

Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Ceartais
Cabinet Secretary for Justice
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Mr Bob Doris MSP
Convener
Local Government and Communities Committee
T3.60
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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Ar faidhle/Our ref: POL/23728

6sm November 2017

Dear Bob,

Thank you for your letter of 19 October, that you have sent following concerns raised by Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS) about alcohol licensing, and the relevant guidance.

I am supportive of the work that AFS undertakes to provide helpful advice and guidance to those involved in alcohol licensing.

The Scottish Government is aware that the statutory guidance for the alcohol licensing regime does need to be updated, and we are currently working with stakeholders, including AFS, on this.

Updating the Guidance is a substantial undertaking, and the Scottish Government is committed to doing so as soon as reasonably practicable. However, you will appreciate that at this time I can give no firm deadline for that work being completed.

The role of Licensing Forums is set out in the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005. As the existing guidance does already cover Licensing Forums it is likely that this text will be updated. However as the underlying legislation has not changed, any such revision will not fundamentally amend the operation of Licensing Forums.

I note that AFS are concerned about transparency, accountability and public participation in the licencing system. You may be interested to know that through the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 the Scottish Government has already responded to calls from AFS for Licensing Boards to provide greater clarity about how they carry out their business.

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There is now a requirement in place for Licensing Boards to produce an annual income and expenditure report on their alcohol licensing activities and we are currently working on bringing into force a further report on Licensing Board functions. These will increase the transparency of Licensing Boards.

I trust that this information is of interest.

Bert weirles
Michael Matheson

MICHAEL MATHESON