

ARGYLL & WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE Licensing Report 2020-2021



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Foreword

In accordance with Section 12(A) Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 I provide the Annual Licensing Report for 2020/21.

I would like to thank you for working with policing to keep the people of Scotland safe in what has been an extremely demanding year. During these challenging times Police Scotland has continued to work closely with Local Authorities and key stakeholders and, collectively, we have played a crucial role in supporting the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic, explaining the rules and encouraging our fellow citizens to do the right thing.

We have embraced new, flexible ways of working that have involved remote or home working where possible and the incorporation of new IT solutions. We have quickly adapted to these changes while continuing to provide a high standard of service to our communities.

We have also continued to deliver effective regulation of Liquor Licensing whilst taking full cognisance of the restrictions and requirements conferred by the Coronavirus Regulations. Our focus has been on preventing alcohol fuelled violence, disorder and antisocial behaviour along with supporting the national response to suppress the virus.

I would like to thank our many local partnerships and acknowledge the good work that they do; without their support we would not be able to maintain the high standard in licensing in the Dunbartonshire area.

Police Scotland remains committed to working with others to achieve the licensing objectives. I am confident that through effective, collaborative working we will meet any challenges that may arise and will continue to improve licensing standards for the communities of Scotland.

Iain Livingstone QPM

Chief Constable

Police Service of Scotland

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Police Scotland Licensing Overview –

The Violence Prevention and Licensing Co-ordination Unit (VPLCU) sits within Safer Communities based at Dalmarnock Police Station, Glasgow.

The VPLCU upholds the two tier structure for licensing which supports both national and local priorities through service delivery. They have overall responsibility for determining and delivering national licensing strategy and policy, by providing advice, guidance and support to divisional licensing teams as well as undertaking other specialist functions.

The Violence Prevention and Licensing Co-ordination Unit is a specialist department which consists of a small team of officers, based in Glasgow. The officers within the unit work with divisional licensing teams and partner agencies to help shape policy and strategy around the police licensing function. They provide practical and tactical advice to police licensing practitioners, operational officers, supervisors and policing commanders.

The VPLCU seek to ensure that legislation governing the sale and supply of alcohol is applied consistently across the country and all opportunities are taken to stop the illegal or irresponsible sale, supply or consumption of alcohol with the intention of preventing and reducing crime and disorder.

During 2020/2021, from a licensing perspective, our particular focus was on the following;

- Scrutiny of the serious incidents of violence, disorder and antisocial behaviour linked to licensed premises.
- Working closely with Licensed Premises and Scottish Government to navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic through the 4Es approach by engaging, explaining, educating and enforcing.
- Governance and ongoing development of the National ICT Licensing System, known as “Inn Keeper”, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of liquor and civic licensing administration and management. Police Scotland are currently working on upgrade to the National ICT system to ensure compliance with GDPR legislation.

Each of the 13 Local Policing Divisions have a licensing team responsible for the day to day management of licensing administration, complying with statutory requirements as well as addressing any issues that may arise within licensed premises in their local area.

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LICENSING BOARD AREA

The Licensing Board area is policed by Argyll and West Dunbartonshire Division.

Chief Superintendent John Paterson is the Local Police Commander who has the responsibility for all day-to-day policing functions.

The Area Commander for West Dunbartonshire is Chief Inspector Coleen Wylie who is based at Dumbarton Police Station. Uniformed response Police officers for West Dunbartonshire deploy from Dumbarton Police Station. They are supported by Problem solving teams based in Clydebank Police Station, Dumbarton Police Station and the Alexandria One Stop Shop. All of these officers are supported by the Licensing team based at Dumbarton Police Station.

There are 235 Licensed premises in West Dunbartonshire which are mainly concentrated in the populated areas of Clydebank, Dumbarton, Alexandria and Balloch. There is a night time economy in Balloch with 2 nightclubs, Clydebank and Dumbarton also house one night club in each. The ward areas troubled significantly by alcohol fuelled youth disorder are Lomond, Leven, Dumbarton, Kilpatrick Clydebank Waterfront and Clydebank Central.

