

Licensed Retail Manifesto for London

- With around a quarter of a million businesses employing just over 2.5 million people, hospitality is one of the fastest growing industries in the UK. Pubs, clubs and bars are the single most important component of this – employing over 500,000 staff with a turnover of some £24 billion per annum, contributing around £10 billion to the public sector.
- The sector needs a supportive regulatory and legislative environment if it is to survive, thrive and deliver the promise of employment opportunities and ongoing investment in and commitment to its local communities.
- The Westminster Licensees Association is the trade body dedicated to representing the interests of pub, club, bar and restaurant operators in the heart of London's entertainment capital. This is our manifesto for the trade in the run up to the forthcoming elections.

Why Licensed Retail Matters To London

- Licensed retail is certainly at the heart of London's economic and social life. London's economy is larger than that of many European countries. Hotels and catering account for 4% of London's GDP – significantly more than the average across the whole of the UK.
- The sector is the second largest private sector employer in Westminster, with an estimated 13,000 employees - 15% of total employment or just over 1 in 6 jobs. The hotel and catering sector alone comprises 21,000 companies, 71% of which will employ fewer than 10 people.
- In light of this, we believe it is important that London's politicians are aware of the needs and concerns of the West End's licensed retailers and have as a goal the creation, maintenance and development of the area as the entertainment capital of the UK.

What Matters to Licensed Retail

- This objective can be met by addressing licensed retailer's concerns about the environment within which they operate, tourism and transport.

Business Environment

- Licensing and planning policy clearly play an important role in providing the supportive framework our businesses need to thrive. Both of these issues are a matter of local, rather than London-wide policy.
- **There must be joined-up thinking to ensure consistency of approach and protect the best interests of London as a whole. We urge the Mayor to take a lead in these areas.**
- **Operators want a clean and safe environment in which to operate. We want greater enforcement of existing legislation against illegal or irresponsible operators.**
- **We want politicians to work with licensed retail businesses not against them. The debate must be open, it must be based on fact and solutions must be evidence based.**

Tourism

- Although most people acknowledge the importance of hotels and restaurants to the tourist trade, few recognize that pubs, clubs, and bars are an equally vital part of London's tourism industry. 30 million visitors come to London every year and spend £9 billion. Most of them will visit a licensed retail outlet during the course of their visit.
- Many outlets are tourist attractions in their own right, with a visit to a London pub featuring high on many overseas visitors' itineraries. But they also service tourists needs for high quality food, drink and entertainment, providing key facilities and support for other tourist attractions. Visitors who come to shop or visit the theatre will also use the complementary facilities the sector provides. A healthy and vibrant trade therefore underpins the London economy as a whole.
- **The importance of the sector to tourism needs to be at the forefront of politicians minds when they are dealing with local policies to ensure that it can continue to service the needs of London's visitors and make a positive contribution to the local economy.**
- **The sector should be celebrated and promoted as part of London's unique appeal.**

Transport

- London deserves the best transport system in the world. Instead we have an inefficient, out of date one which is severely lacking in investment and fails to meet the needs of a modern and dynamic city, and in particular those of the late night economy and its customers.
- An effective and efficient transport system helps to attract a diverse range of visitors and can play a vital role in dispersing them again at the end of the evening. Currently, the failures of the transport system and transport policy actively deter visitors and are a major contributor to late night disorder, creating flashpoints when too many people seek to use a scarce resource.
- **Later running of the tube network must be considered as a matter of urgency. At the very least, tube lines within zone 1 should run until 3am over the weekends.**
- **There must be no extension of the congestion charging area until extensive, independent research is carried out into the impact of the existing scheme on businesses within the charging zone.**
- **There must be better consultation with businesses and advance warning of any significant alteration or disruption to public transport. The closure of the Central Line – although essential and an emergency measure – highlighted the devastating impact this can have on trade within the capital.**

Conclusion

- Retailers make a major contribution to London's economy through direct and indirect taxes, business rates and investment in their local communities. They want to see a return on this. It is vital that London Government is both transparent and accountable to business community – the disenfranchised voice in the political debate.