

Minute

Orkney Local Licensing Forum

Wednesday, 5 November 2025, 11:00.

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



Present

- Representative of the Chief Constable of Police Scotland:
 - Chief Inspector Scott Robertson.
- 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).
- Representative of Holders of Premises Licences and Personal Licence:
 - Malcolm Stout.
- Representatives of Persons Resident within the Forum's Area:
 - Angela Chambers.
 - Barry Cockerham.
 - Charlotte Foy (also representing young people).
 - Andy McGinn.
 - Robert MacKenzie.
- Licensing Standards Officer:
 - Nick Long.
- Representative of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:
 - David McGroarty, Group Commander.

Clerk

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

In Attendance

- Orkney Islands Council:
 - Karen Bevilacqua, Service Manager (Legal Services).
 - Lillian Rendall, Legal Clerk.
 - Susan Taylor, Committees Officer.
- Duncan A Tullock, Convener, Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board (observer).
- Sergeant Sarah Paterson, Police Scotland (via Microsoft Teams).

Apologies

- Representative of local Health Board:
 - Dr Louise Wilson.
- Representative of Persons having functions relating to Health, Education or Social Work:
 - Katie Spence.
- Kristopher D Leask, Depute Convener, Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board (observer).

Chair

- Andy McGinn, Convener.

1. Minute of Previous Meeting

There had been previously circulated the draft Minute of the Meeting of the Licensing Forum held on 9 July 2025.

On the motion of Angela Chambers, seconded by Cameron McConnachie, the Forum approved the Minute of the Meeting of the Licensing Forum held on 9 July 2025 as a true record.

2. Matters Arising

2.1. Young People and Alcohol

The Convener advised that there had still been no response from representatives of UHI Orkney and that a further email had been sent by Nick Long. An update would be given at the next meeting.

2.2. Pubwatch/ Best Bar None

David McGroarty gave a short presentation on the Best Bar None scheme, which might be considered as an alternative to Pubwatch. Key highlights were that it was a voluntary code of practice for licence holders, with four potential award levels. Applicants would apply for the award with applications assessed by a panel including members from Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and that a co-ordinator would be required to process and manage applications. David McGroarty advised that he was scheduled to have a telephone conversation with a representative of the scheme and would gather further information regarding costs and if the application process could be streamlined for island communities.

After a question from the Convener, David McGroarty advised that the scheme was in place throughout Scotland, however Orkney would be the first island community to participate in the scheme and that a representative from Best Bar None could be invited to present to the Forum either in person or remotely if required. It was pointed out that the scheme was aimed more at licensed premises demonstrating good practice in relation to the licensing objectives and was not like Pubwatch where an individual could be excluded from a licensed premise following a report of unacceptable behaviour.

After a question from Charlotte Foy, David McGroarty advised that training would not be necessary for premises to join the scheme but that there were options for support if there was sufficient uptake. Nick Long suggested that licensees could attain reputational advantage by participating in the Best Bar None Scheme.

David McGroarty advised that he would continue his enquiries and report back to the Forum at the next meeting.

2.3. Outing with Street Pastors

The Convener advised that, together with Mr Duncan Tullock, they had accompanied the Orkney Street Pastors on one of their Saturday night patrols. The main highlights were the impact seen to be made by the Street Pastors and the contribution made to the safety and wellbeing of young people. The Convener gave a vote of thanks for the valuable work being done by the team.

2.4. Door Stewards

The Legal Clerk advised that, unless the premises fell under The Licensing Conditions (Late Opening Premises) (Scotland) Regulations 2007, door stewards need only be employed at the premises owner's discretion. The Convener added that, should concerns from Police Scotland or complaints from neighbouring residents arise, the licence holder could be asked to provide stewards if it was considered feasible for them to do so. For clarity, a premises licence review would be required to consider, if appropriate, any condition regarding stewarding where regulation was not applicable.

Robert MacKenzie advised that training to achieve fully qualified door stewards would cost around £1,000 per person, and that 12 candidates would be needed to make a course in Orkney financially viable.

Barry Cockerham confirmed that, since the new nightclub had opened, there was a reduction in movement of patrons between premises, that effective door stewards were in place at the new nightclub and a single entry and exit policy was being enforced.

2.5. Additional Members

The Convener confirmed that Kelly-Marie McGuigan and Jean Tulloch had stepped down from the Forum and thanked them for their work. Neil Stevenson and Betty Muir had been approached and indicated they would be willing to serve on the Forum. Arrangements would be made for them to attend the next meeting in January 2026.

3. Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board

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

4. Licensing Standards Officer

There had been previously circulated a report updating the Forum on the activities of the Council's Licensing Standards Officer (LSO) during the period 1 April to 28 October 2025. Key highlights were that, following the resignation of the previous Licensing Standards Officer, a successful recruitment exercise had taken place, and it was anticipated that a part-time Licensing Standards Officer would be in post by the end of 2025, subject to satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks.

Nick Long advised that there were some issues around the adequacy of risk assessments, provided as part of the application process for occasional licences, in that many were generic and simply a printout of the example provided by the Board. There appeared to be a lack of understanding of the purpose of a risk assessment, and he would ensure this was picked up by the Licensing Standards Officer when in post, to engage with applicants and assist in improving the quality of risk assessments.

