

LOCAL LICENSING FORUM

ABERDEEN, 4 November 2025. Minute of Meeting of the LOCAL LICENSING FORUM. Present:- William Rae, Vice-Chairperson; Finlay Cran, Jonathan Dorrat, Scott Forrest, Mariah Ichakpa, JP McGivney, Sandy Munro, Pelumi Otitoju, John Philip, Steve Stewart, Pete Turner, John Webster, Lindsay Webster and James Welsh.

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1. The Vice-Chairperson opened the Local Licensing Forum meeting by welcoming all attendees, including Karen Scaife and Christina Schmid from the University of Aberdeen.

The Clerk announced that apologies for absence had been received from Danuta Dobrzanska, Steve McConnachie, and Elaine Mottram.

The Forum resolved:-

to note the apologies.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 2 SEPTEMBER 2025 (TO FOLLOW)

2. The Forum was informed that the minutes from the previous meeting held on 2nd September 2025 were currently unavailable due to technical issues. These minutes would be circulated to all members in due course and approved at the next meeting.

The Forum resolved:-

to note that the previous minute would be circulated at the next meeting, scheduled for 10 February 2026.

PRESENTATION ON ASK FOR ANGELA AND THE SAFE TAXI SCHEME (KAREN SCAIFE)

3. The Forum received valuable insights from Karen Scaife and Christina Schmid regarding the "Ask Angela" initiative and the Safe Taxi Scheme, focusing on enhancing student night-time safety. Their primary objectives included:-

- **Active Communication:** Engaging with students from the moment they enrol through a dedicated new student website and various Facebook groups for regular updates.
- **Confidence and Information:** Ensuring students feel confident and informed when going out.
- **Access to Support:** Making sure students know they could access necessary support. The Safe Zone app was specifically for students and staff, and whilst engagement had been a challenge, more students were recognising its value.
- **Third-Party Reporting:** Facilitating reporting incidents to the police on behalf of students.

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- **Collaboration for Safety:** Partnering with Robert Gordon University (RGU) and NESCOL to establish protocols for prevention, intervention, and postvention related to suicide.
- **Student Representation:** Ensuring student representation on forums and working groups to facilitate effective feedback to the university and Students' Union.

During the discussion, concerns were raised about factors that might deter students from visiting licensed premises, particularly regarding safety. Key issues highlighted included:-

- **Transportation Challenges:** Students, especially those living in areas like Hillhead, faced difficulties getting to and from venues, particularly on nights when public transport was limited, such as Wednesdays when night buses do not operate. This lack of accessible transportation discouraged students from going out.
- **Risk of Spiking:** There was a need for more preventive measures to address the risk of spiking. Additionally, promoting safe, non-alcoholic experiences in licensed venues could encourage broader participation in social activities.
- **Effectiveness of Initiatives:** Reports indicated that initiatives like "Ask for Angela" had not always been effective, highlighting the need to resume confidence in students regarding safety measures in the city. Consistent messaging across venues was crucial, despite the challenges bars may face.
- **Taxi Accessibility:** Securing taxis remained a persistent issue, contributing to safety concerns for students who may be required to walk long distances home alone. This transportation challenge significantly impacted students' feelings of safety and their willingness to engage in nightlife.
- **Night Bus Awareness:** There was a lack of awareness among students about the availability of night buses. Increased promotion of these services could help students feel more secure about their transportation options. Currently, night buses operate mainly on weekends, but there was hope for expansion, especially since many students go out on Wednesdays.
- **Safety on Weekdays:** Concerns were raised about safety on Wednesday nights, particularly regarding gender-based violence and sexual harassment. The safety provisions typically available on weekends may not be in place during the week, raising questions about how to ensure student safety during these busy nights.
- **The Safe Zone Apps Functionality:** Clarification was provided to the Forum that the app operated globally; if a student activated the button anywhere, including abroad, it connected them with local emergency services. For example, if a student was in France and pressed the button, it linked them to the French police. Within the city, even if a student was outside the designated Safe Zone, the app would still connect them directly to emergency services, ensuring immediate access to help regardless of location.

The Forum resolved:-

to note the objectives and concerns regarding the "Ask Angela" initiative and the Safe Taxi Scheme.

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ELEPHANT STUDY UPDATE

4. The Vice-Chairperson informed the Forum that Elaine Mottram had been in contact with Professor Niamh Fitzgerald regarding the ELEPHANT Study. Professor Fitzgerald provided a brief update on the progress of various reports expected in the near future.

Whilst some members may be aware of the planned changes to licensing in England and Wales, which do not directly affect Scotland, the findings of the ELEPHANT Study would be relevant to these changes. Consequently, there may be some findings published soon. Several papers were currently in development, and Professor Fitzgerald assured Ms Mottram that the Forum would be notified whenever new information became available.

Professor Fitzgerald also indicated that there would be outcomes specifically relevant to Aberdeen and the work of the Aberdeen Licensing Board. She expressed her willingness to attend a Licensing Board meeting in person and participate in a wider stakeholder event in the spring of 2026 to discuss the study's findings.

Although Professor Fitzgerald expressed disappointment at not being able to provide a more definitive response, Ms Mottram conveyed that the update had been greatly appreciated.

The Forum resolved:-

- (i) to note the update regarding the ELEPHANT Study; and
- (ii) to recommend that the Licensing Board and/or Local Licensing Forum invite Professor Niamh Fitzgerald to a meeting in early 2026 to present the findings of the ELEPHANT Study.

NEW MEMBERS ROLE

5. The Vice-Chairperson announced that two new members were looking to join the Forum: Jonathan Dorrat, Vice-President for Communities at the Aberdeen University Students Union, representing the Young People of Aberdeen, and James Welsh, Hospitality Manager at the Aberdeen Arts Centre.

James Welsh introduced himself to the Forum, sharing that he had been the Hospitality Manager at the Aberdeen Arts Centre and had approximately sixteen years of experience in the industry. His background included working on large-scale events and conferences, as well as in restaurants, bars, and theatres, which he believed would bring a diverse range of experience to the Forum.

The Forum resolved:-

to welcome Jonathan Dorrat and James Welsh as members of the Local Licensing Forum, with immediate effect.

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DISCUSSION ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND ALCOHOL

6. The Forum were informed that this item would be deferred to the next meeting.

The Partnership resolved:-

to note that this item would be deferred to the next meeting, scheduled for 10 February 2026.

NOMINATIONS FOR CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON ROLES

7. The Vice-Chairperson informed the Forum that Elaine Mottram would be stepping down as Chairperson at the next Local Licensing Forum Annual General Meeting in February 2026. He requested that all members obtain permission from the individuals they wish to nominate, before submitting their nominations to the Clerk by the deadline of 30 January 2026.

The Forum resolved:-

- (i) to seek permission from any nominated members for the role of Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson prior to submitting their nominations; and
- (ii) to submit the nominations to the Clerk by 30 January 2026 via e-mail at lmasson@aberdeencity.gov.uk

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 10 FEBRUARY 2026

8. The Forum were informed that the next meeting was scheduled for 10 February 2026.

The Forum resolved:-

to note the date of the next meeting.

- **WILLIAM RAE, Vice-Chairperson**