

Presentation on the Night Time Economy and Younger People  
By Rob Mitchener, Head of Licensing  
Community Safety Partnership Stakeholders meeting  
April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009

Question – *Why was I very concerned about what the weather would be on Thursday 24 November 2005 and over the weekend following?*

What I hope to show in my presentation is how anti-social behaviour in town centres linked to the night time economy has had an impact on residents, businesses, Council officers, Councillors and others in choices they have made; that under the Licensing Act 2003, this borough can show that ordinary people have been engaged in the process, that their political representatives have properly represented views expressed to them to influence policy formulation and how hard facts about anti-social behaviour (asb) were obtained which led to a change in licensing policy.

Through the example of asb in town centres I think we can demonstrate some success for at least one aim of the Licensing Act. We are three and half years into the licensing regime that was heralded in the press, by some politicians and various interest groups as the start of a 24 hour drinking society, with mayhem to follow on the streets. The new system put licensing in the hands of the local authority and away from the Magistrates. It has given local people an opportunity to have their say in individual applications and in formulation of policy. Decisions are taken by Councillors who are mindful of those they represent and aware of local issues.

Why is this important in respect of today's conference?

The reason is that we now have a body of empirical data about asb in Richmond and Twickenham town centres that only four years ago was only anecdotal. When formulating our first licensing policy for publication in January 2005 I presented to the Councils Regulatory Committee a draft policy which was in effect rejected by the Committee because it did not include what are known as Cumulative Impact Zones (CIZ) for the two centres with high concentrations of licensed premises, Richmond and Twickenham.

The reason was that officers did not believe there was sufficient evidence to support such a policy without serious risk of legal challenge. Formal statistical evidence from the Police and the local authority was gathered at speed and we returned to the members with the same advice that the CIZ's could not be justified on the evidence. With a legal requirement to adopt a policy by December 2004 the Council as a whole met their legal deadline, but also required that evidence be gathered to tap what they knew to exist in order that policy could be reconsidered the following June, 2005.

This policy issue had become high profile. Consultants were engaged and a two pronged research programme was developed. Alistair Turnham, now running his own social research practice called 'Make Associates' led the project against a very tight time deadline. We designed a postal questionnaire sent to 4000 randomly selected businesses and residential properties within 200 metres of the proposed

draft CIZ. The purpose of the survey was to discover what the experience and perception of town centre violence and asb was, and whether this could be limited to pubs and clubs.

At that time we were more concerned with pubs than other licensed premises selling alcohol, such as small to medium sized grocery shops and supermarkets. In the questionnaire we also explained what CIZ's were and asked if people were in favour of such a policy. Respondents in Richmond and Twickenham were 80% in favour and the majority supported the extent of the draft CIZ. The majority of respondents had encountered crime, disorder, nuisance, and or asb. Sleep disruption from noise and disturbance after closing times was also reported. Over half of the respondents were deterred from using the facilities at night in Richmond or Twickenham due to their experiences or fear of crime and disorder, nuisance or asb. This is ultimately due to the unpleasantness of the environment and the intimidation they felt due to drunken behaviour of individuals and particularly large groups. Over 80% thought the CIZ should apply beyond pubs and bars, something we incorporated in the 2008 Policy.

The second string of research was observation, covering Thursday through to Sunday. Starting at 8pm each night with a 1am finish on Sunday; 2am on Thursday and 3am Friday and Saturday. There were six observation points in Richmond and four in Twickenham. The observers noted incidents against 11 categories of asb. All observers had been trained by Alistair Turnham in using the recording tool and the interpretation of incidents to ensure consistency.

The field research gives a picture of what takes place, rather than an all seeing flawless account. Pedestrian counts were also undertaken. This is important to judge numbers of incidents against volume of users. This proved particularly useful in comparisons with the follow-up study two years later in 2007 and I hope with the 2009 survey about to begin. The importance of this issue to the Council is demonstrated by my being able to commit funds to continue this particular research at a time when all expenditure is closely scrutinised.

I won't go through all the detailed results because the reports are available on our website, but I will give a flavour of the data. In 2005 Richmond had 498 incidents recorded while Twickenham had 429, remember this is four evening snap shots in April in good weather, but not the peak of summertime popularity. Pedestrian counts were 11422 for Richmond and 5221 for Twickenham. The ratio of incidents to pedestrians was higher in Twickenham. Rowdiness accounted for over half the observed incidents. Rowdiness was defined as shouting, singing, hollering etc.

