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Sale of alcohol to passengers waiting for early morning flights should be banned, government officials say

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Booze ban: Peers have called on the government to ban the sale of alcohol to passengers waiting for early morning flights *Shutterstock*

Calls have been made to ban the sale of alcohol at airports to passengers on early morning flights after a spike in drunken incidents.

Bars and pubs in airport departure lounges should no longer be exempt from the Licensing Act, which controls when alcohol is sold, according to a [House of Lords](#) committee.

It urged the [Government](#) to implement the change by the end of the year.

The Select Committee on the Licensing Act 2003 said: "No one travelling on an international flight can fail to notice that, once they have gone through customs, control of the sale of alcohol seems to be relaxed, and the permitted hours even more so.

"The incidents occurring on flights are notorious, sometimes requiring flights to be diverted, and more often than not, such incidents are the consequence of alcohol consumed airside before the flight."

alcohol".

The Civil Aviation Authority reported a 36 per cent increase in disruptive passenger incidents in the UK from 2014 to 2015.

Research by Alcohol Concern found that nearly one in five passengers start their holidays with a drink at the airport.

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Sussex Police, which is responsible for policing Gatwick Airport, said no sanctions are possible against outlets selling alcohol to people under 18 because the Licensing Act does not apply.

The committee concluded there is "no justification" for this to be the case.

Brigid Simmonds, chief executive of the British Beer and Pub Association, said: "The industry works in partnership with the police and airport authorities to tackle any problems at airside venues.

"We would be happy to review these arrangements and extend them where necessary, but the current penalties for passengers who cause flight disruption are rightly severe."

In July last year, aviation minister Lord Ahmad pledged to examine the way alcohol is sold to passengers before they board planes.

He said: "In terms of specific regulations of timings of outlets (which sell alcohol) and how they operate, clearly I want to have a look at that."

Police figures obtained by the Press Association following freedom of information requests showed at least 442 people were arrested on suspicion of being drunk on a plane or at an airport from March 2014 to March last year.