



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
EAST LOTHIAN LICENSING BOARD**

**THURSDAY 26 MARCH 2026  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON  
& HYBRID MEETING FACILITY**

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**Board Members Present:**

Councillor LA Menzies  
Councillor F Dugdale  
Councillor N Gilbert (r)  
Councillor G McGuire (Convener)  
Councillor J McMillan (r)

**Clerk of the Licensing Board:**

Mr R Thompson, Solicitor

**Attending:**

Ms E Barclay, Democratic Services Assistant  
Ms S Fitzpatrick, Team Leader, Licensing and Landlord Registration  
Ms K Harling, Licensing Standards Officer  
Ms G Herkes, Licensing Officer  
PC M Upton, Police Scotland

**Committee Clerk:**

Ms L Gillie, Team Manager, Democratic and Licensing

**Apologies:**

Councillor L Bruce

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

The committee clerk advised that the meeting was being held as a hybrid meeting; that the meeting would be recorded and live streamed; and that it would be made available via the Council's website as a webcast, in order to allow public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. She noted that the East Lothian Licensing Board was the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018; that data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention; and that the webcast of the meeting would be publicly available for five years from the date of the meeting.

She also reminded members of the need to act in accordance with the Council's pre-election guidance and the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity due to being in the pre-election period for the 2026 Scottish Parliamentary Election.

The committee clerk recorded the attendance of Board members by roll call.

(r) remote participants

Councillor McMillan made a transparency statement advising that he had visited the golf courses included on the agenda in connection with the economy strategy of East Lothian Council. He also noted less formal links with the Golf Alliance and Scotland's Golf Coast and the Scottish Open.

**1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL  
East Lothian Licensing Board, 26 February 2026**

Board members approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.

**2. PROVISIONAL LICENCE  
Dunbar Golf Club, East Links Road, Dunbar (new clubhouse)**

Alistair Macdonald, Macdonald Licensing, Andrew David Little, Food and Beverage Manager and John Montgomery, Director of Golf were present. Mr Macdonald explained that the application was for the new club house, which is under construction, and hopefully available for use in October 2026. He advised the application had been kept as close as possible to the old club licence with a change being made to Sunday hours being one hour later. Mr Macdonald noted the 10am start time and stated that this was included in the old licence and was to enable golfers to have a drink before going out onto the course.

PC Upton, Police Scotland confirmed that they had no objections and no comment to make.

The Licensing Standards Officer (LSO) commented that the 10am start time highlighted by Mr Macdonald was on the old licence and that there had been no complaints. She concluded by stating that the premises appeared to be well run and there were no concerns.

In response to a question from Councillor McMillan Mr Little advised that they kept children and young people 1.5 metres away from the bar and that areas in the new clubhouse could be screened off to enable them to have a completely separate space.

Councillor Menzies asked about proxy sales on the course and was advised that there was no sale of alcohol on the course and they do not encourage alcohol going out onto the course. It was also highlighted that there are course marshals who would be able to see if alcohol is passed to a child.

Councillor Gilbert asked when they thought the new club house would be open and Mr Little stated they hoped it would be completed in September.

Members commented that they were happy to support the application.

**Decision**

The Board unanimously agreed to grant the Provisional Licence.

**3a. OCCASIONAL LICENCE**  
**Temporary Clubhouse, Dunbar Golf Club, Dunbar**

Alistair Macdonald, Macdonald Licensing, Andrew David Little, Food and Beverage Manager and John Montgomery, Director of Golf were present. Mr Macdonald advised that this application was for the temporary facility needed until the new clubhouse was completed. He noted that the request was for the licences to start on Friday 27 March but that the temporary facility may not open until Monday 30 March. Mr Macdonald added that times of 10am to 10pm were requested as it is felt unlikely that it will be booked for functions. He concluded by stating that additional occasional licences may be needed until the new clubhouse is completed.

PC Upton, Police Scotland confirmed that they had no objections and no comment to make.

The LSO stated that she had seen the porta cabins and that they were more than suitable and look like a fully functioning venue. She commented that the 10am start time reflected the time contained in the previous licence.