Perhaps not surprising to those of us who know the Borough the area to the North and South of Richmond Railway station had the most observations. This is also the hot spot for much Police crime data. For Twickenham it was by the main road junction at the top of Water Lane. Sunday was confirmed as the quietest of the four nights. On Fridays Richmond and Twickenham had their highest level of incidents between 10pm and 11.30pm there was then a rapid fall off, but incidents rose again during the 12.45 – 1am period. Saturday was not as incident prone as Friday, with smaller peaks between 10.30-11pm and 12.45 and 1.15am, particularly in Twickenham. In April 2005 the old licensing laws applied and most pubs stopped serving at 11pm. There were some later hours for public entertainment licensed premises for music and dance. The later peak of incidents are possibly limited to such premises.

In the summary to his report Alistair Turnham writes: 'Richmond experiences most environmental grime type issues such as vomiting and public urination as well as

rowdiness, while Twickenham experiences more aggressive behaviour such as fighting as well as more lewdness'. What this robust study did was provide the evidence that confirmed the information that residents had passed on to Councillors and with some additional police data we were with greater confidence able to include two CIZ's in the revised licensing policy adopted by the Council in June 2005.

In April 2007 the observational exercise was repeated. One additional point of observation was added at Richmond Green. Twickenham was much less busy than in 2005 and also as a proportion of the Richmond pedestrian count which went up 10%. Between 2005 and 2007 there was a modest but notable fall in the relative number and incidents in crime, asb and nuisance observed by the study in both town centres. The incident peaks had moved back to 23.45 to midnight in both town centres. There was a petering out of incidents later in the night. There were considerably fewer incidents of rowdiness and fewer incidents of drunken town centres users, but littering had increased. There was a small but notable increase in intimidation incidents mainly of other town centre users. Fewer incidents were noted at the previous Twickenham 'hot spot' at Water Lane, this may be linked not only to the total reduction of people around, but the closure of McDonalds close by. For Richmond there was a small but notable increase of incidents at 23.45. This may be connected to later hours of premises, but cannot be proven. Both town centres show a smoother end to the evening in terms of incidents. This may indicate that the staggered hours available under the new licensing regime have had an impact.

In conclusion we now know for sure that there are very real numbers of low level asb occurring in our two major night time economy centres and that the perception of this probably keeps people away who would otherwise contribute positively to the environment. The Council's Cumulative Impact Policy has helped by making it more difficult to obtain or vary a premises license in these two town centres, thus not materially adding to the concentration of licensed premises. We can never know what might have happened without it. The new research should give us an idea of whether the positive, though small signs of reduced asb are continuing. But of course the national economic problems will also be having an effect as disposable incomes for service sector and leisure activities may be reduced, even in relatively wealthy Richmond upon Thames. The 2009 survey results will be posted on the website probably by the end of June.

Going back to my initial question on why was I very concerned about what the weather would be on the 24 November 2005 and the following weekend; the answer was;

*Thursday the 24 November was the 'second appointed day'. That was the day the new licences 'under the Licensing Act 2003' commenced. These were 'our licences', many with extended closing times. I was worried that the worst case scenario as painted in the press might arise, with major disruption in the town centres. I was hoping for very wet, cold weather. As it happened the weather was not good. Looking back at the official weather reports they state:*

*'The 24<sup>th</sup> saw dramatic change in the weather as two cold fronts swept south across England and Wales, introducing a brisk northerly airstream of Arctic origin. There was a substantial drop in pressure from around 1038 mb on the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 992 mb by midday on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The second cold front gave widespread squally winds, with gusts exceeding 50mph in places. In the wake of the weather fronts, plenty of blustery*

*showers developed especially across Wales, East Anglia and West Country. Some of the showers turned wintry, with sleet or snow especially over hills where temporary blizzard conditions were observed. 5 to 10cm of lying snow was reported in west Wales, Devon and Cornwall on the 25<sup>th</sup>.*

The weather at least went to plan.

## **Glossary**

CIZ = Cumulative Impact Zones

ASB = Anti-Social Behaviour

## **Useful Information**

Anti-social behaviour and the Licensing Act

[http://www.richmond.gov.uk/anti-social\\_behaviour-in\\_the\\_borough](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/anti-social_behaviour-in_the_borough)

Licensing Act 2003 - licensing laws

[http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/business/business\\_and\\_street\\_trading\\_licences/licensing\\_act\\_2003.htm](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/business/business_and_street_trading_licences/licensing_act_2003.htm)