

**BEFORE THE SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUCIL SEXUAL ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING  
COMMITTEE**

**IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION FOR A RENEWAL OF THE SEXUAL ENTERTAINMENT  
LICENCE**

**Playhouse Gentleman's Club, London Road, Southampton SO31 4RF ('PGC')**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF GLENN NICIE**

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**INTRODUCTION**

1. My Name is Glenn Nicie and, along with my Colleague Chris Knight, we are directors of London Road Leisure Limited, the operators of PGC.
2. I am making this statement in support of the renewal of the Sexual Entertainment Venue Licence ('SEVL') in relation to PGC.

**ABOUT THE APPLICANTS**

3. Chris and I have worked in the licensed entertainment industry for the last 55 years collectively. In 1995 I became the Operations Manager for the chain of clubs called FYEO until 2001 when I became a shareholder. In 2003 I was involved in a management buyout and continued as Operations Director with an equity holding in the FYEO chain of Sexual Entertainment clubs, which comprised of 9 clubs.
4. In 2012 Chris and I worked on the purchase of the Southern end of the FYEO brand. We still hold a consulting role in the remaining FYEO clubs.
5. I am very well respected within the industry and has been actively involved with the Government as well as local councils in an advisory capacity in major decision making with regards to legislation being passed by Parliament which has led to the current SEVI legislative regime.
6. All of the business that Chris and I run are currently licensed under the Licensing Act 2003 for sales of alcohol and provision of regulated entertainment/ late night refreshment. All also have a specific Sexual Entertainment Licence for use as an Adult Entertainment/Table Dancing/Lap Dancing/Cabaret style entertainment venue, which to be granted requires a proven track record

and a proven ability to run these businesses without issue- the equivalent of a 'fit and proper' test for the operators.

7. Chris has advised the Home Office, has given evidence in front of the DCMS Select Committee with regards to the passing of the current legislation within the industry. He has also appeared on BBC news, ITV morning chat shows, BBC North, Sky News, Channel 4 News and numerous radio shows to name but a few to speak about the industry and certain misconceptions that people may have. He also gave evidence at the Scottish Government steering group for their new legislation which is now implemented.
8. Over the past 10 years Chris and I have helped various councils write their SEVL policies, including: Islington (London), Newcastle upon Tyne, Bournemouth and Cardiff.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

9. I have carefully considered the issues arising in the objections made against the renewal and would make the following observations:
  - a. Planning is not at issue here. This is a renewal of the SEV licence granted by the Committee in 2019, as amended at a hearing in March 2022. There has been no material change to the use of the premises since this grant.
  - b. We currently close at 2am due to our current planning restriction. We have observed on occasions young people milling around the front of our premises between the hours of 2am and 5am and are discarding all sorts of litter. Regularly, we have to sweep the front street area but that is generally 6pm/7pm when staff come to work. Being able to trade until 5am will mean better supervision which will put off some of the anti-social behaviour residents are currently experiencing.
  - c. At first, we were allowing our staff to leave via the front of the premises after closing down and I think that looked like customers leaving later than permitted. Since the licensing office pointed this out to us, staff now leave via the rear of the premises.
  - d. We maintain a close working relationship with the police. It is fair to note that the police have not objected to this renewal. The police, of course, are best placed to inform the Committee should there be concerns related to the premises. They are consulted as part of this process so have actively chosen not to object.
  - e. Not so long ago, this premises traded as a night club for over ten years, with a capacity of 400. Now, as PGC, the current capacity is reduced to a maximum of 250. Given the nature of the business and our experience at other clubs, it is very unlikely that even at the busiest times we would have more than 100 customers in the premises. Currently at our busiest, we may see 40 in PGC at any one time.
  - f. I would estimate that somewhere in the region of 5000 people are in the area every Friday and Saturday, based on the number of bars and nightclubs and student residents. There are a large number of premises within walking distance of PGC,

including late night bars and nightclubs. These serve a wide variety of customers from students to stag/ hen parties, business people on a night out after work and general people visiting the busy late-night economy, bars, restaurants, casinos, theatre, leisure centres, to people looking to go out and dance, drink and eat and generally just have a nice time. A number of these premises trade past 2am and up to 5am. The majority have significantly larger capacities than PGC with a lot higher capacity. For example, we understand that Trilogy night club has over 1500 customers through their doors every Friday and Saturday nights.

