

To The Board

I write to you on behalf of the licensed premises in East Dunbartonshire. We would like to ask the board to consider moving the final hour on a Saturday to 1am in line with a Friday and bring forward the starting time on Sunday to 11am as per Glasgow's licensing policy.

As The Board will appreciate, the licensed trade has changed over in recent years with changes to drink driving limits and the smoking ban. This has seen traditional pubs move to a more food led operation focussing on customer experience. Combined with the fact more alcohol is now sold off trade than on trade, the need to change with the market has never been more prevalent.

East Dunbartonshire is on the boundary with Glasgow, and in some cases, it may be difficult to tell which council some premises falls within. This makes it a popular area for commuters who work in the city centre, however, it also means that shops, bars, and restaurants are also competing directly with the city centre. This has become more noticeable with the ever-decreasing retail shops in the high streets that are being replaced with cafes and bookmakers. The last thing we want is to have this trade suffer in a similar vein to the retail industry.

Regarding the later trading hours on a Saturday, there has been a shift towards more people dining out while having drinks and consequently, we have seen large financial investments in many premises in the area to accommodate this movement. This is obviously a more sociable way of drinking and inevitably leads to less consumption. However, for those dining after 9pm, this will normally result in them not finishing their meal until after 11.30pm which only allows for drinking up time. If we want to keep more of these customers locally, then being able to offer the same experience as they would have in Glasgow is essential. Personally, I have recently had negative reviews on Trip advisor because, from the customer's perception, we closed early and one particularly questioned why they could not have the same experience on a Saturday as they would on a Friday.

Licensed premises will always come under extreme scrutiny and we sympathise with the position of the board and appreciate that, instinctively, the health perception would be negative. However, culturally things have moved on. Increasingly, people will look to go out somewhere for occasions which would have previously been held at home. We feel, as responsible operators, we will be offering a controlled environment for the public to enjoy their drink until a reasonable hour, where alternatively, they might continue their night at home or decide to have their entire night in Glasgow. We also take decisions to close earlier than the operating licence allows on occasions where we feel it is beneficial to secure safety and protect public health. If all premises stopped any entertainment and started to slow the night down from 12.30am, this would also allow a steady flow of patrons leaving premises and a safer journey home with the avoidance of large taxi queues and reduce the pressure on the police to control such a large exodus at once.

The earlier start on a Sunday is also a customer focussed request. Many families now dine out for lunch on a Sunday and this is also a day of events such as Communion and Christenings. These functions normally take place in all available premises on the same day, yet, those who are a member of a golf club can have their party served from 11am. This seems desperately unfair, given that nobody else in the party is required to be a member. This, in effect, means the same group could book a function on the same day, for the same occasion, in different premises and one would not be able to serve them for over an hour after they arrive.

We would ask that you give this your careful consideration to each point on its own merit and look at similar areas, such as North Lanarkshire, which operate under a similar licence to Glasgow without any detrimental effect. This would also remove any unfair trading advantage currently held by certain premises within the area who currently have such licences. We all have a responsibility to ensure local businesses flourish and it is essential for communities to have local establishments open, thus providing a service which reflects the needs of the local community.