

SCOTTISH BORDERS LICENSING BOARD

**LICENSING (SCOTLAND) Act 2005
SECTION 9A: ANNUAL FUNCTIONS REPORT
1 APRIL 2020 - 31 MARCH 2021**

1 INTRODUCTION – SCOTTISH BORDERS LICENSING BOARD

- 1.1 Scottish Borders Licensing Board (“the Board”) is the Licensing Authority for the local government area of the Scottish Borders for the purposes of the Act. The current Board which was formed in May 2017 comprises nine Members all of whom are elected members of Scottish Borders Council. The Board is responsible for the functions set out in paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 below within the Scottish Borders.
- 1.2 The Council boundaries cover 4,742 square kilometres. The estimated population as identified by the 2011 Census is 113,870. The area is divided into ten Wards of three Councillors and one Ward of four Councillors totalling 34 Councillors of whom nine sit on the Board. All have completed the statutory training required under the Act.
- 1.3 The Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 (as amended) (“the Act”) makes provision for regulating the sale of alcohol and for regulating licensed premises and other premises on which alcohol is sold. The number of licensed premises within the Board’s area averaged 456 in number during the period.
- 1.4 Under the Act, Licensing Boards are responsible for considering applications for:
- Premises Licences
 - Occasional Licences
 - Provisional Licences
 - Temporary Licences
 - Personal Licences
 - Transfer of Premises Licences
 - Variation of Premises Licence
 - Extensions of licensing hours in respect of:
 - The sale of alcohol by retail, and
 - The sale of alcohol in members clubs

2 ANNUAL FUNCTIONS REPORT

- 2.1 The Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 amended the Act to place a statutory duty on Licensing Boards to publish an Annual Functions within three months of the end of each financial year.
- However, as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, Schedule 5 Paragraph

4 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 extended the timeframe for the preparation and publishing of annual functions reports and allowed Boards to prepare and publish their annual reports no later than 31 December 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

2.2 In terms of Section 9A of the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015, the Board has the following key obligations:

To publish an Annual Functions Report within three months of the end of the relevant financial year and to include within the Annual Functions Report:

- a Statement explaining how the Board has had regard to the licensing objectives and its policy statement in the exercise of its functions;
- the Board's Policy Statement in exercise of its functions under the Act;
- a summary of decisions taken by each Board over the relevant financial year including decisions taken by officers under delegated powers;
- the number of licences held under the Act in the Board's area including the number of occasional licences issued during the financial year;
- other information as determined as necessary by the Licensing Board

3 LICENSING OBJECTIVES

3.1 The Act sets out the following five Licensing Objectives ("the Licensing Objectives") as set out below:

- Preventing crime and disorder
- Securing public safety
- Preventing public nuisance
- Protecting and improving public health
- Protecting children and young persons from harm.

3.2 The Licensing Objectives provide a basis for the administration of the licensing regime. They also provide potential reasons for refusal of an application for the grant or variation of a Premises Licence, an Occasional Licence or a Personal Licence. Breach of the objectives may provide grounds for reviewing a Premises Licence or a Personal Licence. Conditions attached to a Premises Licence or an Occasional Licence may be based on any one or more of the Licensing Objectives.

4 FUNCTIONS OF THE BOARD

- 4.1 The functions of the Board are set out in Schedule 1 of the Act and are summarised below:
- Determining the Board's policy for the purposes of a Licensing Policy Statement or Supplementary Licensing Policy Statement;
 - Determining for the purposes of any such Statement whether there is overprovision of licensed premises or licensed premises or any particular description in any locality
 - Determining a Premises Licence application/ Provisional Premises Licence application.
 - Determining a Premises Licence Variation application where the variation sought is not a minor variation
 - Determining an application for the Transfer of a Premises Licence where the applicant has been convicted of a relevant offence or a foreign offence
 - Determining a Personal Licence application or a Personal Licence renewal application where the applicant has been convicted of a relevant offence or a foreign offence
 - Conducting a hearing in respect of a Review of a Premises Licence
 - Conducting a hearing in respect of revoking, suspending or endorsing a Personal Licence
 - Making a Closure Order

5 HOW THE BOARD HAS REGARD TO THE LICENSING OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 In exercising its functions under the Act, the Board is required to have regard to the Licensing Objectives as stated at paragraph 3.1.
- 5.2 Promotion of the Licensing Objectives is always at the forefront of the Board's consideration in determining its policies for the purposes of its policy statement.
- 5.3 When determining licence applications, the Board verifies that all applications are consistent with the Licensing Objectives and ensures that any potential issues are addressed through appropriate measures to safeguard full compliance with the Licensing Objectives. Such measures include attaching local and special conditions to licences if necessary.
- 5.4 The Board is confident that it has been able to pursue the crime and disorder objective by taking into account and recognising that certain

criminal activity or associated problems may take place or be taking place despite the best efforts of the licensee and the staff working at the premises. In such circumstances the Board will endeavour to take any steps it feels are appropriate to remedy the problem. The Board has strived to promote this objective in the interests of the wider community rather than determining the guilt or innocence of the individual which the Board recognises is a matter for the courts of law.

