

Lord Henley  
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10 April 2012

## **Alcohol Reforms**

Dear Lord Henley

We welcome your comments in the late-night drinking consultation that problems in the night-time economy should be addressed locally. Councils work hard to police the night-time economy, working with the police, businesses and residents to create a vibrant night-life.

We are pleased that Government has recognised this work and is ensuring that councils are able to claim back any costs associated with introducing the late-night levy before the money is pooled to be shared with the police. This will go a long way towards making the levy a valuable tool to drive innovation and collaboration in managing the night-time economy. We have consulted with our colleagues across local government and have today provided your officials with details that we feel will be valuable in further shaping the design of the levy and early morning restriction orders.

We also wanted to take this opportunity to share with you the high-level findings of our discussions, to support your commitment to localism and maximise the local benefit should councils decide to introduce a local levy or EMRO.

Firstly, colleagues have stressed the importance of giving councils full flexibility over spending decisions relating to money raised by the levy. If councils are to use the income from the levy in effective and imaginative ways, then they will need the freedom and flexibility to explore new ways of working, such as joint-enforcement work and involving street ambassadors. This is why we are asking the Home Office to refrain from producing a restrictive list of items on which councils can spend their part of the levy.

Secondly, it will be essential to allow for the diverse nature of council areas and the fact that enforcement costs associated with certain types of business can vary significantly from area to area. We recognise that you have committed to providing some exemptions to both the levy and EMROs, but the more flexibility that can be given to councils to respond to local needs, the more effective both levy and EMROs will be. We strongly urge you to consider allowing councils to define and set local exemptions.

Thirdly, there is particular concern among metropolitan councils that the police element of the levy could be used to fund activity outside the council area from which it was raised. For instance, this could see businesses in Haringey potentially subsidising police enforcement costs in Westminster if one council chose to introduce the levy and the other did not. This could have significant implications for the attractiveness of some areas to businesses, so we would strongly support guidance to police and crime commissioners directing them to return the money to the location from where it was raised.

This is a period of considerable reform and improvement in the field of managing the problems associated with excessive and irresponsible consumption of alcohol. It is helpful that the Home Office has been proactively engaging with the LGA to ensure the new tools and proposals recognise the value of local decisions and accountability.

We are aware that the Home Office will shortly be undertaking a review of regulations as part of the red tape challenge, as well as developing the consultations announced in the new Alcohol Strategy. We would be very happy to be part of any working groups related to these, examining ways to reduce the burdens on businesses, councils and, ultimately, taxpayers.

We are sorry that you are unable to provide the keynote speech at our forthcoming conference examining the new powers and their use in managing the night-time economy on 26<sup>th</sup> September. We would like to highlight the work that you are doing at the Home Office and are conscious that you have now been unable to attend several LGA events. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to make it easier for you to attend and engage with senior representatives of local government.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Home Office on behalf of our members, and the wellbeing of the constituents they represent.

Sincerely



Councillor Mehboob Khan  
Chair, Safer Communities Board



Councillor Nilgun Canver  
LGA Licensing Champion