

Response ID ANON-GXRH-UWFQ-V

Submitted to **CALL FOR EVIDENCE AND VIEWS ON THE LICENSING AND REGISTRATION OF CLUBS (AMENDMENT) BILL**
Submitted on 2021-01-15 12:35:35

Introduction

What is your name?

Name:

Paul Anderson

What is your email address?

Email:

pauljohn.anderson@omnplex.ie

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Omniplex Cinemas

Please indicate if you are providing a submission:

on behalf of an organisation or business

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or business please tell us briefly how it relates to the subject matter of the Bill:

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

We are a cinema operator located in Northern Ireland. This bill relates to us and we are requesting that licensing laws are updated and brought into line with England, Wales, Scotland and Republic of Ireland where cinema venues are permitted to serve alcohol.

1. The Policy Objectives of the Bill

What are your views on the overall policy objectives? Do you think that the Bill will meet those objectives? If not, why not?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

The policy objectives of the bill are welcome and should fundamentally promote the responsible sale and consumption of alcohol. The existing legislation requires updating to reflect general changes in consumer behavior and expectations.

2. Easter Opening Hours and Additional Permitted Opening Hours

The removal of restrictions at Easter [Clauses 1 & 23]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

Additional permitted hours for certain licensed premises [Clause 2]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

PSNI authorisation for additional permitted hours for smaller pubs [Clause 4]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

“Drinking-up Time” and the Alignment of Alcohol and Entertainment Licences

What are your views on the extension of “drinking-up” time?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

What impact do you think it would have on alcohol consumption towards closing time and during ‘drinking up’ time?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

What impact do you think it would have on issues such as anti-social behaviour and crowd dispersal?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

Do you have any comments on the proposals to align closing time for liquor and entertainment licences [Clause 3]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

4. Supporting Tourism, Special Events and Small Producers

Do you think that the provisions contained within the Bill will have a positive impact on hospitality and/or tourism and in Northern Ireland? If so, how?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

What are your views on the proposals relating to permitted hours for special events [Clauses 6 & 25]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

What are your views on the provisions of the Bill that are aimed at supporting small local producers of beer, cider and spirits [Clause 8]? What impact do you envisage this could have on tourism? Do you feel that the regulatory framework, as outlined in the Bill, is sufficiently robust?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

5. Children and Young People (under the age of 18)

The removal of the requirement of a licensed premises or registered club to hold a children's certificate [Clauses 10 & 26]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

Permitting certain premises to hold underage functions; the conditions that must be met; the permitted opening hours; and, proposed enforcement action [Clauses 11 & 27]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

Permitting the attendance of young people to remain on licensed premises to attend a private function (e.g. a wedding reception) and the proposed conditions that must be met [Clauses 12 & 28]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

The strengthening of the current law around the delivery of alcohol [Clause 9] and the delivery of alcohol to young people [Clause 13]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

The prohibition on self-service and sale of alcohol by vending machines [Clauses 15 & 30]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

Permitting children and young people to be present in a sporting club to 11:00pm during the summer months (1 June to 31 August) [Clause 29]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

Permitting children and young people to attend an awards ceremony in a sporting club one night per calendar year (until 11pm) [Clause 29]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

Overall, do you feel the measures are adequate to protect children and young people from alcohol related harm? If not, why not?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

6. Alcohol Consumption and Alcohol-Related Harm

What impact do you think these measures will have on reducing alcohol consumption and preventing alcohol-related harm?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

Do you have any other comments in relation to any other aspect of the Bill in relation to alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

7. Regulation, Enforcement, Offences and Penalties

The Bill proposes to allow statutory approval for voluntary industry-led codes of practice in relation to the sale and supply of alcohol in licensed premises and registered clubs [Clauses 19 & 32]. Do you feel these are an effective means of helping to regulate the industry? If not, what alternatives would you suggest?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

The Bill contains provisions to permit a court, when determining an application for an occasional licence, to impose terms and conditions on the licence with consequences for non-compliance [Clause 18]. What are your views on this?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

What are your views on the measures in the Bill that would require a body corporate (licensee) to notify the courts and police of any change of directorship (within 28 days) [Clause 20]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

Throughout the Bill there are a number of new offences and/or penalties under The Licensing (NI) Order 1996, The Registration of Clubs (NI) Order 1996 and The Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985. The Committee would welcome any comments you have in relation to any of these.

