“As London’s tube network prepares to become a 24 hour service, this is a timely report that highlights the significant economic and cultural value of our night time industry, as well as the current challenges it faces. Whilst we all want to enjoy our evenings in safety, it’s important to strike the right balance when it comes to regulation. London is the greatest city in the world partly because of its open spirit and the many places that people can congregate. We look forward to working with the NTIA on ensuring their voice is heard in discussions about the city.”

Munira Mirza, Deputy Mayor for Education and Culture, Greater London Authority

“The night time is where so much excitement and inspiration occurs. It is difficult to imagine the post-war period with all the fashion, design, art and music that has shaped Britain and influenced the world without the night time industry. This is why I support The Night Time Industry Association and believe we should champion, not curb one of our most dynamic sectors”

Matt Clark, Partner, Mother Group
Foreword

It is a great privilege to introduce this new report, "Forward into the Night", from Professor Frank Furedi, the eminent sociologist and commentator. His work will be invaluable for the Night Time Industries Association and our members as we seek to engage with decision makers and those of you in policy, with a view to understanding the enormous cultural and economic contribution that the night time industries provide in the UK.

Having co-founded The Old Truman Brewery creative business and cultural centre in Brick Lane I was lucky enough to participate first hand in the transformation of an entire area, from a run down unvisited region to an international destination – all of which was anchored around the night time economy and creative businesses that are so intertwined with one another.

With 34.8 million visitors in 2014 contributing to the £66 billion overall spend across the country, the night time industries contribute a significant amount to our GDP. Lighting up our high streets, employing eight per cent of our workforce – a large proportion of who are young – paying business rates and as active stakeholders in our communities locally, our industry simply makes Britain better.

The great news also is that while we have more interesting, professional, safe and robust entrepreneurial night time businesses and sectors that benefit immediately from it, we have seen crime significantly decrease over the past ten years, as well as drinking levels generally. With music playing such an important role in generating investment and revenue for cities – as well as intertwining with the worlds of fashion, art, design, technology, architecture and advertising – we are confident that we can continue to innovate and improve our cities up and down the country.

That is why we have supporters of such variety, from Sir Harvey Goldsmith to Matt Clark, head of Mother Agency in advertising, from the world of arts to business and urban planning and tourism. It is also why The NTIA is working alongside Transport for London to promote the forthcoming 24 Hour Night Tube which will be of enormous benefit to London and beyond.

With all this incredibly good news, there is a word of caution to be noted. Recently, as Furedi highlights in this report, we have seen a more restrictive climate where the industry is held accountable for individual behaviour and regulated on the basis of often problematic statistics with crime, such as mobile phone losses. The NTIA is determined to work with authorities and government to ensure that we can continue to make an important contribution and transform our country even further in positive ways, while not debilitating businesses. One only has to look at Detroit to see what happens when activity stops on the high streets and in the city.

I very much look forward to working with some of you in the future and would encourage you all to use us at The NTIA – yes use us, to enhance the very symbolic capital that Professor Furedi describes in his work alongside the enormous economic contribution, Joseph Nye made "Soft Power" a key marker for success – and it is here, both within our borders and internationally that the night time industries can be of so much value to us all.

Alan D Miller,
Chairman - The NTIA
@wearethentia
www.ntia.co.uk

NTIA | NIGHT TIME INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION
1. Executive Summary

Value to the UK

The UK is shifting socially and culturally towards the night time.
For an increasing proportion of the population social activities either begin with or extend
into the night. This trend is not isolated to the UK and around the world global cities are
adapting in order to keep pace with the demand. The UK and London in particular, needs to remain
competitive in this field if it is to maintain its status as a global capital of culture and commerce.

The night time economy contributes to the financial prosperity of the UK.
The night time economy (NTE) supports the wider economy, job creation, regeneration,
the UK's international image and culture. The industry is one of the more resilient and continued
to grow throughout the recession, creating jobs and generating revenue:
- Worth a total of £66 billion
- Accounting for nearly 6 per cent of the UK’s GDP
- Employing 1.3 million people.

The UK is recognised internationally for its diverse night time offering.
Of the 1.5 billion day visits to the UK in 2014, approximately 300 million had a meal or night
out as their focus. According to TripAdvisor rankings two of the top three destinations for night-life
in Europe are in the UK and in 2014 inbound tourism to the UK saw 34.8 million visitors
spend £21.7 billion.

