



Scottish Enterprise

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6 September 2013

Mr Peter Hessett
 Clerk to the Licensing Board
 West Dunbartonshire Licensing Board
 Council Offices
 Garshake Road
 Dumbarton G82 3PU

LEGAL & ADMIN

10 SEP 2013

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Dear Mr Hessett

Consultation on Licensing Policy Statement

We refer to your email dated 15 August inviting submissions in respect of the review of the Licensing Policy for West Dunbartonshire.

Scottish Enterprise (SE) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission and trust that this will be helpful to the Licensing Board in drafting the policy that will apply from November 2013.

SE's Business Plan (2013-16) is directly informed by the Government's Economic Strategy, with a sharp focus on growth companies, growth markets and growth sectors. Within this context developing the Tourism Sector is a priority for SE.

SE has identified 6 geographic areas ("Key Destinations") that have the greatest scope to grow the Scottish tourism economy. One of the Key Destinations is the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park where we work closely with our partners in the public sector to promote economic growth.

Loch Lomond with its National Park is a major tourism asset for Scotland, epitomising as it does what Scotland is recognised for - stunning landscape and scenery with real cultural and historical significance. Internationally renowned, it currently attracts 4m visitors per annum and 7m visitor days per annum, accounting for in excess of 30% of jobs in the area.

Within this context the development of the hospitality sector is viewed as critical to the growth of the tourism economy in the National Park, in particular encouraging the provision of high quality eating establishments and a range of visitor accommodation.

I have set out below specific responses to the various matters raised in the consultation document.

Part 1

Question 6: Categories of licensed premises

SE welcomes the change in terminology proposed from "vertical drinking establishments" to "public houses".

Atrium Court
 50 Waterloo Street
 Glasgow
 G2 6HQ

Telephone 0141 204 1111

Fax 0141 248 1600

www.scottish-enterprise.com



Question 9: Tourism Statement

SE notes and welcomes that the Board will continue seek reports on the needs of the local tourism economy and will take these reports into consideration when deciding on licence applications.

SE recommends that the Licensing Board considers, from time to time, issuing positive statements on the type of provision it would encourage in particular locations to strengthen the tourism market. This will give developers/ investors confidence in developing proposals that will accord with local economic development priorities.

Part 2

It is out with SE's expertise and remit to comment on whether there is over-provision within the four categories of premises detailed in the consultation document, namely; Public Houses; Night Clubs; Large Supermarkets; Off-sales and local convenience stores.

Notwithstanding the above, SE would wish to highlight aspects of the overprovision policy that we suggest that the Board take into account when finalising the policy in respect to Public Houses:

Premises within the prime tourism locations within West Dunbartonshire will derive their customers from both a local catchment and wider visitor market. The visitor market will comprise both day visitors (principally from the Central Belt) and overnight stays (including international visitors). Premises aimed at the visitor market are unlikely to focus on the sale of cheap alcohol (with the associated negative public health implications) and are much more likely to offer a higher quality, authentic experience to their customers.

It is recommended that the overprovision policy is drafted to recognise the scope for specific locations (e.g. Balloch/Loch Lomond Shores) to cater for a wider catchment in their role as strategic tourism centres at a National level.

Restaurants and hotels will frequently have a walk up bar element to their offering. This is usually seen as critical to the overall business model albeit the bar takings are unlikely to be the principle source of turnover within the business.

Under the existing policy hotels/restaurants are subject to the overprovision definition "where the bar facilities are not ancillary to the accommodation or dining".

Prospective restaurant/hotel operators will consider the overprovision policy to be a material consideration when considering whether to pursue development opportunities in West Dunbartonshire. A licence application can only be lodged once planning consent is secured. This means that a prospective developer will have to make a significant investment in their scheme ahead of making the licence application. As such the current licensing policy increases the perceived front end risk to the developer/investor. In such a fragile development/funding market this has the potential to delay or even negate investor commitment.

Given the above it is recommended that the Board consider excluding walk up bars from the overprovision policy where they form part of a restaurant and/or hotel and the walk up bar is demonstrably not the principle element of applicants business.

SE welcomes the proposal that the employment opportunities generated by the proposed licensed premises will be a material consideration for the Licensing Board when considering the application of the overprovision policy.

It is recommended that this principle extends to both the direct impacts (i.e. employment within the business) and indirect impacts. This is particularly important in terms of the tourism economy where licensed premises have the ability to enhance the holistic visitor experience for a particular destination. A good example is Loch Lomond Shores where the provision of an enhanced Food & Beverage provision is seen as pivotal to growing visitor numbers across the site, increasing the length of visitor stay and subsequently spend and increased local economic impact.

I trust the above feedback will be of help to the Licensing Board in formulating the new Licensing Policy. I would be happy to expand on any of the matters raised if required.

Yours sincerely



Allan McQuade

Director of Business Infrastructure

Direct Tel No: 0141 228 7427

E-mail address: allan.mcquade@scotent.co.uk