

## **The Football Supporters' Federation (FSF)**

### **Response to the Home Office Consultation: "Relaxation of licensing hours during the FIFA World Cup" (submitted 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014)**

1. The FSF is the nationally recognised fans' organisation representing more than 500,000 individual and affiliate members throughout England and Wales. The FSF welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on behalf of fans – be they match going England fans or supporters who like to follow the sport on TV.
2. The World Cup is a sporting event which captures the nation's attention like no other. It offers unique commercial opportunities to industry and can bring our diverse population together in a celebratory and socially cohesive manner.
3. The 2014 tournament takes place in Brazil which means it is out of the financial reach of many fans. Media reports indicate the even a "modest two-star hotel room" will cost £245 per night while flights, food and match tickets also promise to be prohibitively expensive for many.
4. The time difference between Brazil and the UK means that many games will be played at unsociable hours. It is fair to say that a significant proportion of football fans prefer to watch World Cup games in public houses.
5. Football fans go to international games not only to watch on-field action but also to share in the communal atmosphere and positive celebration of national identity. Many cannot experience this at a live game in Brazil due to costs and the pub offers a substitute experience.
6. It is also important to recognise that this submission isn't made on behalf of England fans alone. The UK is home to people from all corners of the globe. Our towns and cities host large communities from many countries and it is testimony to the UK that we relish scenes of celebration of people from World Cup competing and winning countries.
7. The World Cup is an opportunity to celebrate diversity in this country like no other sporting event and many venues do just this. During the 2010 World Cup bars were adorned with flags from every competing country. Pubs in east London saw landlords serving traditional food and drink from whatever countries were playing during the live screening of matches. Friendships were forged through football that would not have ordinarily been made.
8. Of course it would be naive not to recognise that for some football and alcohol go hand-in-hand. The late timings of matches increase the opportunity for alcohol consumption and related problems but good community police officers will already be fully aware of which public houses in their areas are regarded as problem venues.
9. The relaxation of Temporary Event Notices has been introduced for events of national significance before and might be again in future. On balance the FSF believes there should be a national relaxation of licensing hours for all England matches during the 2014 World Cup.