The success of the night time economy isn't just limited to London.
The combination of a thriving cultural leisure sector with a dynamic NTE has played an
important role in enhancing the international appeal of urban centres outside of London.
Both Manchester and Liverpool have benefitted from international tourism while Newcastle has
reinvented itself as an internationally renowned party town. In 2012 Newcastle attracted
1.9 million visitors and the tourist trend contributed £404 million to the economy.

The night time economy offers a unique opportunity to local authorities
both in the transformation of urban space and in assisting the project of economic and cultural regeneration.
The Department for Communities and Local Government has estimated that the UK evening and
night time economy accounts for between 10 and 16 per cent of a town centre’s employment.

The revitalisation of British high streets requires creative regeneration projects and should use the
attraction provided by the NTE:

Regulation and a culture of fear is threatening the potential of the NTE.

There remains an entrenched cultural and political fear of the night, based around
premises that crime, anti-social behaviour and alcohol related violence come hand in hand with
the night time economy. Venues are however safer than ever and crime rates are falling – recorded crime is currently 38 per cent lower than in the year 2002 – 2003. Of all the
incidents including those not resulting in injury, fewer than one in five occurs in pubs.
In Manchester the level of violent crime has decreased by 8.2 per cent since 2011/2012, despite the continuous growth of its night time economy.

Overzealous regulation is continuing to stifle the industry.
Taxes on alcohol are on the rise impacting both operators and the consumer – beer duty has
increased by 42 per cent in the past five years, while beer duty revenues have increased by a mere
12 per cent. In the UK we pay 40 per cent of all beer duty in the EU while consuming just 12 per cent of
the beer. One in two customers now believes drinking in a pub is too expensive.

Venues are increasingly subjected to regulation to reduce opening hours:
Harming both the large and small operators, while increased security measures make the
barriers to entry all the more challenging for smaller, unique venues. Large parts of England and
Wales have been designated as areas where no new alcohol licenses will be granted unless the
license holder can provide assurances that their trade will have no adverse consequences.

Recommendations

1. For the night time economy to flourish in the UK the industry needs to work together to
collectively gain favour with policy makers and the police.

2. The evident social and cultural readjustment to the night time should be accounted for
through fair regulation across licensing, planning, entry procedures and crime.
The police and local authorities need to realise the value the NTE has to local communities.

3. Nationally, licensing frameworks should work with operators to better support venues
while ensuring the safe and effective operation of the industry.

4. Crime classifications need to be revisited so as to recognise that crime associated with
the night time economy is not committed by venues, but against them.
- Serious crime statistics should be changed to omit mobile phone thefts.
- Policy makers should consider individual responsibility with regards to crimes committed
under the influence of alcohol rather than the knee-jerk reaction to penalise night time
operators.

5. We should be encouraging a nationally accepted code of conduct for the industry, which
ensures best practice, and protects the individual venues that are operating to the standards
imposed and accepted by the industry.

6. The nature of the conversation around the industry needs to change – to support and
champion one of the UK’s most culturally significant industries, rather than belittle and
stifle it.

7. Regular research into the quantitative value of the NTE should be undertaken, to ensure
that policy makers and industry are made aware of the contribution to UK culture, economy
and society.
2. The UK’s Social Shift

The night-time economy (NTE) has become a fact of life, yet the dramatic shift from a daytime to a 24-hour economy is rarely discussed by policy makers and the media. This development has received far less attention than the ascendancy of Sunday shopping, for example and the subsequent rise of a seven-day consumer economy. Yet the benefits – actual and potential – of extending economic, cultural and social activities into the late night have far greater implications than Sunday shopping.

Social and cultural life organised around the nine-to-five working day is gradually giving way to lifestyles and employment practices that are radically different to the conventions of the past. Over seven million employees – a quarter of the British workforce – work night shifts, around 10 per cent of UK employees – over two and a half million people - work at night on a regular basis.

The NTE involves the provision of goods, services and experiences associated with the conduct of nightlife. Leisure experiences such as entertainment, music, clubbing, and the consumption of food and alcohol are the principal activities associated with the NTE. An efficient infrastructure, especially for transport and logistics, is essential for the NTE to flourish.

