

Music to your ears

Did you know that you don't always need to apply for a licence from your local council to have live or recorded music playing in your premises? The Musicians Union, the British Beer and Pub Association along with DCMS, LACORS and the LGA have produced a leaflet for musicians and the trade setting out the various options for putting on small scale live music in licensed premises.

Further guidance has now been made available to councils about the "incidental music" exemption in the Licensing Act, i.e. where music is ancillary to the main purpose of visiting the venue such as restaurants and bistros. DCMS is looking at the legislation to see whether any clarification is needed about the licensing of facilities for making music but, along with the members of the group, sees no policy reason to require the licensing of the provision of facilities for making music, such as pianos, stages, microphones, etc when they are being used for incidental music.

Working as a group since May this year, representatives from these organisations have also produced together information for councils and the trade about how the recently introduced minor variations process can be used to allow venues to apply to add live music to their licence quickly and at low cost.

The group will continue to explore ways of promoting live music.

Gerry Sutcliffe, Licensing Minister, DCMS:

"Background music played by a live band, a singer or a solo musician can really bring a venue alive and there is an abundance of talented musicians in the UK who are keen to perform. I hope the work done in promoting the existing exemption for incidental music will lead to many more venues putting on live acts."

Danny Longstaff, Chair of the MU Executive Committee (and joint chair of the group)

"This is excellent news. At last we have some real clarity about this area of the licensing act which will be of great benefit to musicians and venues alike."

Mark du Val, Director of LACORS (and joint chair of the group)

"It has been really good working with music colleagues to better understand the concerns and perceived barriers regarding live music. We hope the leaflet will encourage businesses to consider all the possibilities of introducing live music and councils will, I am sure, work with local businesses to find the right option for them"

Brigid Simmonds OBE, Chief Executive BBPA

"Britain's pubs are where live music begins. This leaflet should give publicans a helping hand, not just when it comes to using music to boost trade, but provide a platform for Britain's musicians and bring music lovers together. It has been great to work with the music industry, as well as local and national government, who understand the vital role pubs play as a home for music."

Cllr Chris White, Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport board, said:

"Councils are keen to support their local businesses and venues, particularly during the recession. Introducing background music to a restaurant or allowing a pianist to perform in a bar adds to the atmosphere of a place, and often doesn't require a licence. Making sure

everyone knows about this common sense approach should make the process easier for everyone."

Background to the Group

At a meeting in April 2009 between DCMS Minister Gerry Sutcliffe and representatives of the Musicians' Union, UK Music, LACORS and the LGA it was agreed that a working group would be set up to promote the options for putting on small scale live music in licensed premises.

At the first meeting of the working group in May it was agreed that more venues could make use of the "incidental music" provisions in the Licensing Act 2003 i.e. where music is ancillary to the main purpose of visiting the venue such as restaurants and bistros. So the group will be collating and promoting case studies of incidental music, which will complement the Musicians' Union practical advice and guidance to putting on live music.

Moving forward the group will also be looking to maximise the benefits of DCMS' forthcoming "minor variations" process, due to be implemented in July, which will allow venues to apply to add live music to their licence quickly and at low cost.

The working group is comprised of representatives from the Musicians' Union, the British Beer & Pub Association, LACORS, the LGA, DCMS and is jointly chaired by Mark du Val, Director of LACORS and Danny Longstaff, Chair of the MU Executive Committee.

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