5.5 The Board is confident that it has been able to pursue the Public Safety and Public Nuisance objectives by endeavouring to take any necessary steps it feels are appropriate to address any such problems which may contravene these objectives. In doing so, the Board is mindful that it cannot take into account any issues that are dealt with by other legislation such as the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

5.6 The Board is confident that it has pursued the protecting Children and Young Persons from harm objective by applying appropriate conditions to licences with a view to ensuring that children and young persons are adequately protected within licensed premises or at licensed events. There have also been occasions when the Board has not been satisfied that an application sufficiently complies with this objective and on these occasions the Board has refused the applications accordingly.

5.7 The Board is confident that it has been able to pursue the Public Health objective to mitigate the public health risk when considering licensing applications. The Local Health Board is a statutory consultee who are invited to make representations with regard to each application which is considered by the Board. Whilst in most cases they have no comments to make, there are occasions when they do make representations and a representative is invited to attend the Board meeting and address the Board accordingly.

6 HOW THE BOARD HAS REGARD TO THEIR LICENSING POLICY STATEMENT

6.1 The Board is aware that all applications before it are to be dealt with in an open and transparent manner in accordance with licensing legislation and the Board's policy documents.

6.2 Information and assistance was made available to persons wishing to apply for a licence, make representations or lodge objections.

6.3 The Board, when making their determinations, took into account their Policy Statement and any supplementary arrangements which it had agreed on extended hours for special events of local or national

significance and the Board policy hours.

6.4 The Board is aware of its quasi-judicial function and its obligation to objectively determine facts and draw conclusions from them. The Board always aims to follow best practice to ensure proportionate, accountable and consistent decision making by listening to all the information provided by applicants, any objectors and Licensing Standards Officers weighing up the relevant information, reviewing this against its policies and coming to an informed decision.

6.5 The Board is confident that its Statement of Licensing Policy is sufficiently robust to enable it to make appropriate decisions when the question of over-provision is a consideration. When reviewing its Statement of Licensing Policy, the Board took into account the work carried out by the Scottish Borders Licensing Forum who by way of a multi-agency data gathering public project produced the report "Scottish Borders Alcohol Profile". This Profile provides an invaluable evidence base which has been most useful to the Board in the review of its Policy and the Board has regard to it when determining applications

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7.1 In the year from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 the Board met 8 times to determine applications.

7.2 Each application for a new Premises Licence, Variation of a Premises Licence, Occasional licence or Extended hours was decided on its own merits.

7.3 In assessing applications, the Board used a number of different sources of information to enable them to reach determinations. As well as the statutory consultees these sources included others with an interest including Community Councils, local residents, the Licensing Standards Officers, Police Scotland, the local Health Board, application objectors and established licensing practitioners. As referred to in paragraph 6.5 above, the Board also took into account the information provided in the Scottish Borders Alcohol Profile provided by the Scottish Borders Licensing Forum as well as the Licensing Objectives and its Statement of Licensing Policy.

7.4 All objections received to any applications were taken into account in the decision making process.

8 NUMBER OF LICENCES HELD IN THE BOARD'S AREA

- 8.1 The Board granted 1 new Premises License and 88 Occasional Licences were issued by the Board during the period. 2 of those Occasionals were granted to voluntary organisations whilst no applications by the holders of a Premises Licence for extended hours were received. The Board also considered 10 applications to vary Premises Licences. This included both major variations which must be determined by the Board and the applications which attracted objections or representations. In addition, 5 minor variations, 28 notifications of substitution of manager and 4 transfers were dealt with.
- 8.2 The Board arranged review hearings in respect of 2 premises during the period. Both were in relation to notices for failure of premises to make payment of the annual fee. This resulted in both licences being revoked.
- 8.3 The Board received 55 new Personal Licence applications and 24 Personal Licence renewal applications during the period, all of which were granted.

9 OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE EXERCISE OF THE LICENSING BOARD'S FUNCTIONS

9.1 Licensing Forum

The Licensing Forum continues to meet regularly throughout the year although the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic has meant that it has not been able to meet as regularly as it has in previous years. The Forum held its annual joint meeting with the Board on 20 December 2020. The Forum consists of a cross-section of members including Licensing Standards Officers, representatives from public health, the Police, the licensed trade and the general public. The Forum continues to work well with the Board and provided valuable input during the Board's review of its Statement of Licensing Policy.

9.2 Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic

During the period, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had an adverse impact on the Board's business. A number of premises surrendered their licences and the number of applications received greatly reduced during the period which resulted in the Board's income being significantly lower when compared with previous years.

9.3 Licensing Team

The Board is assisted by a unit of officers who sit within the Council's

Legal and Licensing Team. The unit consists of a Licensing Team Leader, two Licensing Standards and Civic Government Enforcement Officers, two Licensing Officers and a Licensing assistant with administrative support staff. They offer guidance and advice in the processing and issuing of licenses under delegated powers, provide support to the Clerk and make referrals to the Board. The Licensing Team as a unit ensure that the functions of the Board are fulfilled as efficiently as possible.

10 CONCLUSION

The Board is pleased to report that licenced premises in the Scottish Borders have been well run and generally problem free during the period covered by this report. The Board is thankful to the licensed trade in its efforts of promoting and upholding the licensing objectives and complying with the Board's Policy and to the Local Licensing Forum for their continued role in reviewing and updating the Alcohol Profile in support of its Policy. The Board also acknowledges the hard work applied by and the achievements made by those licence holders who were recognised in the annual Best Bar None awards.