In response to questions from Councillor Gilbert Mr Montgomery advised that there were nine porta cabins in total and included the pro shop, an office, toilets and that the kitchen was external to meet health and safety regulations. The areas are connected by a covered walkway. He further advised of fencing around the new clubhouse for safety and that there were designated pathways to the first tee. It was also noted that the golf course had not changed but that it had moved around one hole, so the first hole becomes the eighteenth hole. It was highlighted that the porta cabins meet the requirements of their insurance.

In response to a question from Councillor McMillan it was stated CSQ, who are based in Edinburgh, had been used. They were described as having extensive knowledge and with experience of working with porta cabins. It was added that they want visitors to feel comfortable and to have as good an experience as they normally have, and that the reaction had been positive so far from visitors to the site.

Mr Little responded to a question from Councillor McGuire by stating that no CCTV would be in place, but that staff would monitor children and young people. He added that the calendar for the next six months was quiet, and a separate area would be set aside for any groups to keep them away from the bar.

Members commented that they would be happy to support the application with Councillor Dugdale noting that she was reassured by what she had heard from the LSO.

**Decision**

The Board unanimously agreed to grant the Occasional Licence applications.

**3b. OCCASIONAL LICENCE**  
**Seton Gardens, Seton Mains, Longniddry**

The applicant, Craig Wood, was present and began by advising that the custodians of the land, who he is separate from, had first applied for planning permission two years ago. There is an architect in place who last heard from planning in November regarding SEPA. Mr Wood highlighted that he had liaised with the licensing department and the LSO and contacted building control who would not consider a section 50 until planning

permission was in place. He concluded that he had contacted Environmental Health who had visited and were impressed with the facilities.

PC Upton, Police Scotland confirmed that they had no objections and no comment to make.

The LSO confirmed she was aware of the venue and had received no complaints.

Members commented that they were happy to support the application with Councillor Menzies commenting that she had been a guest at an event and had been very impressed. Council McMillan added that he was aware of the strong personal reputation of the applicant.

## **Decision**

The Board unanimously agreed to grant the Occasional Licence application.

### **3c. OCCASIONAL LICENCE Premier, Duns Road, Gifford**

The applicant, Prasanth Baskaran, was present with Brian McMahon, GNE Consultancy attending remotely. Mr McMahon began by advising that he was appearing on behalf of Gordon Emslie. He stated that they had obtained a section 50 from Environmental Health and were seeking a section 50 from Building Control. He advised that there were historic issues from when the premises was occupied and owned by the Co-op which resulted in building standards advising further action was required before a section 50 was granted. He addressed the layout amendment in the LSO report by stating that they intend to submit a variation at the time of lodging the confirmation. The amendment does not relate to any alcohol display area. Mr McMahon concluded by asking Board to grant the occasional licence to allow the business to continue operating while resolving the outstanding building warrant issues and completing the full application process

Mr Baskaran added that he had seen the complaint about building standards but that he did not know what that was and that he thought he had to pay something to the Council for the section 50.

PC Upton, Police Scotland, stated that this application had come in as a continuation of Occasional Licences and the police had not objected. He added that he had since become aware of the report from the LSO and the concerns noted. He concluded by saying he was to follow up on the concerns and would notify Board of any offences.

The LSO began by advising of two reports presented for this application. She also advised of a complaint received from Gifford Community Council on the viability of the shop, managerial competence and the ability to comply with licencing legislation. The LSO highlighted concerns relating to a staff member providing a false name, staff training and the amount of time Mr Baskaran spends working in the shop. She then provided a verbal update, not contained in the report, stating that she had visited the shop an additional two times and Mr Baskaran had not been present either time.

In response to questions from Councillor Menzies Mr Baskaran advised that the timings for the store are 10am to 10pm and customers must have photo ID if they look under 25. He added that they know the local people from the Gifford area and that they refused someone once and they did not come back. In response to a query on public safety Mr Baskaran stated that children do not hang around the shop, that he has no experience of shoplifters and staff are not trained in looking out for shoplifters. When

asked how often he was at the store Mr Baskaran stated he was there five or six hours and at home the rest of the time looking after his wife and baby. Mr Baskaran advised that his staff are trained in the time of sales, IDs and questions and answers and that he has training records in the shop.

