



Kestrel Radio news interview

Recorded at Kestrel Radio

by Melanie Roberts, solicitor at Phillips specialising in licensing law

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Subject: Licensing laws

Kestrel: there has been a huge amount of noise in the press recently following the government's recent evaluation of the Licensing Act. What are the main findings?

Melanie: the review reveals a really mixed picture. Overall crime and alcohol consumption is down but, as we've all heard, alcohol related violence has increased in the early hours of the morning, with some increase in disturbances.

Kestrel: so what changes can we expect to see in Basingstoke from the government's recommendations?

Melanie: for a start there will be tougher sanctions on those breaching their licensing conditions and these include the introduction of a red and yellow card system to strip shops, pubs and clubs of their alcohol licences if they serve children or if they serve people who are drunk.

Kestrel: are there any recommendations to help reduce trouble in the street?

Melanie: yes there are – for example anyone causing a nuisance and not obeying an instruction to stop drinking or to give up drink in a designated public space will face an increased fine from £500 to £2,500. This should help reduce the number of public disturbances. Also if a licensee is caught consistently serving alcohol to a person under 18 he will face greater penalties than before.

Kestrel: so is there anything that licensees can do to help?

Melanie: yes, there are quite a few things that licensees can do to help – make sure no alcohol is taken off the premises unless you have an off-licence condition and confiscate any alcohol if you suspect that somebody may be concealing alcohol when leaving your premises; train your door staff properly and if you have a late licence extension find ways to disperse groups as quickly as possible; you could also arrange for taxis to be available so that your neighbours are not too disturbed; and finally work closely with the police and local authority, they're there to help.

Kestrel: is there anything else that licensees need to know?

Melanie: yes, if you're a licensee you should review your licences on a regular basis to make sure they comply with all the conditions placed on the licence. For example, you need to check that the correct designated premises supervisor is on the licence and that all licences are up to date – we can help with this and with variations to your licence and of course if your licence is up for review with the local authority. You may also need some help with representation if your application goes to a local hearing at the council. We can also help local people to get a temporary licence for private events. If you're not sure what to do, simply give me a call and take a look at our website, www.phillip-law.co.uk, where we have lots more information.

Kestrel: on the other side of the coin, what can neighbours do if they are disturbed by late night revellers?

Melanie: if you've been disturbed by late night revellers, you should write a letter of complaint to your local authority and send a copy to the police, then the next time the licensee applies for a late licence they will have to take into consideration the views of the local community. Licensees have to balance the needs of the community with their business objectives and so your views will be considered.