



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EAST LoTHIAN LICENSING FORUM

**WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 2025, 10AM
HYBRID SYSTEM/CHAMBER**

Forum Members Present:

Mr G Blaikie (Chair) – online
Mr S Baxter – in person
Ms K Harling – in person
PC S Gibson – in person
Mr J Thayers – online

Licensing Board Members Present:

Councillor F Dugdale – in person
Councillor N Gilbert – online
Councillor G McGuire – in person

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Scott

Visitors Present:

N/A

Apologies:

Councillor C Cassini
Councillor J McMillan
Councillor L Bruce
Mr A Podder
Ms K Burke

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT EAST Lothian LOCAL LICENSING FORUM AND LICENSING BOARD HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2025 & MATTERS ARISING

The minute was agreed as an accurate recording of the meeting. There were no matters arising.

2. POLICE REPORT (VERBAL)

PC Gibson gave an update on reported incidents over the last three months, which included: six assaults, one of which was a serious assault; 13 disturbances; one drug-related incident; two hate crimes; one licensing issue; and 38 incidents of shop lifting. He noted that most of the incidents took place within Musselburgh and Tranent. PC Gibson confirmed 40 inspections of licensed premises were carried out in the East Lothian area and he also made Members aware it was likely the proxy purchase scheme would pick up in the summer.

Mr John Thayers asked how many of the thefts were carried out by repeat offenders. PC Gibson stated most of the thefts were committed from the same small cohort of people to fund addiction. Mr Thayers asked if the people committing these thefts were not in treatment for their addiction, was this something that could be encouraged. PC Gibson explained intervention and support was offered to people when they were taken into custody, but enrolment in a treatment plan could not be forced. Mr Thayers explained the contact service would be able to help people and could even offer transport to appointments. He was happy to provide cards for the contact service to PC Gibson to be made available from the station.

Ms Harling asked if the *It'll Cost You* campaign would be running again this year, but PC Gibson was unsure.

Councillor Dugdale asked if the police had anything in place for keeping young people safe over the summer months as they started to gather in large groups. PC Gibson was not aware of any specific response lined up, but he assumed day and evening patrols in usual hotspots would take place. He agreed to update with any further information he was made aware of.

3. LICENSING STANDARDS OFFICER REPORT

Ms Harling spoke to her report and explained the following outcomes from the February, March, and April 2025 Licensing Board meetings.

FEBRUARY

- Occasional License Applications: Winton Brewery Tap Room, Buck & Birch, 18 Newbigging, Carlo's Fish Bar & Restaurant, the Mart Farm Shop & Humble Hub – a number of occasional licenses were heard as they were either for new premises in the process of applying for provisional premises license or they had been operating on occasional licenses for a period of 12 months. All applications reviewed and applicants for updates on confirming provisional premises licenses. All were granted.
- Major Variation Application: Aldi, Haddington – an application to increase off sales capacity was granted.
- Provisional Premises License: Yarrow Cookery School, Longniddry – a provisional premises license was granted.

MARCH

- Provisional Premises License Application: 18 Newbigging, Musselburgh – an application for a new convenience shop with off sales was granted.
- Occasional License Applications: La Trattoria, Tranent – applications for occasional licenses to operate alongside the provisional premises license were granted.
- Occasional License Application: Seton Garden, Longniddry – an application for season of weddings, update in relation to progress towards premises license.

APRIL

- Occasional License Applications: Broxmouth Court, Carfrae Farm Shop – a number of occasional licenses were heard as they were either for new premises in the process of applying for a provisional premises license, or they had been operating on occasional licenses for 12 months. All applications reviewed and applicants asked for updates on confirming provisional premises licenses. All were granted.
- Occasional License Application: EMF, Musselburgh – an application for occasional license for Edinburgh Marathon Festival, outwith policy hours starting on sales at 10am, was granted.
- Occasional License Applications: Aberlady & East Linton Galas – applications for occasional license for Gala Day and music event were both granted with conditions.
- Occasional License Application: Dirlton Village Fete & Games – an application for occasional license for a village fete and games and music event was granted with conditions.
- Occasional License Application: Seton Sands – an application for occasional license for owners and music events was granted with conditions in relation to noise management.
- Provisional Premises License Application: Graze, Dunbar – an application for occasional license for on and off sales at café was granted.
- Provisional Premises License Application: La Trattoria, Tranent – an application for occasional license for on and off sales at restaurant was granted.
- Provisional Premises License Application: Asda Express PFS – applications for occasional licenses for off sales at garage convenience shop was granted.
- Provisional Premises License Application: Carlo's Fish Bar & Restaurant, Port Seton – applications for occasional licenses for on and off sales at café was granted.