The British NTE has been remarkably successful in mitigating some of the destructive consequences of economic recession. According to the Government’s figures the continuing growth of the 24-hour economy means that there were over half a million more people working nights in 2012 than in 2002. The Treasury estimated its worth at £6.6 billion.

The impact of the NTE cannot be captured through economic statistics alone. It also generates symbolic capital. Symbolic capital refers to the resources available to individuals, groups, institutions and business on the basis of their status and prestige. The symbolic capital generated by the NTE makes a significant contribution to the image of the United Kingdom. It provides something that is converted into an asset for other products, such as the creative and tourism industries, attracting inward investment and assisting urban regeneration.

2.1 The Night Time Industry’s Economic Contribution

The tremendous economic and social benefits of a 24-hour London are now recognised by policy makers involved in the running of the city, both Her Majesty's Treasury and the Mayor of London have acknowledged the importance of improving the infrastructural support for the NTE.

City Hall and Transport for London have undertaken to make life easier and cheaper for Londoners travelling late at night and in the early morning. London Underground will run 24-hour weekend Underground services from September 2015. Transport for London predicted that this move would support almost 2000 permanent jobs and boost the economy by £360 million. It was also announced that the London over ground will run 24 hours from 2017 and all-night services will be extended to the DLR by 2021.

Investment in 24-hour transportation makes sense, since there is already a demand for it. The scale of the demand is demonstrated by the fact that the number of late-night London Underground journeys has risen at twice the rate of daytime trips since 2000.

London is by no means the only city to integrate the NTE into its future plans for economic development. Cities such as Manchester and Liverpool have placed great emphasis on the promotion of a robust NTE into their future plans. Liverpool has adopted an ambitious strategy for leveraging its symbolic capital, seeking to provide a world-class visitor experience. The development of the Liverpool ONE scheme sought to provide a state-of-the-art environment for retailing along with the pursuit of cultural and leisure activities. A report by its developers noted that the ‘planners insisted on Liverpool ONE being open 24 hours a day’.

Liverpool has emerged as one of the few city centre destinations that operates in the evenings, and this retailing experience has seamlessly merged with its thriving NTE.

Manchester has committed itself to becoming a model 24-hour city, and has the fastest growing NTE outside London. A report written for the City Council has recognised that the NTE ‘contributes hugely to Manchester’s economic growth’, estimating that 150,000 people visit Manchester city centre each weekend to ‘enjoy the nightlife’. Between 2007 and 2014, the number of licensed premises in the city centre increased from 609 to 827. According to news reports, every weekend brings the launch of at least one new night time drinking venue.

In the economic life of the UK overall, the NTE now plays an important role. It is estimated that the NTE:

- has an annual turnover of £6.6 billion
- represents 4.3 per cent of the economy as a whole
- accounts for nearly 6 per cent of UK GDP

According to the Department for Communities and Local Government, the UK evening and night time economy accounts for 10 per cent to 16 per cent of a town centre’s employment. Licensed premises paid around £1 billion in business rates in 2013/2014, representing four per cent of all business rates.

The NTE has proved to be a resilient sector of the British economy, weathering the destabilising consequences of the economic recession. Despite the global downturn and a challenging economic environment, the NTE managed to sustain an impressive rate of growth. For example in 2014, spending on nightlife in London's West End was up by over nine per cent. Overall in 2013, the NTE grew by three and a half per cent; generated seven per cent of new jobs (80 per cent of these for 18-24 year olds); employed eight per cent more people than before; and doubled the number of apprenticeships placed.

Many of the activities of the NTE – entertainment, music, clubs, pubs and bars – overlap with those of the cultural economy and creative industries. A recent report by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) drew attention to the symbiotic relationship between the NTE and the creative industries. Using the example of London’s Brick Lane, NESTA noted that that the blending of creative industries, tourism, food, and night time and leisure economies transformed this area into an ‘international brand’. It noted that ‘cultural and creative firms share “symbolic capital” with the associated bars and independent shops located in a place like Brick Lane’.

