

From the Chair of the LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board
Cllr Ann Lucas OBE

Norman Baker MP
Minister for Crime Prevention

4 March 2014

Dear Minister,

Extension of licensing hours for the 2014 World Cup

I am writing to you following the Prime Minister's commitment to a consultation on the possibility of extending licensing hours for the duration of the World Cup. The LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board discussed this at our meeting yesterday and there was unanimous agreement that this issue needs to be decided locally, and therefore we would not support a blanket national exemption.

Councils are aware of the importance of the World Cup to residents and will seek to say yes to well-run businesses who wish to extend their licensing hours and who have proven that they can cater effectively for selling alcohol at events where emotions run high. The LGA was pleased to support the British Beer and Pub Association in providing advice for licensees who wish to hold safe and successful events during the event.

However, councils also have a responsibility to residents who live in close proximity to popular venues and may be exposed to significant disturbance as a result of longer opening hours. They are also aware of the increase in domestic violence that regrettably occurs during events such as this owing to the increased consumption of alcohol. For example, during the 2006 World Cup, Swansea Police reported that incidences of domestic violence were up by almost 40% when compared to the same time in the previous year, while an awareness campaign during the Six Nations tournament in 2012 led to an increase in calls of 10%.

A blanket extension to opening hours, determined nationally, runs counter to the objectives set out the Licensing Act 2003 and would remove the ability of councils to take local issues into account when reaching licensing decisions. Further, a one size fits all approach would mean that councils are not able to agree conditions that help to mitigate any potential problems. At the operational level, local decisions to extend opening hours can be communicated to partners such as the police, which means risks can be managed and dealt with in a targeted way. A blanket extension would make it difficult for the local council and the police to have a definitive picture of which premises intend to remain open for longer, making effective planning much harder.

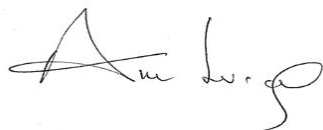
We believe that an alternative option would be to revive a power available to Magistrates prior to the introduction of the 2003 Licensing Act. Orders for varying permitted hours enabled local Magistrates to issue a blanket extension to local licensing hours to specified pubs and clubs in a local authority area while working with the police to identify any premises that should be required to apply for an extension. Reintroducing this power would obviate

the need for future national consultations on this issue, as well as providing local areas with flexibility to reduce burdens for locally significant events.

I thought it would be helpful to register our views with you in advance of the announced consultation because from a business and local government perspective, clarity now will help resource planning for the World Cup. Businesses will need to know shortly whether the rules are to be altered, or whether they need to apply for a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) and council licensing teams will want to respond in a timely way.

As the event is now just three months away, we would therefore favour an early decision, or an indicative position so that local government licensing departments can gear up to providing the very best service to both businesses whilst still providing effective protection for their residents.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Lucas', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Ann Lucas OBE
Chair, LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board, and Leader, Coventry Council