



*traditional arts support in the community*  
*registered charity 1042144*

24<sup>th</sup> March 2010

Shelley Mickleburgh  
Licensing Team  
Sport and Leisure Directorate  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
2-4 Cockspur Street  
London SW1Y 5DH

Dear Sirs,

**Consultation on a proposal to exempt small live music events from the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 (the Act)**

We are writing in support of the proposed exemption. TASC has been involved in creating, delivering and promoting traditional music, song and dance in the community since 1994. Almost all our work has been in small community venues, usually in rural locations.

We are convinced that not only are barriers to small-scale music-making harmful and unnecessary, but that they seriously impair the sort of activity that can have a positive and beneficial effect on social cohesion, providing a sense of achievement for the individual that should be at the heart of counteracting anti-social behaviour.

TASC is also closely involved with the Powys Arts Forum and through them with the Powys Regeneration Partnership, encouraging projects throughout the county under the Rural Development Plan for Wales. While I am not writing on behalf of either of these organisations, of which I am trustee of the first and chair of the second, they have brought me into contact with many community initiatives. From my observation and understanding of the mechanisms driving vibrant communities I am convinced of the importance of a light legislative framework for volunteer-supported activity.

As a further aside I was on the panel of the All Wales Convention at its meeting in Powys. This led me to believe that there is a significant groundswell of opinion that sees laws clearly designed for urban conditions, as this one undoubtedly was, as unacceptable to rural Welsh communities, particularly where they have had no chance to vary the provisions to suit local needs.

I am also a trustee of our local village hall.

TASC supports the proposed exemption with the proviso that 100 is too low a limit and that 200 would be more realistic, encompassing most of the significant community activity.

Our support for the exemption is based on the following reasons:

I. Cultural expression should not be regulated unless there are overmastering reasons such as civil disorder of significant proportions. In regard to that:

1.1. there appears to be no evidence that small events of the kind envisaged in the exemption are liable to cause public nuisance

1.2. there is already adequate legislation in place to deal with any potential or actual threat to public disorder.

2. The law is poorly understood by the majority of Village Halls and Community Centre volunteers. We believe the complexity of the system and poor monitoring is responsible. It is probable that the law is being ignored on a fairly regular basis because of this. Poorly understood and improperly enforced legislation brings the law itself into disrepute.

3. A massive amount of public money has been poured into the Regeneration Agenda with the aim of encouraging more active and vibrant communities, and maximising the use of community buildings. The current position for small scale events – the kind this exemption is intended to cover – is:

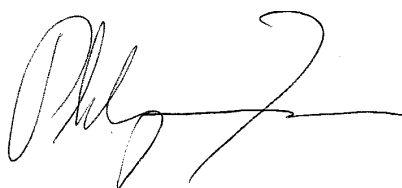
3.1. People don't understand the concept of licensable activities (as mentioned above) and if they did they would be more likely to un-volunteer than comply. The Third Sector works completely differently from the private sector, and the effect of overburdensome legislation will create a severe shortage of volunteers when we need them most.

3.2. Under Temporary Event Licenses many premises are restricted in the number of events they can host. This can impact severely on the viability of community venues, reducing the amount of community activity and thereby the concomitant social cohesion.

3.3. There is a need to further develop the Tourism Industry in rural Wales to help compensate for the increased difficulties that farming faces. Small community events are a key building-block in this, and the very real reductions that we have seen in such events since this legislation has a profoundly negative impact on such activity.

In conclusion, we repeat our first point: that restricting cultural expression without very serious reasons seem to be a denial of human rights. Where events are large enough to cope with such restrictions they will probably survive, but at the smaller and more fragile end of the spectrum – where rural, small-scale, community and minority events sit - the effect is more often to suppress them altogether. Where they do survive they may be driven underground and create a reservoir of anti-authority feeling which would be the very antithesis of the crucial need for community cohesion and citizen engagement.

Yours



Philip Freeman  
Administrator & Trustee  
Traditional Arts Support in the Community (TASC)  
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