“THE UK EVENING AND NIGHT TIME ECONOMY ACCOUNTS FOR 10 PER CENT TO 16 PER CENT OF A TOWN CENTRE’S EMPLOYMENT”
2.2 The Night Time Economy And British Society

While a distinction can be made between the daytime and night time economies, the two are interconnected. People carry on their daytime activities into the evening and frequently continue to look for leisure experiences well into the night. A night out in a cinema or restaurant is often followed by going for a drink in a bar.

Daytime businesses are aware of the allure of the night to potential customers and are increasingly seeking to take advantage of the NTE by staying open later. The phenomenon of night markets and pop-up shops throughout the country indicates that night time leisure activity has had a spin-off effect on other businesses.

Historically night time leisure activities were associated with a relatively small number of venues and areas, such as London’s West End. Today the NTE plays a prominent role in the economic and social life of every major city and many towns, accounting for nearly a third of the turnover of town and city centres. Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff, Belfast, Glasgow, Nottingham and Newcastle are just some of the beneficiaries of the economic contribution of the NTE. Towns from Brighton, Bournemouth and Newquay to Romford and Lincoln have all profited from input by the NTE.

The past three decades has seen a qualitative transformation of urban economies, away from industry and towards service-oriented, leisure, and cultural pursuits. The 21st century NTE plays an essential role in the reinvention of cities as spaces where every day economic activity meshes with cultural and social experiences.

The growth of the NTE is interconnected with the growing global significance of the symbolic economy, which blends economic investment with cultural capital. This has encouraged the cultivation of a distinct urban experience. The NTE plays a key role in attracting investment and consumers to participate in the experience economy. Global competition has forced cities to adopt strategies for developing attractive sites for the pursuit of leisure and entertainment. Some of the most successful international cities such as Barcelona, Berlin, New York or Sydney have enhanced their status and position because their cultural activities and experiences are perceived as vibrant and exciting. It is no coincidence that all these successful cities are also 24-hour urban environments.

London has led the way in the development of the cosmopolitan 24-hour economy. Nightlife is not simply confined to bars, clubs, and other entertainment venues; the successful example of night time industries has encouraged complementary enterprises to experiment. Hairdressers, fitness centres, grocers and other retailers are regularly frequented by late-night Londoners. Cultural venues have begun to extend their opening hours. During the final weekend of its run, the Tate Modern’s Matiss exhibition stayed open for 36 hours non-stop. The Tate Modern decided to become a museum of dance for 48 hours in May 2015, and its world-famous Turbine Hall was transformed into a nightclub. Theatres and cinemas have also sought to take advantage of the willingness of tourists and Londoners to attend late-night performances.

Powerful social trends and global economic forces continue to drive the 24-hour city, throughout the modern world. The night time economy provides a socially-inclusive forum through which different groups of society can interact and although it is frequently argued that the NTE contributes to the polarised life led by generations, it in fact has considerable potential for providing a bridge between generations. Across Europe, people in their 40s and 50s engage with the night time economy alongside younger generations.

2.3 International Impact

NESTA’s characterisation of Brick Lane as an international brand can be extended to many other sectors of the UK’s NTE. The NTE has made a significant contribution to the competitive position and prestige enjoyed by the UK in the global economy. It has helped to enhance the attractiveness of the UK as a cosmopolitan hub for business, entrepreneurship, and cultural and leisure activities. Historically, London has been the main beneficiary of international investment and tourism. However during the past three decades smaller towns and cities, often enjoying a reputation for vibrant night-life, have shared the benefits of international interest.

2014 was a record year for inbound tourism in the UK, with 34.8 million visitors spending £21.7 billion. In the same year London was awarded the prestige first place in the MasterCard Global Cities Index report. That the NTE has played an important role in enhancing the attractiveness of London and the UK as a tourist destination is underlined by the following examples:

- 13 million tourists (the equivalent of the populations of Sweden and Ireland combined) visit pubs every year.
- From the 1.5 billion day visits to the UK last year, approximately 300 million had as their focus a meal out or a night out. Their spending on night time related activities represented 21 per cent of the £52 billion spent on day visits.
- In the World’s 50 Best Bars list, 9 are in the UK and 8 in London. London also made it in CNN's top five cities based on their nightlife, alongside Sao Paulo, New York, Berlin and Ibiza.
- According to TripAdvisor, Newcastle is the third best destination for night-life in Europe (London being the first). Newcastle’s NTE attracts almost 20 million people every year, who spend £346 million. The jobs around the city’s NTE exceed 4,000.
2.4 Regional Impact In The UK

The combination of a thriving cultural leisure sector with a dynamic NTE has played an important role in enhancing the international appeal of urban centres outside of London. In addition to the benefits from international tourism experienced by Manchester and Liverpool, the old industrial city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne has reinvented itself as an internationally renowned party town. Its thriving nightlife is partly responsible for attracting 1.9 million visitors into the area in 2012. This tourist spend contributed £404 million to the economy – an increase of eight per cent from 2011.