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

8. Resource Implications for Certain Organisations/Bodies

(a) The PSNI:

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

b) Health and social services:

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

c) Other organisations (please specify):

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

9. Registered Clubs

Do you have any additional comments on the provisions in the Bill which specifically relate to registered clubs [i.e. Clauses 22 to 32]?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

N/A

10. Additional Information

Are there any other measures not included in the Bill that you think should be included and why?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

Under the current legislation in Northern Ireland, cinemas are not allowed to apply for a licence to sell alcohol and we would like to change that, to bring it in line with the rest of the UK and ROI. We feel that cinemas in Northern Ireland have been neglected, in the list of premises that can serve alcoholic beverages, additionally cinemas are not listed in the current places of public entertainment, which includes Theatres and Racecourses.

www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1996/3158/article/5

All cinemas must have a cinema licence from their local Council for them to trade every year, which is virtually the same as an entertainment licence except it does not include a section on alcohol. As such the Council could simply change from using cinema Licenses to using an Entertainment licence for the cinemas to control the use of alcohol.

Omniplex is the largest Cinema Company operating on the island of Ireland with over 250 screens in 33 locations (15 in Northern Ireland and 19 in ROI) Due to public expectation and lifestyle changes the cinema is no longer a place where you just go to see a film, we now offer our patron alternative content such as live opera, ballet, and concerts. We also deliver high standards of premium seating, hosting the latest in projection and digital sound technology. The Omniplex Brand has become the standard bearer for multiplex facilities. Omniplex are also expanding into the corporate conference and private hire sector. Due to the current pandemic, we are looking to innovate and create valuable resources for communication and connection across the globe.

We want to create a next level cinema experience for our customers, we would like to do this by echoing what is already happening in cinemas in the UK and ROI. We would like to provide hot food for patrons whilst also giving them the opportunity to have a glass of wine or beer. It would take the burden and stress away from our customers and their families as the cinema can become an all-round destination, fit to meet all their needs and expectations. This would add an extra dimension to their cinema experience, allowing them to sit, relax and enjoy all in one place. This has been successfully introduced by Everyman Cinema in the UK, The Stella in Dublin and the QFT in Belfast, additionally our own cinema in Rathmines can sell alcohol as the cinema has been class as a theatre under the licencing law in the republic of Ireland. <https://www.revenue.ie/en/companies-and-charities/excise-and-licences/excise-licensing/theatre-licence/index.aspx> As such we believe that Cinemas should be licensed in the same way as the Theatres in Northern Ireland. As we show live theatre as part of the national theatre programme, as well as our other alternate content such as concerts, one off productions, musicals etc. Our patrons are always left extremely disappointed when they cannot purchase an alcoholic beverage during the interval, to give them that overall true theatre experience. It does lead to some of our competitors, such as QFT, having a unique selling point for the same scheduled showings, giving them an unfair and unequal advantage.

We would like to draw the committee's attention to the fact that Queen's Film Theatre (QFT) in Belfast has enjoyed the benefits of a licensed bar for many years simply because it is situated within Queens University. As part of a higher education institution, it has been allowed to apply for a liquor license as defined within the current legislation. Being able to offer alcoholic beverages to their customers clearly gives an unfair unique selling point to QFT. However, QFT is proof that customers can enjoy an alcoholic beverage at the cinema without incident or annoyance to other customers, staff or indeed the local community in which it is situated.

Northern Ireland is the only place in these islands that currently prohibits cinemas from obtaining a license to sell alcohol. Please see further information on Licensing Act 2003 in England

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/17/contents>) and Licensing Act (Scotland) 2005 in Scotland

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/16/contents>) - which brought together previously separate regimes for alcohol, entertainment etc into a single 'premises licence' administered and policed by the local authority.

To conclude we have always been a company that has fought to innovate and strive to create new opportunities. Due to the pandemic, there has been an even larger focus on continuing to develop our business in Northern Ireland. Several times during the pandemic regulations, we were omitted and neglected, therefore we have had to shift our focus on ensuring when the pandemic is over, we can thrive as a business. We feel becoming an all-round destination will entice our customers not only to return once but allow cinemas to become a go to destination ensuring we continue to meet and exceed our own expectations. We would be delighted to meet and discuss the issues raised and our own operations with the committee and would be keen to be involved in any consultations.

Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

Please provide your comments in the text box below:

I would welcome discussing this matter further and/or to be involved in the consultation.