

**LICENSED TRADE CALLS FOR “REASSURANCES” OVER
LICENSING REFORM IN SCOTLAND**

Representatives of over 7,000 of Scotland’s 17,000 commercially licensed premises are calling on the Scottish Executive to give “reassurances” about the licenses of pubs, restaurants, hotels and corner shops.

The Scottish Beer and Pub Association (SBPA), the British Hospitality Association (BHA) in Scotland, and the Scottish Grocers’ Federation (SGF) have jointly written to the Scottish Executive’s Licensing Minister, George Lyon MSP. They are calling on him to guarantee that licensed premises will continue to have a drinks’ licence and that they will have their existing hours transferred over to the new licensing regime due to come into force in late 2007.

They argue the only exception should be when members of the public make specific objections to specific applications.

“The Scottish Executive should not ignore the fact that there is real concern amongst Scotland’s licensed industry about the potential impact of licensing reform,” said Patrick Browne, Chief Executive of the Scottish Beer and Pub Association:. “The fact that three trade bodies covering diverse elements of the trade, accounting for nearly half of all of Scotland’s licensed premises have come together to call for guarantees on continuity of trade should leave the Executive in no doubt that it needs to respond positively to the concerns of the licensed industry.”

John Loudon, Secretary of the BHA in Scotland, added “Uncertainty about licensing reform in Scotland could see companies divert their investment into other parts of the UK where the process of licensing reform is much clearer and where the hospitality industry has already obtained assurances from government. Given that some pubs and hotels in Scotland have been operating for decades we believe that the great majority of the 17,000 licensed premises in Scotland should be able to move to the new licensing regime without any problems or objection, and we are asking the Scottish Executive to give reassurances to them and to those who invest in our industry, that they will facilitate that.”

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And Scott Landsburgh, Chief Executive of the Scottish Grocers' Federation, said "Licensing reform is the biggest change to impact on the business sector in Scotland since the introduction of devolution in Scotland. The Scottish Executive needs to accept that licensed premises need clarity and reassurance and that simply because a piece of legislation has changed it doesn't mean that the livelihoods of people running licensed premise should be brought into question."

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Notes for Editors

1. The Scottish Beer and Pub Association was originally formed in 1906. Members are brewing and large pub companies representing the licensed trade industry in Scotland. The main aim of the Association is to contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of Scotland through employment, investment and training. Members account for 1,500 of the 5,100 licensed public houses in Scotland.
2. The British Hospitality Association (BHA) in Scotland is the national association for the hotel, restaurant and catering industry and it has been representing the hotel, restaurant and catering industry for over 90 years. The BHA represents some 3,000 establishments in Scotland, across all sections of the industry - not just group-owned properties, but also hundreds of individually owned hotels and restaurants.
3. The Scottish Grocers' Federation (SGF) represents just under 2,600 licensed convenience stores throughout the length and breadth of Scotland with an average turnover per store of £14,000 per week. A lot of these stores form the hub of the local community and in most cases their very existence depends upon the fact that they possess an off-sales liquor license.
4. A copy of the industry's letter to the Scottish Executive's Licensing Minister, George Lyon MSP, is available from the contact below.

For further information contact Patrick Browne, SBPA on:

Tel: 0131 225 4681 Mobile: 0791 509 3052 email: patrick.browne@geoghegans.co.uk