

AIRSIDE ALCOHOL LICENSING AT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS

Committee name	Licensing Committee
Officer reporting	Nicole Cameron, Legal Services
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

This report updates the Licensing Committee in relation to airside alcohol licensing at international airports in England and Wales.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Government is considering ending an exemption under alcohol licensing laws given to key airports, including Heathrow. Currently bars and restaurants do not need to hold a licence to sell alcohol as they would in the rest of the country. The exemption was initially granted as the constraints of normal licensable hours were seen as a hindrance to UK airports.

In May 2016, the House of Lords appointed a Select Committee to carry out scrutiny of the Licensing Act 2003 (the Act"). The Select Committee found evidence that there had been an increase in alcohol fuelled incidents at airports, which caused disruptions. The Select Committee's report published in April 2017 recommended that the exemption be revoked from the Act that applies to 24 international airports in England & Wales, which includes Heathrow Airport.

The Government is now consulting on that recommendation and the consultation shall end on the 01 February 2019. The aim of the consultation is to allow the Government to assess:

- the true scale of the problem of drunk and disruptive passengers at international airports in England and Wales;
- the extent to which airports and airlines use effectively the existing statutory powers and other measures to address the problem; and
- the impact of these interventions as well as the proposed application of the Act.

The consultation is broken into 5 main sections:

- Section 1: scale of the problem of drunk and disruptive airline passengers.
- Section 2: effectiveness and limitations of the current statutory and voluntary instruments in managing the problem of drunk and disruptive airline passengers.
- Section 3: the impact the Act could have on addressing the problem of drunk and disruptive passengers if applied airside at international airports in England and Wales.
- Section 4: economic implications of applying the Act airside at international airports in England and Wales.
- Section 5: administration of the Act airside: feasibility and practicalities

It is argued that justification for the deregulation of drinking at airports no longer applies as 24/7 licences are now permissible. There are, however, concerns that if the exemption were revoked it would be difficult to enforce the law because of high security at airports.

If Members were minded to respond to the consultation then this would need to be considered and decided upon by the relevant Cabinet Member, Councillor Douglas Mills.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Call for Evidence: Airside Alcohol Licensing at International Airports in England & Wales (Home Office) 01 November 2018