

Minute

Orkney Local Licensing Forum

Wednesday, 21 January 2026, 11:00.

Committee Room 1, Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.



Present

- Representative of Persons having functions relating to Health, Education or Social Work:
 - Cameron McConnachie, Development Officer, Orkney Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (deputising for Katie Spence).
- Representatives of Persons Resident within the Forum's Area:
 - Angela Chambers (via Microsoft Teams).
 - Barry Cockerham.
 - Bob MacKenzie.
 - Andy McGinn.
- Licensing Standards Officer:
 - David Bowden (via Microsoft Teams).
- Representative of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:
 - David McGroarty, Group Commander (via Microsoft Teams).
- Representatives of Holders of Premises Licences and Personal Licences:
 - Neil Stevenson.
 - Betty Muir.

Clerk

- Hazel Flett, Service Manager (Governance), Orkney Islands Council.

In Attendance

- Orkney Islands Council:
 - Nick Long, Service Manager (Environmental Health).
 - Lillian Rendall, Legal Clerk.
 - Susan Taylor, Committees Officer (via Microsoft Teams).
- Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board (observing) (and invited for Item 3):
 - Duncan Tullock, Convener.
 - Sandy Cowie (for Items 1 to 3).
 - David Dawson (via Microsoft Teams).

- Stephen Heddle (via Microsoft Teams).
- Gwenda Shearer (via Microsoft Teams).

Apologies

- Representative of the Chief Constable of Police Scotland:
 - Chief Inspector Scott Robertson.
- Representatives of Holders of Premises Licences and Personal Licences:
 - Charlotte Foy (also representing Young People).
 - Malcolm Stout.
- Representative of Persons having functions relating to Health, Education or Social Work:
 - Katie Spence.
- Representative of local Health Board:
 - Dr Louise Wilson.
- Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board (observers) (who had been invited for Item 3):
 - Kristopher Leask, Vice Convener.
 - Rachael King.
 - Owen Tierney.

Chair

- Hazel Flett, Service Manager (Governance) (for Item 1).
- Andy McGinn, Convener (for Items 2 to 13).

1. Appointment of Convener

The Service Manager (Governance) welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that, in terms of the Constitution, as this was the first meeting in the calendar year, one of the members of the Forum must be elected as Convener.

The Service Manager (Governance) thereafter asked for nominations for Convener.

Angela Chambers, seconded by Bob Mackenzie, proposed Andy McGinn.

There being no other nominations, Andy McGinn was elected Convener of the Licensing Forum.

Andy McGinn took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

2. Appointment of Depute Convener

The Convener, seconded by Bob Mackenzie, proposed Angela Chambers as Depute Convener. There being no other nominations, Angela Chambers was elected Depute Convener of the Licensing Forum.

3. Alcohol and Drugs Partnership

Cameron McConnachie gave a presentation on the work of the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership including statistics around drug and alcohol use in Orkney and Scotland and the actions being taken to address the problem. Highlights included:

- The social, biological and financial drivers behind drug use which included peer pressure, isolation and anxiety, predisposition to addiction and deprivation.
- The categories of available drugs, their different effects and the possible consequences of short and long term use.
- Key changes and trends in hospital stays due to drug use in both national and local contexts, including that Scotland still had the highest rate of drug deaths in Europe and, whilst opioids were the most used type of substance nationally in the period, the commonest cause of hospitalisation in Orkney was due to the use of multiple substances at the same time.
- National statistics from 2021 indicated an overall drop in drug use and, whilst in Scotland the highest number of patients were aged between 35 and 44, by contrast in Orkney this was 15 to 24 year olds. Cameron McConnachie suggested that this high rate of hospitalisation was due to this very young and inexperienced age group being unaware of the dangerous cumulative and opposing effects of using a combination of substances.
- Different age ranges gravitated towards particular substances, with variation in the types and combinations of substances used in Orkney possibly due to supply levels and costs, making future use difficult to predict and prepare for.
- In the Scottish context, drug use was highest in the most deprived areas of the country.

In light of the above statistics and concerns, he then presented the actions and initiatives which had already taken place and were planned for the future, including:

- Thursday alcohol and drug recovery drop-in service, which operates out of the King Street Halls, Kirkwall, which has around 10 to 15 people attending each week, with a handful of people attending only for advice and support.
- Regular visits to Secondary and Junior High Schools.
- Collaboration with other organisations to increase community awareness, for example the Stamp Out Spiking initiative in conjunction with Rapture nightclub and a recovery walk in conjunction with Isle Fight. Further events and training opportunities were scheduled for 2026.
- Social media activity, with a recent Facebook post receiving in excess of 19k views.

In response to a question from Nick Long, Cameron McConnachie advised that there had been a shift away from alcohol consumption in young people but there was still a need for this to be monitored.

Following a question from David Bowden, Cameron McConnachie advised that some combinations of drugs could be more dangerous than others however this was difficult to measure given the many variations being tried.

The Chair thanked Cameron McConnachie for his presentation.

4. Minute of Previous Meeting

There had been previously circulated the draft Minute of the Meeting of the Licensing Forum held on 5 November 2025.

