



Drumbo Park Briefing Paper - 2016

Summary: Call for support

Drumbo Park is calling for the support of the Northern Ireland Assembly to change an anomaly in the current licencing laws which prohibits it from providing patrons with a choice of alcoholic beverage on a Sunday.

We require Article 42 of the Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 be amended so that the general permitted hours for a place of public entertainment include a Sunday. We only wish to operate on a Sunday between the hours of 1pm and 6pm.

A positive outcome will impact directly on the securing of many jobs, the sustainability of the rates contribution and the viability of the track.

The issue

Drumbo Park is ultimately calling on the Minister for Communities to bring forward a change in the law (through the upcoming Liquor Licensing Bill) to allow it to serve alcohol on a Sunday - one of its busiest days of the week (across the year) - so that patrons can have the choice of an alcoholic beverage as they dine and seek entertainment.

We previously corresponded with the former Minister for Social Development (Nelson McCausland) requesting that the matter be included in the consultation paper entitled "Proposed Changes to the Law Regulating the Sale and Supply of Alcohol in Northern Ireland". Unfortunately the Minister did not include the matter in the consultation paper, nor was it included in the wider consultation on Liquor Licensing last year. We had written to and met with the next Minister for Social Development Mervyn Storey and requested that he consider rectifying this omission. This did not happen – suggesting that the then Committee for Social Development could bring forward an amendment.

Changes to the legal anomaly

Technically all that is required is that *Article 42 of the Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order 1996* is amended so that general permitted hours for a place of public entertainment 'include a Sunday'. Presently it does not and is prohibitive to the further success of Drumbo Park and a host of other entertainment venues across Northern Ireland such as Down Royal and Downpatrick Racecourses, which support our representations for an amendment to Article 42 of the Order to include Sundays. We are asking that Article 42(2) is amended to include a new Articles 42(2)(c) in the same terms as Article 42(1)(c).

Brief Background to Drumbo Park

- Drumbo Park Limited first opened in July 2009 and has so far contributed £200,000 in rates.
- Over 150 people from the local Lisburn area are employed at the track.
- Drumbo Park, unlike normal businesses has a very short window to make profit trading for effectively only 14 hours per week.
- The promoters and equal shareholders are John McCollum, who owns JMC Restaurants Limited (employs 140 people), Michael McAdam who owns Movie House Cinema Group (employs 255 people) and Thomas Anderson, who owns Lagan Valley Steel (employs 25 people).
- It has become Northern Ireland's premier greyhound racing venue attracting customers from far and near, catering for corporate functions, charity events and a good night's entertainment.
- It provides a five star offering with a 300-seater grandstand and restaurant with panoramic views over the track.

- The Drumbo experience is a family leisure experience providing excellent facilities, food and drink with the average tote bet being only £1.40.
- Drumbo attracts visitor groups from the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and USA.
- Although Drumbo operates under the rules of the Irish Greyhound Board (IGB), they receive no funding. The IGB is a semi-state body in the Republic of Ireland and in 2012 received over €11M in government funding. The industry employs directly and indirectly over 10,000, of which 1,000 are employed in Northern Ireland.
- Drumbo are members of the Tourism Northern Ireland and BVCB.

Drumbo Park – A Spotlight

Drumbo Park unlike normal businesses has a very short time window to make profit trading for effectively only fourteen hours per week.

It is not practicable to attempt to trade at any other time than a weekend, and Sunday afternoon is the only practical choice to extend the business hours. The alternative is to expand the facility to accommodate more people in the trading hours.

Sunday is a key day

Sunday is one of the most important sporting days of the week, and market forces dictate that this demand is met. The sporting mix in Northern Ireland includes GAA, Rugby, Soccer, Motor sport, snooker to name but a few. Greyhound racing and the leisure experience that accompanies this pursuit also plays a significant part in that sporting mix.

Consumers' attitudes and expectations are driving changes to legislation. As a result, it is now commonplace for retailers and licensed premises to be open seven days a week, with many traders noting that Sunday is their busiest day.

Shops and pubs can already open on a Sunday under the Shops (Sunday Trading) (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, and larger shops can open for six hours.

Past amendments to retailing and Liquor Licensing laws have been a positive reaction to these changing consumer demands and reflect a modern, competitive Northern Ireland. Growth in the leisure industry has been a key factor in this and will continue to be in the future.

Contribution for the local economy

To estimate the impact on the Northern Ireland economy in economic terms it is necessary to calculate value added which measures the amount of wealth created by a company and is calculated by taking account of net profit, income creation associated with increased employment and multiplier effects. See attached financial history appendix.

The ability to serve alcohol on a Sunday during a race meet would mean that we could potentially see an additional:

1. 40 jobs on a pro rata basis. Drumbo Park Limited gives employment to 158 people according to the statistical survey in September 2012 of which 17 are full time and 141 part time;
2. Being able to fairly compete with other jurisdictions such as GB and RoI (Dundalk and Lifford) who are allowed to sell alcohol at meetings on a Sunday.
3. Cater for 800 customers and represent an increase of approximately 35% in business with extra revenues for the Exchequer.

Additional income and additional activity in the local economy will have spin off effects, and benefit the local economy through the income effect and the supply chain effect. In other words, the increase in income associated with increased employment will encourage consumers to spend more, and the

additional economic activity from an extra days trading will act as a stimulus to other related businesses.

Looking ahead

It is our intention to seek an amendment to the legislation to provide patrons with the choice of an alcoholic beverage on a Sunday at our racing venue which in turn will have a positive knock on effect across Northern Ireland. We envisage that this amendment will have minimal unintended consequences.

To sustain the night time economy (throughout the year) we require such an amendment. The '*do nothing*' approach is by its very nature prohibiting growth, revenue generation and stalling the development of the leisure industry here.

The fact that this issue has been overlooked during the previous consultative phase highlights the lack of an evidence based approach. This is a position which should cause grave concern, especially when such an economic lever is in the gift of a local Minister and devolved legislature.

Drumbo Park regards itself, and is proven to be, a first rate racing venue that is a responsible retailer of alcohol, a strict enforcer of closing time requirements and ensures the safety of its patrons at all times.

It's also plays a supporting role for Lisburn Distillery FC (of which Drumbo Park is its home ground).

At present we already have a significant level of support from our customers, the industry and the organisations associated with the night time economy. We continue to raise the need for an amendment and the associated positive impacts that it will have with all elected representatives, government officials and the media.

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