In response to a query from Angela Chambers, Nick Long was not aware of any application for an occasional licence being refused solely on the adequacy of the risk assessment. Nick Long confirmed that, when an application was received from the Licensing team, if he had any concerns, these would be fed back to the Licensing team and he would also contact applicants direct, if there was anything unusual.

The Legal Clerk clarified that a potential refusal of an application for an occasional licence would be heard by the Licensing Board, as officers were not permitted to refuse applications under delegated powers. An occasional licence could be granted for a maximum period of 14 days, voluntary groups were limited to 56 days per annum, and there were no restrictions on the number of applications.

5. Public Health

There had been previously circulated a paper from NHS Orkney setting out alcohol-related hospital statistics, both locally and comparing across all Scottish NHS Boards, for 2023/24, being the latest published data. Key highlights were that Orkney was sixth lowest in Scotland and slightly below average for wholly alcohol-attributed hospital admissions. The Convener commented that this was a lower figure than the previous year. The Forum noted that the statistics did not cover situations where people suffering from alcohol-related health issues had been able to go home rather than attend hospital.

There had also been previously circulated a paper updating the Forum on the work of the Orkney Alcohol and Drugs Partnership's Education, Community and Training input for June 2024 to March 2025, as well as a training schedule for 2025/26. Key highlights included development of strong links with the secondary schools through drop-in sessions and events including the Safe Islander initiative. Social media use had been expanded with one post attracting over 14,000 views.

The Convener confirmed that Cameron McConnachie would be running a supplementary training and information session to the Forum at its next meeting on 21 January 2026, and that members of the Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board would also be invited. Cameron McConnachie requested that any further ideas or training requirements for inclusion in the information session on 21 January be forwarded to him.

6. Police Scotland

Chief Inspector Scott Robertson confirmed that, since the last meeting, regular inspections of licensed premises had continued, with approximately 400 inspections carried out. In the same period, eight incidents were reported to Police Scotland with no interventions or actions taken, illustrating the good conduct and management by licence holders and their staff. Since the previous meeting, the Island Games had taken place and, again, this did not cause Police Scotland any extra issues and had been a huge success for Orkney.

There had been previously circulated the Chief Constable's Orkney Licensing Report for 2024-2025. Sergeant Sarah Paterson of the Violence Prevention and Licensing Co-Ordination Unit (VPLCU) gave an overview and advised that there had been 24 recorded incidents which was an increase of 11 from the previous reporting period and that 7 of these had been resolved without the need for further Police intervention. The number of recorded inspections of licensed premises undertaken by Police in Orkney had increased from the previous year's figure of 837 to 964, which was the highest number in Scotland. Sergeant Sarah Paterson had made two visits to Orkney, which include a visit to Hoy, and had undertaken detailed inspections including visual checking of premises, ensuring that Normal Operating Procedures were up to date and adequate and staff had undertaken the required training.

In response to a question from the Convener, Sergeant Sarah Paterson advised that confirmation had been received from the Police Scotland Policy Unit that there was no requirement for the Report to be dated. She further advised that, as there were 32 reports in total requiring checking and distribution, dating each one would be difficult to manage.

After a query from the Convener, Sergeant Sarah Paterson advised that the VPLCU was located at Dalrnarnock Police Station in Glasgow, but that reviews and inspections were delegated to licensing teams within Local Policing Divisions. Chief Inspector Scott Robertson added that this arrangement helped standardise implementation of licensing policies and facilitated cohesion between areas.

The Convener then asked how incidents were categorised. Sergeant Sarah Paterson advised they were mainly of a minor nature which licence holders did not wish to progress or which could be resolved at the time, and which were usually due to the behaviour of patrons rather than premises management or staff.

The Convener then asked if Police Scotland were implementing any test purchasing to see if under-age patrons were being served alcohol. Sergeant Sarah Paterson advised that data protection legislation would make this kind of surveillance difficult unless a previous pattern could be established however this could be undertaken by local Trading Standards officers, who required a lower evidence threshold. She was not aware of the need to go down the route of undertaking directed surveillance in Orkney.

After a question from the Convener, Sergeant Paterson advised that she had not observed any overcrowding issues during her visits to Orkney and that licensees were aware of capacity restrictions. Local Police officers could perform a headcount if there were any concerns in a particular establishment.

In response to a query from Nick Long on what constituted an inspection, Chief Inspector Scott Robertson confirmed that it would depend on the circumstance; should intelligence be received in respect of alleged drugs misuse, officers would attend and wipe surfaces, however, for the most part, inspections by local officers comprised checking in with licence holders and speaking to staff. From Sergeant Sarah Paterson's perspective, her inspections were more in-depth and comprised looking at premises licences and operating plans, incident and refusal books, CCTV, safeguarding and testing staff to ensure they were aware of policies. An inspection could range from five minutes for a basic walk through to over an hour for thorough checks.

7. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

David McGroarty reported that there was nothing of significance to report since the previous meeting.

8. Any Other Competent Business

The Convener gave thanks to the Clerk for her assistance throughout the year.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The following dates for meetings in 2026 were approved:

- Wednesday, 21 January 2026 at 11:00.
- Wednesday, 29 April 2026 at 11:00.
- Wednesday, 8 July 2026 at 11:00.
- Wednesday, 4 November 2026 at 14:00.

It was also agreed that the annual joint meeting with Orkney Islands Area Licensing Board be held on Wednesday, 4 November 2026 at 15:30.

10. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Convener declared the meeting concluded at 12:35.