Liverpool serves as a model of how an urban symbolic economy based on a distinct cultural identity and an attractive NTE can contribute to the development of an urban community. In 2008, Liverpool used its designation as European Capital of Culture to great effect. Liverpool’s festival was visited by 9.7 million people, an increase of 34 percent and an event that generated £753.8 million for the local economy. During the past seven years Liverpool has built on this experience, using its cultural identity and reputation for an exciting nightlife to help create a Liverpool that is a city of events. Liverpool’s ‘City of Light’ programme in 2007, which illuminated over 60 of its central buildings, illustrates how creative planning can both enhance the quality of nightlife and benefit the local economy.

Edinburgh too, provides a paradigm for generating symbolic capital through the medium of its festival. During its festivals, millions participate in both its daytime and night time events. It is important to note that in the current globalised environment, festivals with a distinct cultural identity play an important role in attracting overseas visitors.

Urban festivals shape people’s perception of a city, and many successful global cities have sought to develop their cultural attributes through the promotion of events. Late night extravaganzas attract millions of people to cities such as Rome, Paris and Montreal. The festivalisation of the city relies on the availability of late evening events and a distinct brand of night-life. Numerous city authorities – including Berlin, Dublin, Genoa, and Toronto – have encouraged the promotion of late-night cultural festivals and museum nights.

“LIVERPOOL’S FESTIVAL WAS VISITED BY 9.7 MILLION PEOPLE, AN INCREASE OF 34 PERCENT AND AN EVENT THAT GENERATED £753.8 MILLION FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY”

2.5 Fuelling Regeneration

The NTE has played a significant role in the transformation of urban space and in assisting the project of economic and cultural regeneration. This point was recognised by the previous government administration, and the potential contribution of the NTE in regenerating towns and cities is expressed by the recent National Planning Policy Framework.

The government’s response to the Portas Review on the future of High Streets should encourage all stakeholders to explore opportunities for the development of the NTE. A report by the Department for Communities and Local Government that follows up progress since the Portas Review drew attention to the importance of establishing a balance between entrepreneurial retailing capital and symbolic capital, noting that:

“The future of high streets is not just about retail. People care about high streets because they are the centres of their community. Government wants to see vibrant, viable high streets where people live, shop, use services, and spend their leisure time, including in an evening and night time economy.”

The review also observed that evening markets tying in with the NTE and other events proved an effective combination for drawing people into the town centre.

It is now widely acknowledged that the revitalisation of many high streets requires creative regeneration projects, and that such projects will need to utilise the attraction provided by the NTE. Bournemouth City Council offers an example of a middle-sized city harnessing the potential of the NTE to assist its regeneration. The City Council has now launched the second stage of its Bournemouth By Night initiative, with the aspiration to focus regeneration efforts in order to grow the Bournemouth market and develop a more diverse and appealing evening and night time offer.

Bournemouth attracts around 5 million visitors per year, and in 2012 boasted over 50 town centre bars, pubs and clubs. In recent years it has succeeded in reversing its previous negative image, and its NTE is widely perceived as offering a quality night time experience.

The capacity of the NTE to transform urban space is vividly demonstrated by the experience of the City of London. London’s financial district has relatively few residents: while 400,000 people work in the City, only 7,500 people reside there. Traditionally this built-up area was deserted at night; now it has become a lively and thriving site for night time entertainment and drinking. More than a third of its 767 licensed premises remain open into the early morning. The ease with which the transition occurs from daytime banking, financial services, and retailing, to late-night reveling illustrates the organic link that can be established between the NTE and other sectors of the economy.

Edinburgh’s George Street provides another example of how an area that provides banking and retail services during the day transforms itself into a flourishing site for night time entertainment and leisure.