On the motion of Angela Chambers, seconded by Bob MacKenzie, the Forum approved the Minute of the Meeting of the Licensing Forum held on 5 November 2025 as a true record.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. Young People and Alcohol

The Convener advised that there had been no response to Nick Long's email to staff at UHI Orkney and that this matter was now unlikely to be progressed.

5.2. New Members

The Convener welcomed Neil Stevenson and Betty Muir, recently appointed as new members of the Forum, and also to David Bowden, recently appointed to the post of Licensing Standards Officer.

5.3. Chief Constable's Orkney Licensing Report

The Convener expressed his continued concern over the annual Licensing Report being signed but not dated, particularly as there was a legal requirement under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 for the annual report to be submitted as soon as possible after the end of the financial year.

In this regard, the Convener advised that he would be raising the matter with Liam McArthur MSP and potentially meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs.

6. Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board

The Legal Clerk reported that there was nothing of significance to report to the Licensing Forum.

7. Licensing Standards Officer

There had been previously circulated a report on the work of the Licensing Standards Officer during the period 29 October 2025 to 15 January 2026. The contents were noted and there were no questions or comments.

8. Orkney Street Pastors

Barry Cockerham advised that there were no significant events to note however the number of glass bottles and pieces of broken glass found in the Bridge Street area had increased during the period of closure of the Rapture nightclub and that, although there had been no reported injuries, there was still cause for concern. Barry Cockerham and Neil Stevenson had agreed to meet to discuss ways of working in future.

In response to a question from the Convener, Barry Cockerham agreed that sporadic availability of taxis could have an impact on the number of people loitering in the area.

Following a question from Angela Chambers, Barry Cockerham gave an update on volunteer recruitment, namely that three male volunteers were expected to complete their training by April 2026. He advised that the current seven male and six female volunteer complement restricted the amount of cover which could be provided, given the need for three volunteers to be present for each shift. Months with five weekends were particularly problematic to ensure cover.

The Convener complimented the continued positive work of the Street Pastors.

9. Police Scotland

As no representative from Police Scotland in attendance, no update was provided.

10. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

David McGroarty gave a short update on the Best Bar None scheme, in that he was pleased to confirm the scheme was self-funding. He confirmed that he would report back to the next meeting of Forum with further information regarding administrative requirements.

Regarding Scottish Fire and Rescue Service business, David McGroarty reported that there were no trends in relation to alcohol or drug-related domestic fires.

After a request from the Convener, David McGroarty agreed to arrange for a representative with knowledge of the Best Bar None scheme to attend a future meeting of the Forum.

Neil Stevenson advised that he had previously been a member of the Pubwatch Scheme, however consistency of getting the message across was key and, if the threat of a universal ban was not enforced, the scheme became unworkable. Accordingly, he was interested to learn more about the Best Bar None scheme.

After a question from Nick Long regarding the bar fire which had occurred in Crans-Montana at the end of 2025, David McGroarty advised that there was a National Operational Learning team within the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service who would cascade any lessons to be learnt to local areas. He would also ask colleagues if any further training or advice was available in light of the tragedy.

11. Any Other Competent Business

11.1. 2026 Football World Cup

A discussion was held around whether the Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board intended to follow Aberdeen City in granting a blanket opening hours extension to licensed premises for Scotland's World Cup matches, some of which had an expected kick-off time of 02:00 (UK time).

The Legal Clerk advised that the Licensing Team had not received any enquiries from licence holders and there were currently no plans to consider a general extension of licensed hours in connection with a special event of local or national significance without any requirement for an application be presented by the relevant licence holder.

In response to various queries, the Legal Clerk confirmed the following:

- “TV sport” would need to be explicitly included in a premises’ operating plan.
- In terms of The Licensing Conditions (Late Opening Premises) (Scotland) Regulations 2007, where premises routinely opened between the hours of 01:00 and 05:00, there was a requirement for door stewards, first aiders and the premises manager to be on the site.
- Each application for extended hours was considered on its own merits and, if the request was outwith policy, the application required to be considered by the Licensing Board.
- Occasional licences were for a one-off event and could not be used by licence holders in their premises.
- Seasonal variation provisions within operating plans would not cover the 2026 Football World Cup.

In response to a suggestion that the subject of a blanket extension be added as an item for discussion at the next meeting of the Licensing Board, the Legal Clerk advised that this may be possible, however she would need to discuss the matter with the Clerk to the Licensing Board.

Nick Long advised it was unfortunate that Police Scotland were not in attendance. He further stated that there were mechanisms for licence holders to extend their approved licensing hours, but this would need to be progressed quickly in order to meet statutory timelines regarding consultation and potentially reporting to the Licensing Board.

11.2. Stamp Out Spiking Campaign

The Convener gave his appreciation to Neil Stevenson for organising the Stamp Out Spiking campaign, which had been covered in the local media over the festive period.

12. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 29 April 2026 at 11:00.

Dates for the remainder of 2026 were noted as follows:

- Wednesday, 8 July 2026 at 11:00.
- Wednesday, 4 November 2026 at 14:00.
- Joint meeting with Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board – Wednesday 4 November 2026 at 15:30.

13. Conclusion of Meeting

The Convener thanked everyone for attending the meeting, including members of the Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board, who had been invited for Cameron McConnachie’s presentation at Item 3, and had remained for the duration of the meeting.

There being no further business, the Convener declared the meeting concluded at 12.00.