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M.I.L.A.M.
Director of Community Services**

Date: 14th January 2003

Dear Sir

National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy - Consultation

Outlined below is North Shropshire Community Safety Partnership's response to the above consultation document. The response was compiled by the Partnership's drugs working group and is based on a mixture of opinion, perceptions and facts.

Please note the response relates only to the section on 'Crime disorder and anti-social behaviour: the effects on our surroundings and community', as this seemed the most appropriate area for the Partnership to respond on.

Background Information

North Shropshire is a rural area of around 67,858 hectares (262 square miles). There are four principal market towns along with 29 parishes. The population is 57102 (2001 census) and approximately 50% of the population live within the four towns. North Shropshire is a relatively low crime area, the total crime rate per 1000 population in 2000/01 was 59.8 compared to a national average of 98 (2001 crime audit).

Responses to Question Numbers:

- 23.** Incidents of disorder (civil disputes – on licensed and private premises, disturbances in public places, drunkenness, general public nuisance, neighbour disputes, other) are concentrated within the four town towns. Last year there were 808 reported incidents in Whitchurch and Wem (17 were on licensed premises and 29 were of a direct result of drunkenness) and 543 in Market Drayton (12 were on licensed premises and 15 were a direct result of drunkenness). The police inspector for North Shropshire states that "hotspots for disorder tend to correspond with the location of public houses and the licensing hours".

The number of people arrested who are deemed to be under the influence of alcohol may provide further evidence.



- 24.** Our opinion is that alcohol is a factor in habitual re-offending. This is both by individuals for example repeating public order offences or violence against the person offences and also by people shoplifting alcohol or shoplifting other goods to fund drinking.
- 25.** This is reflected in our response to answer 23. There is a definite increase in crime and disorder over weekend evenings. This is reality not perception. Again monitoring how many people arrested are 'under the influence' could help to substantiate this.
- 26.** Transport is not necessarily seen as an issue. Many people within the four towns can walk into the centres. People will also happily travel to larger towns in the area, such as Oswestry or Shrewsbury, using private cars or taxis. The built environment is not necessarily a factor in North Shropshire. The towns, like many other market towns all over the country are small, rural and 'quaint' but disorder still occurs.
Other factors:
- rehousing offenders / people with misuse problems near each other or back into their local community without adequate support can cause problems.
 - Licensing regulations need to be enforced.
 - Changes in society and people's attitudes towards drinking.
- 27.** In urban areas there is a greater concentration of licensed premises and the proportion of premises having late night licenses also increases. The number of people is also greater. In rural area there are less people, less licensed premises and less licensed premises with late night licenses. However, this does not detract from the fact that drink induced disorder etc is a problem in rural towns as it is in large cities. It may also be that in more rural areas people are less tolerant of noise and disruption caused by 'revellers'.
- 28.** We feel that bottles are more of an issues than glass. Trends have moved more towards drinking out of bottles over recent years. Bottles create litter and they can also be easily used as a dangerous weapon. Better lighting and a highly visible police presence can help to reduce disorder issues.
- 29.** It is a good idea to share ideas and information. The ability to do this is probably inhibited by people being unaware of what other organisations are doing and possibly an unwillingness to divulge what they do know.
- 30.** There was a mixed response to this question, with some people agreeing that initiatives need to be targeted on young people, and others saying that there is no need to single them out. All people should be made aware of the effects of anti social behaviour.

- 31.** Having varied opening hours on a premises by premises basis may lead to people leaving for home at different times rather than the mass movement of people at one time. However, it is not known how many licensed premises in small rural towns will take up the opportunity of longer opening because of economic constraints, so its possible impact may not be so great.
- 32.** The law and policing approaches to drunkenness could be more effective by increasing police patrols in the places and at the times when there is anticipated public disorder. There are currently no 'no drinking zones' in North Shropshire. This measure would only be effective if it could be enforced by the police, but this is constrained by resource issues.
- 33.** Yes, people need to be aware of what anti social behaviour is and be mindful of their responsibilities whilst out on an evening (links back into question 30). However an excess of alcohol can make people nosier, less inhibited and possibly prone to doing things that in a sober state they themselves would regard as unacceptable. The ability to strike a balance between having a good time and being socially acceptable needs to be addressed.
- 34.** The high profile campaigns run through the year probably do act as a deterrent to many people and drink driving is no longer socially acceptable. However, the police do not have the resources to carry out blanket stops and the true extent of drink driving is probably unknown.
- 35.** It is correct to associate domestic violence with alcohol misuse. Many groups or organisations working with victims of domestic violence and the perpetrators can verify it is often a contributory factor. This type of organisation would be more able to comment on good practice.

Please contact me if at North Shropshire District Council (tel 01939 232771, ext 384), if you require clarification to any of our responses.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Irvin
Community Initiatives Officer