These experiences illustrate how the NTE can add value to the pre-existing daytime economies. The complementarity of the two economies is recognised by a growing number of local authorities, which are seeking to integrate the NTE into their regeneration plans.
3. Fear Of The Night

Since the beginning of time, the night has served as a territory in which society's anxieties are played out, investing the shadow lurking in the dark with malevolent intentions. This tendency to equate the night with risk still influences perceptions in 21st century Britain. The media often focuses on examples of antisocial behaviour, and represents deviant forms of behaviour, such as binge drinking and alcohol-fuelled crime, as characteristic features of the night time experience. Yet, as this report indicates, the harms associated with alcohol and crime have been considerably reduced and night-time venues offer a far safer place for drinking and socialising than in the last century.

The one-sided emphasis on antisocial behaviour overlooks the potential of the NTE for providing young men and women with opportunities to make their transition into adulthood and for the forging of social bonds. It is worth noting that women have actively embraced the opportunity provided by an increasingly sophisticated and diverse night-time industry.

There are two powerful drivers of the NTE. The globalisation of economic life has encouraged a shift towards flexible patterns of activities, such as the reorganisation of production and consumption around a 24-hour clock. At the same time the cumulative outcome of important social and cultural trends – such as greater individualisation, the rise of one-person households, the delayed age of marriage and childbearing, and increased mobility – is that the social life of a growing section of the population begins with, or extends into, the night.

Policy makers need to assess the implications of these developments and adopt a forward-looking orientation towards a sector of economic life that is likely to continue to expand into the indefinite future. They need to restrain their current impulse to hyper-regulate the NTE.

3.1 Night Time Myths

The night has always served as a focus for moral anxieties and social insecurities. The age-old mysteries associated with the fears of the dark have in modern times been reinforced by concerns about a world where the normal practices of the day give way to the transgression of normal conventions.

The reason why so many are attracted to the night time experience is also why some are so uncomfortable with it. The consumers of night time leisure are disproportionately young; consequently, they are typically boisterous and their behaviour sometimes tests the limits of prevailing conventions. Their conduct is unpredictable and sometimes unruly. Members of the older generation are often at a loss to understand the language, music and social practices of the youth. Often this incomprehension towards new and unfamiliar practices provokes a defensive and insecure response.

Instead of engaging with night time culture, those in authority sometimes give way to the impulse to monitor, regulate and police.

People search out night-life leisure to encounter experiences that allow them to participate in a social setting that promises relaxation and pleasure. For many, a night out is also an opportunity for the display of camaraderie, forging bonds and meeting new people. Others go out seeking experiences that provide an alternative outlet to the routine of everyday work and life. The crossing of the boundary into the night is for some a quest for a meaningful experience. Crossing boundaries frequently leads to excess and to forms of interaction that are inconsistent with the customs of daytime life.

The uncertainty and ambiguity that surrounds the allure of the night provides the context for the production of urban legends. Two principal myths are that the NTE is becoming more and more dangerous, and that this threat to personal security is the outcome of a rise in alcohol consumption.

Take the myth promoted last summer about the dangers facing the public during the night in Manchester. In June 2014, Inspector Ian Hanson, Chairman of the Greater Manchester Police Federation, proclaimed that ‘I personally would not now go into Manchester city centre after midnight because it is now too dangerous a place and I do not believe that we can guarantee individuals’ safety the way things are at the moment’.

Hanson’s representation of the Manchester NTE as a crime-ridden territory was very much at odds with experience of the night time revellers. According to reports, they appeared oblivious to the perils outlined by Hanson and felt safe going out at night.

When tens of thousands of people congregate together, there are bound to be instances of antisocial and even violent behaviour. Yet such behaviour can occur at sporting events, music festivals, daytime carnivals and post-Christmas sales. The inflation of the challenges facing the NTE encourages a perception that attributes far too many wider social problems to the NTE alone.

The good news is that despite the continuous growth of the NTE in Manchester and the inability of the city to provide the police with the resources to match this growth, crime has been decreasing. According to a recent study, while the city centre has accounted for 17.5 per cent of violent crime in Manchester over the past three years, levels of violent crime in the city centre have decreased by 8.2 per cent since 2011/2012.