Ms Harling reported that there were 15 provisional licenses outstanding confirmation.

Marketing the Forum

Ms Harling confirmed she continued to prompt the Forum while on visits, but there had been no recent enquiries of people looking to join.

Pre-inspection Letters

Ms Harling confirmed letters with information about the statement of licensing policy and helpful resources were being distributed to all licensed premises. Inspection would take place after all letters were delivered.

Forum Training Update

Unfortunately, as not all Members responded to the email sent out in relation to the training, this was unable to be taken forward.

Councillor Gilbert asked if Buck and Birch were still trading as normal after their business suffering a fire. Ms Harling confirmed they continued to supply to other premises and off sales, but she would need to check for further information.

Mr Thayers noted that there had been a large number of occasional license applications for May, June, and July, and asked if these were for events for children and families. Ms Harling explained two applications for gala days had already been dealt with, and decisions followed Board policy. She added that applications picked up again in August for single events, such as Halloween- and Christmas-themed events.

Councillor Dugdale asked if there had been any progress on increasing the costs of occasional licences. Ms Harling reported the East Region Licensing Standards Officer Group had been established, and she had taken on the role of secretary. She advised that the group had only met twice, but a lot of authorities had reported the same issues with occasional licences; one had reported back on cost analysis that processing a licence cost between £65 and £75, when the applicant is only charged £10. Ms Harling noted progress with the Scottish Government had been slow, but they had began looking at the Civic Government Scotland Act; if that was overhauled, then there could be changes to occasional licences. Ms Harling agreed to feed back from the LSO Group to the Scottish Government.

Mr Graham Blaikie asked if most premises had completed the two-hour mandatory training with their staff. Ms Harling confirmed this was not the case, and untrained staff were a significant problem over many venues. She added that this was something she was strict with, and she would not allow anyone to sell alcohol who had not completed their two hours of mandatory training.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Thayers reported towards the end of last year Audit Scotland produced a report on people who used substances; they had made several interesting comments particularly relating to alcohol, one of which pointed out how the Government had failed to deliver on a number of targets relating to alcohol. He added the report highlighted that alcohol was Scotland's most problematic substance and he hoped they would receive additional funding to reduce alcohol harms. Mr Thayers was happy to share the report with the rest of the Forum.

Councillor Dugdale welcomed the Audit Scotland report and felt it tied in well with the NHS and mental health services, as sometimes people self-medicated with alcohol while awaited services.

Mr Blaikie asked if Mr Thayers could also send him some of the cards for the Contact Service, as he would like to have them available within his premises.

Ms Harling said she would send out another email to Members regarding the Forum Training, and hoped to get more responses than last time. She made everyone aware the training could not be taken forward unless the majority of Members agreed to attend. Ms Harling explained the training would be provided by Alcohol Focus, who would spend a day with the Forum to come up with a plan to better structure meetings to aid the function of the Forum to review the Licensing Board in terms of how it administered its functions.

Councillor McGuire asked if premises were actively promoting the *Ask for Angela* initiative. Ms Harling reported from visiting premises that she very rarely saw campaign materials for this, but if the police still had a stock of these, then they could be distributed. She commented that the campaign was not well known. Mr Blaikie said he was aware of this being used a couple of times, and it worked well, allowing the customer to leave safely in a taxi. Councillor Dugdale highlighted that the public also needed to know about the campaign for it to be effective. Ms Harling suggested a social media release from the Council alongside the police, along with the distribution of posters to licensed premises.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

Future meeting invites will be sent out electronically.

- Wednesday 20 August 2025, 10am
- Wednesday 19 November 2025, 10am (Joint meeting with the Licensing Board)
- Wednesday 18 February 2026, 10am