The LSO stated that she had spoken with Mr Baskaran by phone and there had been no training records available in the shop. The LSO added that staff had been unable to show they had received any training and were not able to converse with her. It was repeated that training records were held in the shop, with the LSO responding to say no documentary evidence had been available.

Councillor McMillan expressed his concern that Mr Baskaran had said he didn't know what work was required by building standards and asked for an explanation of the extent of that work. Mr McMahan responded by advising that the Co-op had building warrant which was not confirmed but that they had been allowed to ignore this building warrant and put in a new application to undo it. Remedial work now needs to be completed to put a wall or structure back in place.

Councillor McMillan commented that the Community Council who had raised concerns were keen for shop to succeed but there were concerns about the management and stock levels. He also raised an issue with guttering on the property and asked if they were aware of this. Mr McMahan stated he would make sure Mr Emslie and Mr Baskaran looked at the issue. Mr McMahan advised that the landlord should be dealing with the building warrant and that they only provide advice in relation to licensing matters. He continued by stating he gave credit to Frank Fairgrieve from East Lothian Council as they were now clear about what needed to be done.

Councillor McMillan stated that Mr Emslie had previously spoken about supporting Mr Baskaran as part of the Sri Lankan community and that he felt disappointed in this. Mr McMahan stated he could not speak on behalf of Mr Emslie and added that although the two-hour training is not statutory, he would make a commitment to get the training completed, if not already done, and ensure it is recorded.

In response to a question about recruitment Mr McMahan stated that a community store is much more than just somewhere to go and buy bread and milk. Mr Baskaran advised that his staff were friends that he brought up from London. He stated that they had worked in an off licence for two or three years and that the licensing laws differ between England and Scotland. He concluded by saying that they were trying to book their personal licence course for the next day (Friday 27 March).

Councillor McMillan asked Mr Baskaran about the time spent in the shop and he replied by saying he did not have regular hours, weekdays only from 10 or 11 am. He advised that he brought stock with him when he came to the shop and had deliveries on Wednesday and Friday. On days when he needed to help his wife Mr Baskaran stated he came to the shop in the afternoon. Mr Baskaran added that he checks products for dates as losing products means losing money.

Councillor Gilbert asked when Mr Baskaran had been in the shop this week and he replied by saying he could not remember what time he had there on Tuesday but he had brought the van to restock items in the shop. When asked about Monday and Wednesday he stated that he had not been there on Monday but had been there on Wednesday evening.

Councillor Menzies queried the rules on alcohol prices and promotions. Mr Baskaran replied by saying that Scotland has a unit price that needs to be checked. Mr McMahan added that Premier take care of this for shops and when the price list is released, the price change is done before the start of the licence period, but the promotion would

always cover more than 72 hours. Councillor Menzies advised that the reason she had asked was to see if Mr Baskaran understood the 72 hours. She noted that staff would need to check if it hadn't been done and the item was removed for 72 hours until the price change had gone through.

In response to a question from Councillor McGuire Mr McMahon advised the Premier can put on one day specials or weekend specials whereas with alcohol Premier will always make sure that there are at least 72 hours and the price change should be done before they start the licence period

Mr McMahon suggested that a schedule over the next weeks for when Mr Baskaran is at the shop could be put together to give the LSO some reassurance

The Convener referred to Councillor McMillan's comments about the community wanting the shop to succeed and Mr Emslie saying he would be with Mr Baskaran to help him through this. He added that there was a real danger that the shop would close and that they are keen to help but that there have been a number of excuses over the last year. Mr McMahon replied to say that he would speak to Mr Emslie and that it was in the interest of Mr Baskaran for the shop to be a success.

The meeting was paused to allow members to discuss the application in private.

When members returned Councillors Menzies and Gibert commented on concerns about licensing objectives, how crime and disorder would be prevented and the issues raised in the LSO report. Councillor Menzies also commented that it was a criminal offence to obstruct the LSO by providing a false name. They stated they were minded to refuse the application.

Councillors Dugdale, McMillan and McGuire advised of their real concerns, the need for improvements and to take the licensing objectives seriously. Working with the LSO and police was highlighted as was the need for staff training with records being kept. Councillor McMillan commented that he does not feel this is a successful community shop and he hopes Mr Baskaran will take the opportunity to show he is competent.