This pattern of crime reduction has been repeated in many parts of the UK. For example, Bournemouth has experienced a significant decrease in violent crime in the town on Friday and Saturday nights between 9pm and 6am. It fell by 24.7 per cent between 2009 and 2010, and was down by an estimated 19.3 per cent between 2011 and 2012. A night out in most parts of the UK would seem to be far safer than it was in the past.

Indeed, the UK in general has become a safer place. Recorded crime has been falling, and is currently 38 per cent lower than in the year 2002-2003. Of all the incidents, including those not resulting in any injury, fewer than one in five occurs in a pub, night club or the surrounding area (most of these take place in areas outside of the pub or bar). This figure represents a significant drop compared to ten years ago, when the equivalent number was one in four. At a time when there has been a significant expansion of night time drinking opportunities, this reduction in bar or pub related incidents represents an impressive achievement.

Of course, there have been instances of alcohol-fuelled antisocial behaviour. But contrary to myths peddled by sensationalist stories in the media, such unpleasant incidents are in decline. The most recent crime statistics published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicate that although alcohol-related incidents represent 53 per cent of violent incidents, the volume of these affrays has been steadily falling in recent years. The number of alcohol-related violent incidents dropped from 1.1 million in 2004-5 to 0.7 million in 2013/14.
3.2 A Misguided Campaign Against The Consumption Of Alcohol

The category of ‘alcohol-related incident’ used in crime statistics is open to interrogation. A study published in February 2015 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) concedes that its figures of alcohol related violence are estimates. The study notes that there is no specific offence of alcohol-related violence defined in law, and the data collected by the police ‘does not separately identify this type of crime’. That means that these figures are subject to the process of interpretation and aggregation; they are ‘about proportions rather than numbers’.

It also far from clear what is meant by the definition of an alcohol-related crime. Since there is no specific crime of alcohol-related violence, the publication of these constructed figures has, as their premise, the prior assumption that alcohol is a problem of special political significance. But it is debatable whether anything that is alcohol-related should be aggregated into a generic alcohol-related crime. Breaking a glass in a pub, being a nuisance to other pedestrians, urinating on the pavement, and stealing an item from a retailer are effortlessly put in the mix with beating up or stabbing somebody. By definition, any incident that occurs on a licensed premise becomes an alcohol-related crime.

Any attempts to define an alcohol-related incident are highly subjective and arbitrary. According to the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW), alcohol-related violent incidents are defined as those violent incidents where the victim perceived the offender(s) to be under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident. This intrinsically subjective definition, based on the perception of the victim, provides little insight into the incidents. The opinion that someone was under the influence of alcohol is just that – an opinion not a matter of fact.

Arguments that promote scare stories about the dangers of night life serve as a prelude to demanding more regulation and policing of the NTE. The main argument used to support the call for more regulation is that most violent crimes are alcohol-related incidents that occur at night.

Scaremongering about drinking escalated with the implementation of the 2003 Licensing Act, which reformed and de-regulated the hours during which alcohol could be consumed in licensed premises. The campaign against this Act encouraged a media outcry about the dangers of an alcohol-fuelled Britain. One of the main public relations achievements of this campaign was to rebrand the relaxation of opening hours as the curse of 24-hour drinking.

The anxieties towards the relaxation of opening hours crystallised into the narrative of ‘binge drinking’. Constant references by the media and officialdom to the scourge of binge drinking have reinforced the impression that Britain faces a major social crisis; indeed, the then Prime Minister Tony Blair warned that binge drinking risked becoming the ‘New British Disease’.

As arguments about the consumption of alcohol per se have failed as warrants for a more restrictive policy, anti-alcohol campaigners tend to focus narrowly on the vague notion of ‘binge drinking’. The NHS classifies this as ‘drinking lots of alcohol in a short space of time or drinking to get drunk. Researchers define binge drinking as consuming eight or more units in a single session for men and six or more for women’.

The panic about binge drinking, which was principally targeting the behaviour of young people, was based on the fantasy that increasing opportunities for the consumption of alcohol would lead to the constant escalation of drinking. But how does this correspond with reality? Contrary to the propaganda promoted by anti-alcohol crusaders, the British public drink significantly less than they used to.

