



Norman Baker MP
Minister of State for Crime Prevention
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
SW1P 4DF

Letter sent via email 26th March 2014

Dear Norman Baker MP

Relaxation of licensing hours during the FIFA World Cup

A number of members of the Alcohol Health Alliance have responded to the online consultation on the relaxation of licensing hours during the FIFA World Cup 2014 separately. The Alcohol Health Alliance is made up of 37 members, including medical bodies, charities and alcohol health campaigners - I have been asked to raise the following concerns with you about the proposals on behalf of the group:

- We do not regard the FIFA World Cup to be an occasion of 'exceptional international, national or local significance', the criterion required under s172 of the Licensing Act 2003 to allow the Secretary of State to order a relaxation in licensing hours for licensed premises. Unlike events such as a royal wedding or the Queen's Jubilee, the FIFA World Cup is a sporting competition that takes place every four years, and therefore in no way can it be considered an exceptional event.
- A relaxation of licensing hours in this instance could set a worrying precedent whereby future international sports tournaments are also deemed to be suitable for relaxations in licensing hours. Popular sports such as cricket, rugby and athletics all have regularly occurring major tournaments similar to the Football World Cup. For example, the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 will be held in Australia and New Zealand; the 2016 Summer Olympics will be hosted by Brazil; and Japan will host the IRB Rugby World Cup in 2019. As with the FIFA World Cup, all of these tournaments will likely mean early morning or late night kick-off/start times for UK viewers.
- Local councils, in collaboration with partners such as the police and residents, are best placed to make decisions regarding if, and for how long, licensed premises in their area should stay open. An extension automatically applied nationally fails to take into account local circumstances and knowledge regarding problem premises and areas. It is also unnecessary, as the existing Temporary Events Notices procedure provides a means by which licensable activities may be carried out on a temporary basis without the need for a licence. We do not regard the £21 fee for a TEN to be an unreasonable cost. Moreover, even in the unlikely event that no TENs are applied for in this instance, more than 1 in 10 on-trade premises are already licensed to sell alcohol until 1am or later, so consumers are unlikely to be disadvantaged.



- There are typically higher levels of anti-social behaviour and violence during the late night periods in which the relevant World Cup matches will be televised, which will likely mean additional pressures placed on emergency services. Moreover, there is a growing body of evidence linking domestic violence to sports events, which can be exacerbated by drinking. The Home Office has previously reported that reported incidents of intimate partner violence increased by up to 30% on the days of England's fixtures during the FIFA World Cup 2006. Rather than focusing on measures that may encourage increased consumption, the Government should perhaps look instead to support initiatives that highlight the increased risks of violence to women during high profile sporting occasions.
- Sport in the UK has, in recent decades, become a very pro-alcohol environment - during the lead-up to the FIFA World Cup 2010, Carlsberg, the official sponsor of the England football team, expected an extra 21 million pints to be drunk during the tournament. The decision to allow pubs to open late during certain football matches will only serve to facilitate increased consumption during these periods and further perpetuate the notion that watching football (and sport more generally) goes hand in hand with drinking.

We would welcome discussing this issue with you in more detail should you feel this would be helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Harris Smith".

Madeleine Harris Smith
Policy & Advocacy Manager
mharrissmith@alcoholconcern.org.uk
0207 566 9809