

NEWS RELEASE

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The Licensing Act must be reviewed

The Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) today called on government ministers to announce now that there will be a review of the Licensing Act 2003 after a year of the legislation's implementation.

Local authorities are due to commence processing licensing applications under the new legislation from 7 February. With the new arrangements expected to be fully operational by November, there are disputes about the predicted effects of the new legislation, especially on binge drinking, health and anti-social behaviour; and about the implications for local authorities, policing and council taxpayers.

The local democracy think tank believes that there must be early action to remedy any problems that may become apparent as a result of the new legislation, and that a firm commitment to act on an early review of the Act, during the course of 2006, would be the most practical way of starting to address the concerns that have arisen.

Dennis Reed, LGIU Chief Executive, said: "While there was a widespread view that our licensing laws were in need of modernisation, many people in local government have been warning for a long time that the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003 could cause serious practical difficulties for many councils.

"There are particular concerns about the effect of the legislation on local authority and police resources, on councils tax payers, and about the public order and health issues that are expected to arise from a greater occurrence of binge drinking after the likely increase in late alcohol licences.

"The LGIU therefore calls on ministers to announce now that there will be a review of the Licensing Act 2003 after a year of its implementation. This will allow is a fair chance to assess whether some of the hotly disputed predictions about the effects of the Act turn out to have been correct. Such an intention on the part of the government will provide some reassurance that there will be action to resolve any problems that may have arisen."