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Edited by Paul Charity, named second most influential sector journalist by research and insights firm Allegra Strategies



## Tue 4th Apr 2017 - Lords licensing committee – ‘scrap local authority licensing committees and repeal Late Night Levy in current form’

### Lords licensing committee – ‘scrap local authority licensing committees and repeal Late Night Levy in current form’:

The House of Lords select committee set up to review the Licensing Act 2003 has recommended a one-off radical overhaul, including abolishing local authority licensing committees and repealing the Late Night Levy in its current form. The committee, which was set up to scrutinise the act, said that in the 11 years it had been in force hardly a year had gone by without major amendment. It wants to end these frequent piecemeal changes and has recommended a one-off radical overhaul, including the abolition of local authority licensing committees. The committee found the government made a substantial error in placing the responsibility for licensing with local authority licensing committees and said planning committees were much more effective, reliable and well-equipped to make licensing decisions. The committee recommended that co-ordination between the licensing and planning systems should begin immediately in all local authorities, while fees for licensing should be set locally, not nationally. The committee said it heard convincing evidence suggesting the Late Night Levy does not pay for the cost of policing as intended, and came to the conclusion that in its current form it is fundamentally wrong, in principle and practice. It said that unless current amendments proved effective, they

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should be repealed as should Early Morning Restriction Orders, which no local authority has yet introduced. Meanwhile, the committee also recommended that if Minimum Unit Pricing was introduced in Scotland and found to be effective in cutting excessive drinking, England and Wales should follow suit. It also said Scotland's example should be followed in helping disabled people access licensed premises by ensuring a disabled access statement was provided with a premises licensing application. Committee chairman Baroness McIntosh of Pickering said: "The act is fundamentally flawed and needs a major overhaul. It was a mistake and a missed opportunity to set up new licensing committees when the planning system was already available to regulate the use of land for many different purposes. The planning system is well suited to dealing with licensing applications and appeals, and the interests of residents are always taken into account. We cannot understand why the government has decided not to apply the act to sales at airports. This can lead to dangerous situations, and must be changed. Pubs, clubs and live music venues are a vital part of our cultural identity. Any decline in our cities' world-famous nightlife ought to be prevented and the businesses supported. But the night-time economy needs regulating – even in these areas of cities, residents have their rights. The current systems are not being used because they do not work."



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