

ARGYLL & BUTE Licensing Report 2021-2022



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Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to provide the Annual Licensing Report for 2021/22, in accordance with Section 12(A) Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005. Throughout this year Local Authorities and Police Scotland worked hard to support licensed premises in their road to recovery as Covid-19 restrictions were being lifted.

Collaboration is vital to ensure these businesses can flourish, providing much needed employment for our communities as well as a safe environments for people to socialise. Police Scotland will continue to work closely with Local Authorities, as well as other stakeholders, to ensure there is a fair and consistent approach across all 32 Local Authorities throughout Scotland to aid this recovery. Preventing alcohol fuelled violence, disorder and antisocial behaviour remains a priority for Police Scotland and I believe that working together we can reduce this through early intervention and enforcement.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our local partnerships and the good work they carry out. With their support Police Scotland and partners can continue to drive improvements in licensing. I will continue to ensure that all officers and staff recognise the importance of working together with key partners, including the Licensing Trade, in an effort to improve licensing standards nationally.

Mr Iain Livingstone QPM
Chief Constable
Police Service of Scotland

Police Scotland Licensing Overview –

The Violence Prevention and Licensing Co-ordination Unit (VPLCU) sits within Safer Communities based at Dalmarnock Police Station, Glasgow.

The VPLCU upholds the two tier structure for licensing which supports both national and local priorities through service delivery. They have overall responsibility for determining and delivering national licensing strategy and policy, by providing advice, guidance and support to divisional licensing teams as well as undertaking other specialist functions.

The Violence Prevention and Licensing Co-ordination Unit is a specialist department which consists of a small team of officers, based in Glasgow. The officers within the unit work with divisional licensing teams and partner agencies to help shape policy and strategy around the police licensing function. They provide practical and tactical advice to police licensing practitioners, operational officers, supervisors and policing commanders.

The VPLCU seek to ensure that legislation governing the sale and supply of alcohol is applied consistently across the country and all opportunities are taken to stop the

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illegal or irresponsible sale, supply or consumption of alcohol with the intention of preventing and reducing crime and disorder.

During 2021/2022, from a licensing perspective, our particular focus was on the following;

- Scrutiny of the serious incidents of violence, disorder and antisocial behaviour linked to licensed premises.
- Working closely with Licenced Premises and Scottish Government to navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic through the 4Es approach by engaging, explaining, educating and enforcing.
- Governance and ongoing development of the National ICT Licensing System, known as “Inn Keeper”, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of liquor and civic licensing administration and management. Police Scotland are currently working on upgrade to the National ICT system to ensure compliance with GDPR legislation.

Each of the 13 Local Policing Divisions have a licensing team responsible for the day to day management of licensing administration, complying with statutory requirements as well as addressing any issues that may arise within licensed premises in their local area.

Licensing Board Area

The Licensing Board area is policed by Argyll and West Dunbartonshire Division.

Chief Superintendent Lynn Ratcliff is the Local Police Commander who has the responsibility for all day-to-day policing functions.

Local Policing Priorities

Following our public consultation process, the policing priorities for Argyll and Bute as set out in our Local Policing Plan are as follows;

- Public Protection
- Serious Organised Crime
- Violent Crime
- Road Safety and Road Crime
- Acquisitive Crime

Description of Board Area

There are two Area Commanders responsible for Argyll and Bute. Chief Inspector Marlene Baillie is responsible for Mid Argyll, Kintyre, Oban, Lorne and the Islands and Chief Inspector Emma Grimason is responsible for Cowal, Bute and Helensburgh.

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Response Policing Officers for Argyll and Bute are supported by Community Investigation Units and based throughout the area. All officers are provided with specialised support from the Licensing Team, working together to create strong and positive relationships with both residential and business premises, with the aim of creating a safer environment for people to live and work in.

There are 607 Licensed Premises in Argyll and Bute of which the vast majority are in the main settlements of Oban, Helensburgh, Campbeltown, Dunoon, Lochgilphead and Rothesay. There is also licensed premises in almost every village throughout the area. The economy is mainly service based in Helensburgh and tourism throughout the rest of Argyll and Bute, a large part of this encompassing the licensing trade.

The Loch Lomond and outlying areas receives an influx of tourists including large groups of children and young persons every summer. A multi-agency operation including Argyll & Bute Council, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park and Police Scotland was carried out in these areas to target and deter anti-social behaviour and ensure that underage drinking and associated proxy purchasing was prevented and detected.

