

Call for late-night levy exemptions

Noctis to lobby over accredited outlets

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Any venue with Best Bar None or equivalent accreditation should be exempt under the planned late-night levy.

So says Noctis, the trade body for late-night operators. The levy for late-night bars, to pay for extra policing, is part of the Government's radical plans for licensing.

Noctis executive director Paul Smith said: "If you have [accreditation with] Best Bar None or a similar scheme you should be exempt from the levy. There's talk of blanket enforcement of a levy on venues, but a lot of those venues are very well run. It doesn't make much sense."

Smith said he will lobby for exemptions in discussions with ministers.

Other plans include

Government to-do list

- Letting councils and police permanently shut venues that persistently sell alcohol to children
- Reviewing alcohol tax and pricing so it tackles binge drinking without unfairly penalising responsible drinkers, pubs and important local industries
- Doubling the maximum fine for underage alcohol sales to £20,000
- Letting councils charge more for late-night licences to pay for additional policing
- Overhauling the licensing Act to give councils and police much stronger powers to remove licences from, or refuse to grant licences to, problem premises
- Cutting red tape to encourage the performance of more live music
- Making small-business rate relief automatic
- Scrapping national ID cards

Government to review Licensing Act

Home Secretary Teresa May says a "complete review" of the Licensing Act is underway.

She told the Police Federation conference that an "evidence-based approach" would be applied. "We are going to look at the licensing laws. I was in opposition when they were introduced and I argued against them."

May said the promised "café culture" failed to

materialise and reform "produced problems on the streets". "There are some other issues to look at around the binge drinking culture that has grown up – we think it is right that we do review these laws."

The British Beer & Pub Association welcomed the review as a way to "dispel some myths" about the Act.

May's announcement is a sign that the Home Office is to have a big say on

licensing under the new Government.

This is despite the licensing brief formally remaining with the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, with John Penrose named as the new licensing minister.

A DCMS spokesman said some licensing issues will be taken on by the Home Office; for example, the licensing of lap-dancing clubs.

greater powers to close pubs for persistent underage sales and doubling fines for serving children. They're to be included in the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Bill, to be introduced within 18 months.

Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers chief executive Nick Bish feared the potential to impose additional costs on the industry.

"Both parties pledged to save the pub during the election campaign – now is the time to deliver on that, not strangle it with more red tape," said Bish.

Right to buy last pub in the village

The new Government plans to introduce powers to give communities the right to buy the last pub in the village, David Cameron has said.

The power is to be included in the forthcoming Localism Bill, announced in the Queen's Speech on Tuesday.

The Prime Minister said: "We will be passing a law to have a community right to buy – so if communities want to come together to save the last pub, the last post office or to take over that bit of derelict land or derelict building, they can."

The coalition has agreed on some of the principles set out in the Tories' "Big Society plan", which focuses on "driving power" back to local authorities and community groups.

The speech also emphasised that there would be extra "support for co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises".

The policies aim to give communities a greater say over their local planning system and allow residents to appeal decisions – which could affect pubs.



Action: Former communities secretary Hazel Blears is leading a community buy-out of Salford's Woolpack

Bar talk

Has the good weather affected your trade?

GORDON McINTYRE

The Metropolitan Westbourne Park, London



It has helped massively. We have a garden and a roof terrace and show sport outside, so we've been packed to the brim all week. We had around 1,500 people over the weekend and we're doing very well on budgets compared to last year.

SHERRY HOWCROFT

Shoulder of Mutton Southowram, West Yorks



We were quite quiet the first couple of days as people tend to stay at home

to enjoy the weather – they've been trapped inside that long. We have a good area at the front of the pub, which was busy, but no garden. Overall it was a reasonable weekend, better than it would have been.

JOHN CADWALLADER

Pack Horse Inn Bury, Lancashire



It has definitely increased. Since Friday, I'd say we doubled trade each day. People

stayed longer and later into the evening. On a normal Sunday night we'd have about four or five people in but this week we had nearly 40. During the week it was busier during the early evening too.

CHRIS NORMAN

Commercial Inn Pontyminster, Gwent



It was flying. We got through 60 cases of Kopparberg and Magners,

emptied two ice machines and four bags of ice. We are close to Cardiff so there was big interest in the Championship play-off final. On a normal Saturday we'd have about 250 people, this Saturday we had 500.