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## Peers calls for 'major overhaul' of licensing laws



Baroness McIntosh is calling for a "major overhaul" of alcohol licensing laws

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**A Yorkshire peer is leading calls for a shake-up of UK licensing laws in response to "damning" claims that many local bodies are ill-prepared to take responsibility for the process.**

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The proposals from the former MP Baroness McIntosh include calls for existing local authority licensing committees to be scrapped and for a ban on the sale of alcohol to under 18s to be extended to airports.

The recommendations follow an inquiry by the House of Lords Licensing Act committee, which claims many councillors lack the necessary experience and support to make effective licensing decisions.

The committee also raised concerns about the suspension of licensing laws in UK airports, which means businesses are not prohibited from selling alcohol to teenagers or passengers likely to cause disruption.

Responding to the findings, Lady McIntosh, who chairs the committee, said they revealed the current legislation to be "fundamentally flawed" and in need of a "major overhaul". "In the eleven years since it has been in force hardly a year has gone by without major amendment to the Licensing Act 2003," she said.

"The Committee was shocked by some of the evidence it received on hearings before licensing committees [whose] decisions have been described as 'something of a lottery', 'lacking formality', and 'indifferent'.

"We also 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.

"The current systems are not being used because they do not work."



The 2003 Act was originally intended as a means of consolidating existing laws governing the sale of alcohol, including setting out the role of local authority licensing committees. Subsequent amendments have seen the introduction of policies like the late-night levy, which allows councils to charge taxes premises that open late to help cover costs associated with managing the late night economy.

However, the committee urges ministers to consider repealing the levy, and instead follow Scotland's lead in applying Minimum Unit Pricing for alcohol. It also calls for responsibility for licensing to be passed to local planning committees, which it argues are "much more effective, reliable and well-equipped" to make such "significant" decisions.



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