

Please find below the full article featured in today's Telegraph ref the effects of 24-hour drinking. PFEW has been actively involved in this consultation and gave evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, resulting in the call for authorities to control the number of licences issued in certain areas to ensure police are not overstretched. The committee also wants to see an end to irresponsible offers of alcohol.

Simon Reed is quoted as saying;

"Aside from the obvious detrimental effect to the individual officer, this also has a knock-on effect of stretching the resources available to other members of the public that need assistance to the absolute limit.

"All too frequently our members cannot attend to emergency calls because they are tied up with intervening in pub fights or drunken street brawls.

"At times, policing is really stretched - probably more so in the smaller towns than it is in the bigger cities.

"My knowledge of some small market towns is that, on occasions, they are the Wild West, because they really are stripped of resources."

24-hour drinking has turned Britain into 'Wild West' warn MPs

Twenty-four hours drinking has turned parts of Britain into the Wild West as the police tell how late night consumption is stretching resources to the "absolute limit", an MPs' report warns.

By Caroline Gammell

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Officers are being forced to work regular shifts until 4am, leaving a scant supply of police on duty at other times of the day.

The Police Federation of England and Wales said alcohol had become so endemic that "drinking to excess remains to be seen as laudable and to be encouraged by a significant proportion of the population".

In its report into the effects of the Licensing Act 2003, the Culture, Media and Sport Committee said it was alarmed that all day drinking had done little to curb alcohol related problems.

It said: "The Committee remains concerned that the relaxation of rules on premises' closing hours have not diminished law and order problems, but have merely moved them one or two hours later than previously."

The report called on the Government to impose restrictions on promotional drinking as Home Secretary Jacqui Smith announced a series of proposals to bring excessive consumption under control.

During its evidence gathering about the impact of the Licensing Act, the Committee heard from the Police Federation, as well as Acpo and senior police officers.

In a statement, the Federation said "afternoon" shifts for officers now run from 6pm to 4am.

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Referring to the Act, Chief Inspector Adrian Studd told the Committee: "It has quite a drastic impact on police resourcing because instead of being able to allow officers to go home at midnight or 1am before... they are on until three, four, five in the morning.

"Inevitably that has an impact, with limited resources, on the visible presence of police officers during the day."

Federation spokesman Simon Reed added: "At times, policing is really stretched - probably more so in the smaller towns than it is in the bigger cities.

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John Whittingdale, the Conservative chairman of the Committee, said evidence about the levels of disorder following the Act had been varied, but conceded that the police had raised some real concerns.

"One of the purposes of the Act was to try and stop 1,000 people all pouring out at the same time, often drunk," he said.

"There has been some evidence from some police that all are chucked out at 2am and that's putting a great strain on police resources.

"But I do not think anyone would propose going back (to 11pm closing times) again."

In its recommendations, the Committee called for authorities to control the number of licenses issued in a certain area to ensure the police were not overstretched.

"One of the things we feel is that local councils should be able to work out the number of clubs and pubs in a particular vicinity," said Mr Whittingdale.

"Another thing we are calling for is trying to control binge drinking and not allow irresponsible drinking promotions. The industry is already looking at this themselves."

He said the committee wanted an end to irresponsible offers of alcohol.

"There were one or two examples we were given where in certain establishments, girls could drink as much as they liked within a certain period which quite patently was providing an incentive to drink as much as possible," he said

Labour MP Rosemary McKenna added: "Ten to 15 years ago, people would smoke as much as they liked and now it is frowned upon. We have to do something to change the culture of drinking."