## **Decision**

For: Councillors Dugdale, McGuire, McMillan

Against: Councillors Gilbert, Menzies

The Board agreed to grant the Occasional Licence by majority.

## **4. MAJOR VARIATION Renaissance Golf Club, Cowden Hill Drive, North Berwick**

Niall Hassard, Hassard Licensing and Jerry Sarvadi, co-founder and co-owner were present. Mr Hassard provided a short introduction to the golf club and stated his firm had been engaged following a visit from the LSO. He advised that some matters needed attention including gaps in documentation, which have been updated, licencing layout plans, site plans, updating some of the activities and the licenced hours particularly in relation to the service of breakfast. Mr Hassard added that there had been visits by the police and LSO during this. He then addressed the halfway house which contains a kitchen area, w.c. and food and drink including a small amount of alcoholic drinks. The halfway house will be staffed during the summer months but during winter guests will sign for food and drink consumed. Mr Hassard described several controls for when it is not staffed including regular housekeeping, access via a

keypad with the code only given to over 18s and non-members being chaperoned by a caddy. CCTV is also in place. He commented on the code of conduct and said that items would be logged against memberships and that any discrepancies would be seen on CCTV. Mr Hassard added that membership can be withdrawn from members who do not uphold the code of conduct and that the fridge would be screened and lockable with no access after 10pm.

PC Upton, Police Scotland confirmed that they had no objections, he also stated that he did not dispute the report by the LSO but the risk was considered to be low.

The LSO summarised her report. The start time of 9am was noted and the two related conditions in the report. The LSO stated that this did not pose any issues. She then commented on the halfway house not being staffed in the evening and during the winter months. The LSO mentioned two concerns with licensing conditions, 5 - authorisation of a sale and 9a - age verification policy. She also noted the possibility of codes being passed on and that CCTV was more reactive than proactive. The LSO concluded by adding a third condition to the application - that alcohol was only to be sold by a personal licence holder or trained member of staff.

Councillor Menzies asked if the club would be happy with the third condition and Mr Hassard replied that asked for it to be waived due to the reasons and risk analysis of the police. He added that the club know they are responsible.

In response to a further question from Councillor Menzies Mr Sarvadi stated that there have been occasions where membership has been suspended. He added that they have a zero tolerance policy.

In response to a question from Councillor Dugdale Mr Hassard advised that under 18s were allowed access only with an adult and that he could not think of any under 18s that play on their own. He added that there was no provision to have the sale of alcohol from the halfway house from 9am and that they accepted the condition on the sale of alcohol from 9am at the clubhouse with a plated meal.

Councillor McMillan noted that a halfway house had been in existence previously but not included on the licence and that he understood that the access code was known locally. He queried how regularly the code would be changed. Mr Hassard stated he could not say how often the code would be changed but that staff would be on the course and concerns about members behaviour would be raised. He added that having the halfway house staffed at all times would not work for the club and that staff would be there often to replenish food and drinks. He concluded by saying that events in the winter would be staffed.

Councillor Gilbert asked the LSO if she was aware of other self-service facilities in Scotland. She responded by saying that she was not aware of any in the surrounding areas but that she could not confirm that they do not exist in Scotland.

Councillor Dugdale asked about how information is shared with international members and Mr Hassard stated that members are greeted by staff, any communication would take place at this point.

The Convener questioned that as there was no knowledge of similar places in Scotland whether this would be setting a dangerous precedent. One club in East Lothian with a halfway house was mentioned but it was stated that this was believed to be staffed.

Councillor McMillan commented that he did not feel this was a dangerous precedent and that he would be minded to grant without the addition of condition 3. All other members commented they would be in support of all three conditions.

**Decision**

For, with conditions 1 and 2: Councillor McMillan

For, with conditions 1, 2 and 3: Councillors Dugdale, Gilbert, McGuire, Menzies

The Board agreed to grant the Major Variation by majority subject to the following conditions:

- Alcohol served between 09.00 – 11.00 hrs is to accompanied by a substantial plated meal with a limit of 2 drinks per person.
- Alcohol served between 09.00 – 11.00 hrs is to served only by the glass and not the bottle.
- Alcohol only to be sold at the halfway house by a personal licence holder or trained member of staff present there.

Signed

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Councillor G McGuire  
Convener of East Lothian Licensing Board