



Late Night Drinking and Anti-Social Behaviour. Review of Licensing Policy

City centre residents make a vital contribution to the vibrancy of the City centre and it is essential everything is done to promote and protect residents who live here. Lifestyles in the city centre are inevitably different from more suburban residential areas, but city centre residents are entitled to a good quality of life as well.

Lancaster City Centre Residents Association represents the permanent residents living in the City Centre. We wish to express our grave concerns regarding late night licensing, the irresponsible practices of some pubs/clubs and the alcohol-fuelled behaviour that results.

LCCRA comprise of professional, semi-retired and retired people with a wide age range. We love our city. We want nothing more than for it to flourish and fulfil its potential. We live, as more people should, right in the heart of the town in houses and flats, in terraces and above shops within or immediately adjacent to the one-way system. Some of us rent and some are owner-occupiers, but all are committed to living where we do. Some of us have been here for over twenty years.

Sadly, we are the people who clear up the broken bottles and glasses that greet us in the mornings and who scrub the vomit, urine and worse from our doorways on a regular basis. We are also the people who are not consulted or taken into account when decisions are made to locate student housing into the city centre and to then extend liquor licences through to six o'clock in the morning.

We understand that the city centre is not officially classified as a residential area. However, people **do** live here and some practices of the night time economy are completely unacceptable by any measure of common decency regularly making our lives, and the lives of many students here, a misery. The result is a city centre that, from the evening until far into the morning, is not rich in 'cafe society', vibrant restaurants, late night shop opening, entertainment for all age groups and a vital part of our tourism and visitor attraction – it is an alcohol-fuelled mono-culture that can be a very intimidating place to be.

Whilst we acknowledge there are well run, respectful businesses operating the night-time economy we are very concerned about practices such as this – an advertisement outside the Dalton Rooms...



Extra shots of vodka for 10p each and the sale of 'triples' to young people who have only just passed eighteen years old must be considered cynical and asking for trouble - the police and staff of the RLI must look at these offers in disbelief. If it is not strictly against the law it must surely be in contravention of some code of practice. The LCCRA consider it grounds for the suspension of a drinks licence and urges the City Council and Police to monitor this type of offer and take action. The recent sad case about the breaches to health and safety rules at Oscars Wine Bar epitomises some of the **unacceptable practices** going on in some irresponsible clubs.

Noise

Before the changes in licensing that have happened over the past few years, all noise from pubs was over by 11.30pm unless a special one-off license was obtained. Clubs were allowed to go on until 1.00am. Now, pubs and bars have a blanket license to open until dawn in many cases, blurring the lines between a pub and a club. Clubs should adhere to rules regarding sound proofing and the policing of people going in and out of their premises. However, the introduction of the smoking ban means that customers are constantly in and out to have their cigarettes and the streets (where we live) have become an **open-air extension** of the premises. Some clubs, the Glow Rooms, for example, seem to actively encourage this and have been known to place PA speakers outside in the street. Excessively loud music, purposefully directed out into the street is now seen as an acceptable and desirable advertising method by some licensees and bar managers. This is totally disrespectful to residents who have to suffer the consequences of such irresponsibility.

The resulting unlicensed al-fresco 'festival' (with the associated screaming, swearing, occasional violence and vandalism) goes on until 4 – 4.30 am upsetting our sleep, but also causing upset because of fear of what might happen. This is not just at weekends, but also during the working week at certain times of the university terms. Fresher's Weeks are, of course, particularly excessive, due in part to the active encouragement by the universities and by the Student Union who escort crowds of new arrivals from one organised cheap alcohol deal to the next.

No-one committed to living in the city centre expects a silent and tranquil existence; however, no-one should be expected to endure the results of un-monitored anti-social disturbance by both the retailers and customers of all-night drinking.

We would ask that the City Councillors, the Police and Environmental Health review their policy and enforcement practices regarding:-

- **The granting of through-the-night drink licences in general.**
- **Ensuring that loud recorded music and Karaoke are separated from the outside environment by two sets of doors that are monitored by doormen and kept shut.**
- **No speakers in the street.**
- **Doormen to ensure that people stay inside the premises or quiet outside and not drink-in-hand.**
- **Unreasonable drink offers are subject to a code of conduct that is monitored with the genuine threat of losing the drinks licence.**

- **A streamlined, risk-free complaints procedure to report establishments disregarding the new code should be developed so the public is more easily involved in the policing of their own city centre.**

All university towns have their problem areas associated with high density student accommodation and late-night drinking. Lancaster is a small place to cater for two universities and as such has seemingly given over the entire centre of the city for this purpose. The people who pay the price of this every week are the people who live here and Lancaster itself is a long-term loser.

Lancaster City Centre Residents Association, September 2015