ALMR Press Notice

Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers

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SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT:
PUB GROUPS ENDORSE MPs CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT's RELICENSING

Errors made by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport "severely let down" licensees during the introduction of the Licensing Act last year. That is the damning conclusion of a report by the ODPM Select Committee published today (Friday March 17).

The report, 'Re-licensing', concludes that the Government failed to manage the introduction of the new Act effectively through a lack of preparation and inadequate support. It calls for lessons to be learnt and recommends a series of specific actions to address identified concerns.

The Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers gave evidence to the Committee as part of the inquiry and today welcomed publication of the report. Chief Executive, Nick Bish, said:

"We whole-heartedly support and endorse the Committee's analysis of the problems faced by all sides in managing the introduction of the new Licensing Act. This was a complex piece of legislation and the Government let us all down by failing to provide clear, timely advice. We warned DCMS at the time that problems would emerge, but I'm afraid our advice was ignored."

Commenting on the report's recommendations, Mr Bish continued:

"Much of the report deals with the way in which legislation was introduced; it clearly describes the history of the problems about which we are only too aware, and while it is important that the Government learn the lessons from this, it is scant consolation for licensees living with the outcomes. The crucial thing now is to concentrate on the solutions to problems which will continue to emerge in the future. What the industry needs is action not more recrimination."

The *ALMR* particularly applauds the suggestion that there be a slip rule to correct minor errors in applications and endorses the removal of some of the more onerous and prescriptive application requirements which add significant cost to the licensing costs. We also fully support recommendations for greater consistency in local implementation and administration and the introduction of mediation as a formal part of dispute resolution .

Nick Bish concluded:

"The Government set up 2 reviews on the Act before it had even taken effect, suggesting that they themselves acknowledge they got things wrong. We very much hope that these reviews take heed of this report and reflect the positive recommendations it contains."

Notes to editors:

1. The *ALMR* represents 92 companies– predominantly small, independent groupings – between them operating in excess of 30,000 outlets, equating to around half the UK pub estate……..
2. The ODPM Select Committee Report will be available on the Committee website on the day of publication
3. For more information please contact - Nick Bish 020 8579 2080 or 07831 778993
   - Kate Nicholls 07958 796238

The Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers
9B Walpole Court, Ealing Studios, London, W5 5ED
Tel: **020 8579 2080** Fax: 020 8579 7579 email: info@almr.org.uk