



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Please use this form to submit written submissions in relation to the Licensing Bill.  
Return to [committee.socialdevelopment@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:committee.socialdevelopment@niassembly.gov.uk) by Thursday 31 December.**

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**Organisation: (if applicable) \_\_\_\_Ulster Rugby**

**Date\_30<sup>th</sup> December 2015\_\_\_\_\_**

This submission is to support the Licensing Bill as introduced in the Northern Ireland Assembly on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015 (Bill 69/11-16)

Currently in order to be granted a licence to authorise the sale of intoxicating liquor we operate under an Occasional Licence issued to an existing licensee. The main difficulties experienced with this procedure are (1) The granting of the licence is often decided very close to the date of the event which restricts our ability to plan and promote what are often international events. (2) The Occasional licences currently granted apply the conditions of a Children's Order which restricts our ability to deliver a fully inclusive family entertainment package in a controlled environment.

In supporting the Bill we would make the following observations on each of the clauses.

**Clause 1. Interpretation**

No comments

**Clause 2. Meaning of “outdoor stadium”**

The Kingspan Stadium is 1 of 3 stadia redeveloped or under going redevelopment with the assistance of £110m funding from the Northern Ireland Executive. The facilities provided within Kingspan stadium have put us on par with or in most cases ahead of our competitors. As a result we are now capable of bidding to host major international events. We have already successfully bid for and been awarded the hosting of the 2015 Pro 12 Final and the 2017 Women’s Rugby World Cup Finals. In preparing their bid to host the 2023 Rugby World Cup the Irish Rugby Football Union have already earmarked the use of the Kingspan Stadium and Casement Park in feasibility reports.

One of the basic requirements when bidding for these events is to display the ability to provide, not only the minimum standard of playing and spectator facilities, but also a high standard of food and refreshment provision including the sale and consumption of alcohol.

To have a licence similar to that of the SSE Arena would put the 3 outdoor stadia on equal terms and in a position to further develop and realise the full business potential not just for the stadia but for the economy as a whole.

The current arrangement of having to apply for an Occasional licence with a Children’s Certificate restricts our ability to submit these international event applications with the confidence of being able to guarantee delivery. It also provides a doubt for the the 15 scheduled home fixtures that Ulster play in each year and the confidence of the 10,500 annual season ticket holders that we can deliver the full match experience that they are used to.

**Clause 3. Licences for outdoor stadia**

We support the wording of the Bill

**Clause 4. Attachment of conditions to licences**

The need for these conditions is understood and supported

**Clause 5. Temporary continuance of business**

We support the amendment of paragraph 2A of Article 29 of the principal Order to make special provision for outdoor stadia.

**Clause 6. Additional permitted hours and suitability for functions.**

The core business of the Kingspan Stadium is to provide a venue for hosting rugby matches and other sporting events.

The kick-off times for matches can vary from between 1.00pm and 8.00pm depending on the requirements of television. Presently the sale of alcohol in the stadium on match days is restricted to 11.30am or 1 ½ hours prior to kick-off, whichever is the later, and 11.00pm or 1 ½ hours after the final whistle, whichever is the earlier.

Should the provisions of this Bill be enacted the permitted hours for sale and consumption of intoxicating liquor will fulfil our requirements for the majority of events. While we do not foresee a requirement to make regular requests for the granting of additional hours we support the inclusion of this clause to permit application should such a requirement arise.

**Clause 7. Requirements in respect to sale of intoxicating liquor**

Subsection (1) The conditions imposed by this article are in keeping with current practices at the Kingspan Stadium in that the sale of alcohol is ancillary to the main objective of the event. Other non alcoholic beverages and food are always available for purchase from a range of service points.

Subsections (2) & (3) – The provisions of these articles are understood and supported. Article 58, paragraph 13, f supports the family friendly environment which puts enjoyment of a sporting occasion at the fore. At Kingspan Stadium we are known well for this, is critical to us and further growth. Ulster Rugby has 830 Junior Season ticket holders all which are associated with adult season tickets and match

statistics shows youth bookings range from 12% to 20% of total crowd dependent on the match.

**Clause 8. Commencement and short title**

The requirement for this clause is understood

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