Operation of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005

The Argyll & West Dunbartonshire Divisional Licensing Team provides guidance and support to Local Policing in relation to the prevention of underage sales at licensed premises and to ensure adherence to this Act.

All crimes, incidents and inspections of licensed premises are recorded by officers on the Police "Innkeeper" system. This system provides a means for licensing staff to review such matters, supporting premises where necessary and giving positive feedback where appropriate.

The Licensing Team also collaborate with a variety of partner agencies, including Licensing Standards Officers, Ministry of Defence Police, Environmental Health Officers, Trading Standards and Border Control, to ensure that licensed premises are running safe and legitimate businesses. Working together ensures that licensing objectives are fully met in conjunction with local and national policing priorities.

The Licensing Standards Officers and Licensing Sergeant work together in order to resolve issues at the earliest possible stage. A recent example of this was working with licensed premises for the new outside areas due to Covid 19 restrictions. This involved meeting at premises to view and discuss applications as well as making suggestions to ensure all applicants were operating within the guidance set out by the Scottish Government.

Preventing the sale or supply of alcohol to children or young people

In the last year across Argyll and Bute, the unlawful sale and supply of alcohol to young people frequently resulted in anti-social behaviour.

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This resulted in several persons being reported to the Procurator Fiscal for purchasing alcohol for persons under 18 years of age. Numerous young persons had alcohol seized after being observed with alcohol in public places during targeted operations, with referrals being made to partner agencies to further support and educate young persons in respect of the dangers connected to alcohol abuse.

The agent purchase campaign planned for this period has been suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions, however, community and intelligence led Policing through engagement with young people and licensees continued, in order to reduce the number of young people accessing alcohol.

There are 5 dedicated Youth Engagement Officers in Argyll and Bute who work closely with schools and youth organisations in order to educate young people on the significant risks associated with the consumption of alcohol. First year pupils are all able to attend the Choices for Life programme which tackles a number of issues for young people including the effects of alcohol. Support is sought from the Licensing Department as and when required.

Tackling Serious and Organised Crime

Serious and Organised Crime Groups pose a risk within the Argyll and Bute area, in respect of public safety and community wellbeing. The licensed trade, particularly on sales, is viewed as an area of interest to such groups due to their primarily cash orientated business model and the ability to launder money from the proceeds of crime in such establishments.

The Argyll & West Dunbartonshire Divisional Licensing Team, in conjunction with both Divisional and National Intervention support, continue to robustly ensure checks are carried out in relation to all relevant applications. Particular attention is paid to those which may be of interest to Organised Crime Groups, in order to reduce opportunities for these groups to infiltrate legitimate businesses within the Argyll & Bute Licensing Board area.

Police Scotland also continue to work with licence holders in relation to the dangers around substance misuse that can be found within premises. Where issues are identified, these are highlighted to the licence holders and/or responsible persons, with advice and guidance provided to assist in addressing said issues. Where inadequate action is taken, premises and individual licence holders will be reported to the Licensing Board.

Proposed activity for the year ahead

During the next year Police Scotland will continue to work in all areas of licensing in line with the Divisional and National Policing Priorities to ensure that we continue in our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of the people and communities of Argyll & Bute.

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As outlined, the Divisional Licensing Team have strong working relationships with our partners and we will continue to build on these in the forthcoming year. We will continue to share information where appropriate and consult other agencies to assist in solving problems or concerns that arise involving licence holders.

Police Scotland will continue to monitor all incidents in and around licensed premises and where shortcomings are identified, will provide support and/or plans in respect of tackling these issues. Divisional Licensing Teams will use interaction, intervention and support prior to requesting a review of a premises licence unless the matter, due to its severity, requires to come before the Licensing Board immediately.

We will continue to tackle agent purchasing of alcohol on behalf of children and young persons through intelligence led policing and community education. The hope will be that the National Proxy Purchase campaign will go ahead and information in relation to the campaign will be made available to the Board when available.

We will support the Licensed Trade in their efforts to prevent and deter violence in premises. This will continue to be carried out by tasking visits to premises where violence has been identified as an issue and by ensuring that staff are well prepared for dealing with any such incidents. We will continue to seek exclusion orders for persons convicted of committing acts of violence on licensed premises.

Conclusion

To conclude we would like to thank you for your continued support and stress the importance of this collaborative problem solving approach. This ensures that police, license holders and licensed premises staff have a better understanding of their responsibilities. We look forward to furthering this partnership over the coming year.