- g. The hours between 3 and 4am are still very busy as bars and night clubs that operate past these hours are kicking out, all the way to 5am. I would say that there must be in the region of 3000 to 5000 people on the streets in our area up until 4 am on busy weekends and somewhere close to about 1000 around in the following hour up to 5am.
- h. By Contrast, patrons attending PGC remain seated, the music is kept at a moderate volume and there is a significant number of staff and door staff on hand to manage behaviour. For these reasons, customers tend to leave in smaller groups, more quietly and often directly into taxis. Most of our customers have an app on their phone now (eg Uber) that allows them to call a cab and it tells them when the cab is at the front door and even gives the registration number. When notified that the cab is nearly there, they leave their table and go directly to their cab. The reality is that this is a bit like how a restaurant would operate, with tables dispersing at different times, rather than en-masse at closing.
- i. Alcohol is very much ancillary in PGC. We do not tolerate intoxication and as I have said previously, customer behaviour is closely managed.
- j. There is, unfortunately, a commonly held misconception that clubs like ours are substantially the same as nightclubs. This is not the case. Put simply, not all premises open late into the night are the same or cause the same kind of issues and certainly sexual entertainment premises should not be confused with a typical nightclub or late night bar. This was recognised by the licensing committee when it extended the trading hours from 2am to 5am, to allow for trading under the SEVL and only for trading as an SEV.
- k. We expect a high standard of behaviour from customers. When they arrive, they are expected to act responsibly and are reminded of the rules of the house. Likewise, when they leave, if they are not jumping into a cab, we always ask our customers to leave quietly and respect our neighbours.
- l. We do not have a drug issue at the premises. The high level of management and supervision means we can very easily spot anyone who might be taking drugs and deal with them appropriately. In truth, it is rare that we need to take any action as most people who might have been taking drugs are dealt with at the door and not allowed in. The same with intoxication. We have witnessed young people taking these substances out on the street, including so called 'legal' highs. However, if we see it, we

will not let them into our premises- albeit the vast majority are nothing to do with PGC, this is why the police have not objected and have actually complimented us on our operation in Southampton.

- m. We have a smoking area out the front of our premises, as permitted by our premises licence. However, any reference to 'half naked ladies' being observed in the area are not our staff or dancers; they are customers. Over the past 5 to 6 years we have seen more female customers looking to come to a safe, clean, quieter, kinder atmosphere, rather than a busy overcrowded, noisy, and for some, perceptibly unsafe night club. We also have a number of couples coming to our premises now as well for the same reasons. Like with male customers, our female customers are required to dress smartly and appropriately.
- n. We opened the premises in March 2022 following the grant of the variation to the SEVL and therefore any allegations relating to before this time are not fairly attributable to PGC. As a point of order, we do not cause the sort of crime and disorder alleged. On occasion in the past, when a night club is suffering from crime and disorder issues, I have been contacted by local authorities and/ or the owners of the premises to see if I want to operate the venue as a sexual entertainment venue. The reason being that the nature of the venue, the stricter management, the lower capacity all contribute to removing the crime and disorder that the premises was struggling with.
- o. The rear of our club leads onto an alleyway surrounded by high buildings. PGC is mainly situated in the basement. I can say with certainty that there is no noise outbreak from our premises to the rear and certainly not any noise that could be considered a public nuisance.
- p. There is residential accommodation in the area, just as there are a lot of bars and clubs that trade to 4am and 5am in the morning. There has been no evidence provided to suggest that noise from PGC adds to or exacerbates noise issues that residents might suffer from time to time from other sources. There is a large amount of student accommodation in the area which contributes significantly to noise in and around the area later at night
- q. In the past year we have personally seen the high street start to regenerate in terms of new hospitality businesses arriving. We have a new Pizza restaurant one side and a new cafe the other. There has also been a significant investment into the Wetherspoons pub nearby and a new bar has opened called Whisky Blue. To say the high street is turning residential is not a fair reflection of what is happening. Yes, there is residential property nearby, but there is also a lively bar and club culture that sits alongside the existing retail units. What is important is whether any of the issues complained of are attributable to PGC, or relevant to this renewal. With respect, the answer to both these questions is no.

## **SUMMARY**

10. PGC has been in this location for over 14 years. It previously traded as a 400 capacity night club to 2am for over 10 years. As the committee understood in 2019, a club trading under an SEVL, with lower capacity, no dancing (apart from the professional dancers), no loud music, alcohol as an ancillary activity and significant supervision both inside and out, the risks of crime, disturbance or nuisance coming from PGC is greatly diminished. We are confident that PGC is not the cause of the ongoing issues complained about by the objections to this renewal.

11. We therefore ask that the SEVL is renewed on the same terms as the current licence.

The Contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

SIGNED....

DATED *26/sep* .....2022