



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

Please use this form to submit written submissions in relation to the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill. Return to committee.communities@niassembly.gov.uk by Wednesday 19 October 2016.

Name: Stephen Magorrian

Organisation: (if applicable) The Horatio Group of bars and restaurants

Date: 3rd October 2016

(where possible, please structure your response to the specific clauses of the Bill and, if appropriate, suggest alternative or additional wording to clauses, which may assist the Committee's consideration of the need for any amendments to the Bill)

Dear Sir,

Please find my comments below:

Clause 1. Additional Hours at Easter.

Easter is the first big tourism opportunity of the year and we curtail our licensing hours, which doesn't make sense if we genuinely see Tourism as an opportunity for the Northern Ireland economy. The Ministers proposals therefore, don't go far enough. I comment as follows:

The proposal to regularise Thursday night is welcomed, but this will have the least impact of all options available.

Not looking at Good Friday at all is regrettable, but I can understand the difficulty the Minister might have in addressing this from the "religious aspect". I don't accept that this "religious aspect" actually exists anywhere other than in the Press

– it makes good listening. When you can buy a bottle of wine in a supermarket and go to an unlicensed restaurant to consume it with your meal, the whole matter becomes a farce.

Not looking at Saturday night is the biggest issue. We need to normalise Saturday night at Easter to be like any other Saturday night. There are two reasons for this both based on the fact that Saturday night is the biggest night of the week.

Reason 1 is Tourism. It is embarrassing and disheartening from a Trade perspective having to tell tourists that we are closing early. It ruins their week-end, damages our business, and sends the wrong message about Northern Ireland being a good place to go.

Reason 2 is our own local Northern Ireland customers. People come out later than they used to, and / or they visit a restaurant first before finishing their night elsewhere in a bar or club. Everyone is aware of the restrictions on Good Friday, but many are not aware of the issue on the Saturday. It is a regular occurrence for customers to arrive on Easter Saturday in a taxi that they have paid for, only to be told, sorry, we're closed, or, we've just called last orders. This creates friction and ill will that could easily be avoided. And then there is the problem of getting a taxi home. Because it is a night when things close early a lot of taxi drivers take the night off as there simply isn't enough business. Therefore those that have come into town find it difficult to leave again, particularly as everywhere is closing at the same time.

In short, not to address Saturday night is wrong on many counts and I would ask the Minister to reconsider. Saturday should be normalised, in the same way as Thursday.

Clause 2. Additional hours: applications to court.

The Ministers suggestion of an additional hour 12 days per year is to be welcomed, but it doesn't go far enough. Firstly it creates extra burden on administration and then extra burden on enforcement. It could also create some issues with premises in the same area applying for their extra hour on different nights. Some premises should be closed whilst another remains open. How will the PSNI know which is which, and do we want people leaving one outlet to go to another because of the

extra hour?

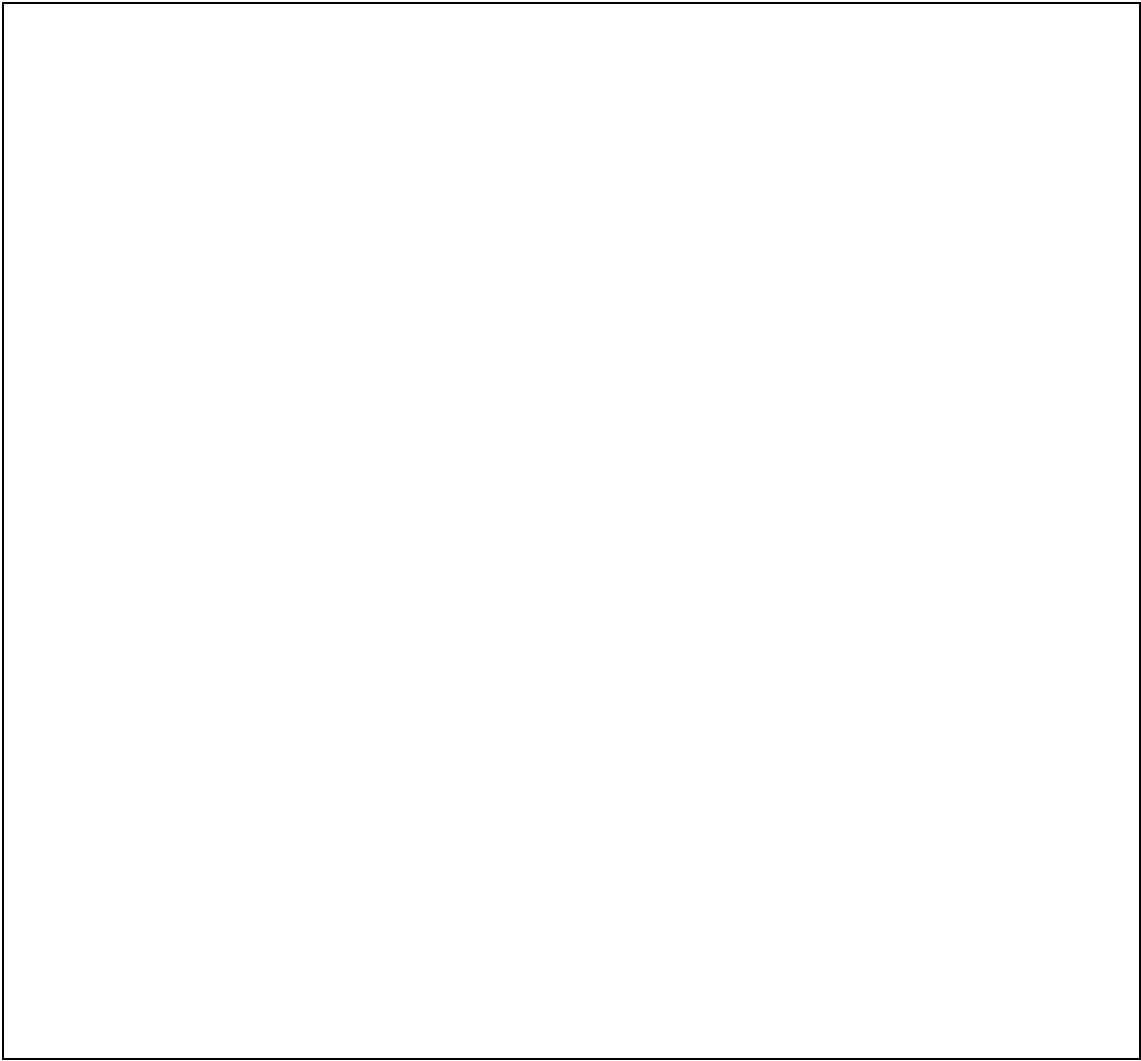
I would have proposed an extra hour on a Saturday night, every Saturday night. This is by far the busiest night for socialising and consequently, the busiest night for taxis. The extra hour would spread the pressure on everyone leaving and getting home safely, and would also send the message that Northern Ireland is open, just like our competitors in the Tourism Industry.

General:

In General I welcome the Ministers proposals and agree with many. If the changes suggested by me above were to be introduced I believe we will have gone a long way towards modernising our existing laws.

Your Sincerely

Stephen Magorrian



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