



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Licensing and Registration of Clubs
(Amendment) Bill:
Department for Communities

8 December 2016

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Colum Eastwood (Chairperson)
Mr Steven Agnew
Mr Andy Allen
Ms Nichola Mallon
Mr Fra McCann
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín

Witnesses:

Mr Liam Quinn	Department for Communities
Ms Carol Reid	Department for Communities

The Chairperson (Mr Eastwood): You are back again, folks. Come on ahead. We have Liam Quinn and Carol Reid again. I refer members to the paper from the Clerk in tabled items: it might be useful in identifying some of the other issues. We went through this two days ago. I do not know if Liam or members want to raise anything in particular. Issues under clauses 11 and 12 were most substantial. Liam, do you want to highlight anything on those issues?

Mr Liam Quinn (Department for Communities): Chairman, thanks. We received a comprehensive letter from the Chair yesterday evening setting out the Committee's position. I think that it is fair to say that there were no surprises in the letter. We will brief the Minister in due course, and the Minister will respond formally.

Asda raised an issue on clause 11. I responded to the Clerk and pointed out that we did not see any difficulty with the issue that Asda raised around leaving alcohol to be collected at a remote location and providing the person who had purchased the alcohol with a key or code to access it. It would already be illegal for anyone to send a young person to collect that alcohol, so we do not see that our proposed prohibition on vending machines would have any impact on that. As I understand it, Asda does not operate that system in Northern Ireland anyway; it is the sort of thing that they use in more remote areas of Great Britain for people living out on the Yorkshire moors, for instance, or many miles from the nearest supermarket. They leave their groceries and drink to be collected at a central location. We do not see any issue with that.

Clause 12 relates to the restriction on off-sales drinks. On Tuesday, we mentioned that the Minister will consider the letter from the Chair around the issue. There is a discrepancy between stand-alone off-sales and off-sales that are associated and linked to a pub operating under a pub licence. We will look at that in detail and respond to the Committee as part of the general response.

The Chairperson (Mr Eastwood): Do members have any other issues around some of the things that Liam has discussed or anything else? I am aware that we went through this in a fair bit of detail on Tuesday.

Members, if you are content, we will give further consideration to the Clerk's paper over the recess and ensure that we are ready to go on making decisions when we come back. I look forward to a response from the Minister on some of the issues that we have highlighted. Many of them will be issues that the Minister might want to take up, which would maybe make things a bit easier. If there are issues that the Committee still feels strongly about, we can put in amendments, and, of course, individual members can do that. Are members content to move on?

Members indicated assent.