Advertiser series and the Slough and Windsor Express series, reaching approximately 160,000 people of all demographics across East Berkshire every week. What more effective local medium can there be for reaching so many people so regularly?

The role of statutory notices, such as licensing applications, is as valid today as when they were originally introduced: to ensure important information which can have a real impact on community life is publicised as widely as possible.

It goes to the heart of the public's democratic right to know and should not be dismissed simply as a 'cost-saving' issue. Is the Home Office seriously advocating a measure simply to save the alcohol industry a one-off cost, at the expense of local residents' right to be informed and comment upon issues which directly impact on the very areas the Government professes to be concerned about – alcohol-fuelled crime and anti-social behaviour?

The Home Office should also acknowledge the impact of the strategy on the local and regional press in the current downturn – threatening to remove almost £8m of revenue from local newspapers.

The negative effect of this proposal flies in the face of the Government's repeated emphasis of the vital role of local newspapers and the recent strong expressions of support for the local press when MPs actually called on Government departments to come together and think innovatively about channeling their activity to ensure it provides support to local newspapers.

Newspapers are currently operating in the most challenging economic climate they have ever experienced and the abolition of the requirements to publicise these notices would have an enormous impact in terms of lost revenue and be yet another nail in the coffin of our industry.

For all of the reasons outlined above, from the damage to communities and local democracy to the negative impact on a struggling newspaper industry – itself vital to the continuance of local democracy – I urge the Home Office to scrap proposals for the abolition of the statutory requirement for alcohol licences to be advertised in local newspapers.

Yours sincerely,

**Martin Trepte**  
Editorial director  
Baylis Media Ltd



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