Local Policing Priorities

Following our public consultation process, the policing priorities for West Dunbartonshire Division, as set out in our Local Policing Plan are as follows;

- Acquisitive Crime
- Public Protection
- Major Crime and Terrorism
- Road safety and Road Crime
- Violence and Anti-social behaviour

Description of Board Area

West Dunbartonshire is home to approx. 90,000 people, bordering City of Glasgow, East Dunbartonshire, Argyll and Bute and Stirlingshire. It has 6 multi-member wards over the 3 main populated areas of Clydebank, Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven district. The North of the region encompasses part of the Trossachs National Park therefore attracts a large number of tourists and visitors every year.

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OPERATION OF THE LICENSING (SCOTLAND) ACT 2005

March 2020 saw the UK plunge into a national lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. All non-essential businesses were closed with the instruction for people to “stay at home” except for limited purposes. The impact this had for the “on sales” licensed trade was devastating. Off sales were added to the list of essential retailers therefore continued to trade during this time.

July saw the re-opening of beer gardens with strict rules in place. Premises had to ensure “Covid compliance” in line with not only government guidance but legislation which was ever changing. Premises went to extreme lengths to ensure the safety of their patrons with carparks, vennels, waste ground, and pavements to name but a few being licensed to maximise numbers while adhering to outdoor drinking and social distancing rules. The efforts and passion of staff who worked hard behind the scenes to allow premises to re-open under these strict rules should not be overlooked.

West Dunbartonshire Licensing Board delegated authority to the Chair of the Board and the Clerk to the Board to make decisions regarding occasional licences, mainly for outdoor areas. This move significantly reduced the lead time on licences being granted/refused allowing premises to open previously unlicensed outdoor areas to maximise capacity during this period where outdoor drinking was encouraged by the Scottish Government to minimise the risk of the spread of COVID-19. The Chair of the Licensing Board, the Depute Clerk, LSO and Licensing Sergeant carried out proactive visits to premises at various times during licensed hours in order to provide support and guidance during the re-opening period and the following weeks where rules and guidance changed on a regular basis. These visits were welcomed by staff and patrons as it was a positive approach, including providing a QR code allowing staff to access up to date Scottish Government guidance and regulations. There was no requirement for any premises in West Dunbartonshire to be subject to review by the Licensing Board.

We eventually saw indoor areas open for business with new challenges faced by staff and owners which was unique, customers were also faced with a whole new socialising experience with no music, no standing, no shouting, no games, no mingling, reduced restroom facilities to name but a few of the changes in place. These measures were put in place by the Scottish Government and adopted accordingly by premises with a view to reducing the spread of the virus. Premises were under extreme pressure to provide enhanced cleaning, additional staff and with a reduced capacity of patrons meant businesses would struggle to recoup losses from the previous 4 months.

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Eat out to help out encouraged patrons to “sit in” for food on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays with the UK government subsidising the cost of the meal. Licensed restaurants saw an increase in customers on those days, but suffered a downturn at the weekends when traditionally they would have been busier.

Unfortunately the Scottish Government were forced to impose another lockdown in November 2020 due to an increase in the infection rate, this time for many months taking us up to the end of the period of this report. The knock on effect this had to other areas of licensing for example taxi/private hire and fast food premises cannot be underestimated. During this time premises which were licensed were permitted to serve take-away food and alcohol which allowed some to trade in a small capacity. Premises had to become innovative for example, one created a pop up drive through in their carpark to allow for non-contact sales, others opened kitchens, carried out major building/refurbishment works, all with a view to survival of the premises and retaining much needed jobs.

TACKLING SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME

Police Scotland continue to work in conjunction with licence holders to prevent Serious and Organised Crime Groups infiltrating legitimate businesses within West Dunbartonshire.

PROPOSED ACTIVITY FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

The year 2021 – 2022 is completely unpredictable due to the ongoing global pandemic, however, the Nation is optimistic that the virus will be under some form of control now that vaccinations are being rolled out. The Scottish Government have announced that premises should be allowed to re-open at the end of April 2021.

Police Scotland will continue to work with licensed premises with a view to adhering to guidelines and regulations in order to ensure premises remain open and trading.

The Proxy purchase campaign which was put on hold due to the pandemic will be revisited. This campaign is intelligence led and aimed at reducing agent purchase, commonly known as “jump ins” around areas known for youth disorder and alcohol related incidents. The campaign will further be rolled out in secondary schools by the Youth Engagement Officers. This is all dependent on government guidelines at the time.

To conclude we would like to thank you for your continued support during what has been a challenging year for all. We have all had to adapt to a new way of working and ever changing circumstances which has been embraced by all.

We look forward to a safe and healthy 2021/2022.

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