One in five adults and one in four citizens aged 16-24 indicated that in the course of a week, they had not consumed any alcohol at all. According to an ONS report published in February 2015, the proportion of young adults who reported that they do not drink alcohol at all had increased by over 40 per cent between 2005 and 2013. The report not only noted the rise in the number of teetotallers but also remarked that ‘people have also been drinking less frequently’.

Levels of so-called binge drinking are also falling; it is mainly young adults who have been responsible for this decrease. The proportion of young people who claim to have engaged in binge-drinking the week before fell by more than a third since 2005, from 29 per cent to 18 per cent.

Levels of so-called binge drinking are also falling; it is mainly young adults who have been responsible for this decrease. The proportion of young people who claim to have engaged in binge-drinking the week before fell by more than a third since 2005, from 29 per cent to 18 per cent.

Contrary to the predictions of the scaremongers about the perils of binge drinking, it seems that the consumption of alcohol has stabilised. The expansion of opportunities for night time drinking has not been paralleled by the escalation of alcohol abuse in the NTE.

No doubt excessive alcohol consumption constitutes a problem. But in the UK this is a problem of individual consumption, rather than the result of the social drinking that occurs in the NTE. One of the consequences of the economic recession is the growth of drinking at home, with sales of beer from off-licenses now outstripping pub sales.

Pubs and bars are responsible for only 30 per cent of all alcohol sales; the rest is consumed at home. Despite all the hype the problem drinker is most likely to a middle-aged male consuming alcohol at home.

4. Increasing Regulation Threatens The NTE

British society has a schizophrenic attitude towards the NTE. Policy makers regard it as an important contributor to urban regeneration. In different localities, plans for economic development recognise the boost that the NTE can provide for the revitalisation of the High Street. Officials and professionals involved in promoting Britain to a global audience embrace the NTE as a positive asset, and the symbolic capital that the NTE generates is positively perceived by the creative industries, who recognise that the UK’s brand is intimately associated with its dynamic night life. Young adults and a growing section of people in their 30s and 40s enthusiastically participate in it.

Yet despite its success and the contribution it makes to Britain’s economic and social life, the NTE often serves as a target for moral entrepreneurs and officials, who demand that its activities are curbed. In a recent statement, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe urged that that the numbers of bars and pubs should be reduced to deal with what he represented as the rising tide of alcohol-related violence. His call to reduce the NTE appeared to be principally motivated by the problems created by the significant reduction in the resources available to the police. While the frustration of the ‘Commissioner with the reduction of police resources is understandable, it is regrettable that his solution was to call for the contraction of a successful sector of the economy.’
“ONE IN TWO CUSTOMERS BELIEVE THAT DRINKING IN PUBS OR BARS HAS BECOME TOO EXPENSIVE”

Perversely, the attempt to extend the regulation of the NTE or to curb its activities will do very little to reduce either the problem of alcoholism or of violent crime. Most bars and pubs are careful to ensure that their customers enjoy a safe evening out. That is why the expansion of the NTE in recent years has not led to an increase in crime. A reduction in the activities of night-time industries would lead to the reduction of the resources and number of people who are involved in managing and containing anti-social behaviour. As matters stand, most alcohol is consumed outside licensed bars and pubs. A decrease in the size of the NTE would simply reinforce the shift from social to individual drinking.

The myths about rising crime and problem drinking have provided an ideological justification for the hyper-regulation of the NTE. Recent proposals for the introduction of breathalysers and sniffer dogs in clubs represent not only an economic burden but also exact a social cost. Such additional security measures serve to undermine the mood of relaxation and spontaneity of night life. It threatens to turn every night time venue into the equivalent of an airport security check point.

Taxes on alcohol are disproportionate, harming not only the operator of the venue, but also the customer. From every average pint of beer, £1 goes to tax and so does 60 pence from every glass of wine. More specifically, beer duty has increased up to 42 per cent in the last five years, while beer duty revenue have been increasing by a mere 12 per cent and beer consumption fell by 16 per cent. We in the UK are paying 40 per cent of all beer duty in the EU, while consuming 12 per cent of the beer. As a result, one in two customers believe that drinking in pubs or bars has become too expensive.

5. Conclusion

The politicisation of licensing means that good economic sense and the demand of customers is trumps by the influence that interest groups, the police, licensing committees and public health campaigners are able to exercise on this issue. Permission to grant licences is often accompanied by onerous conditions such as the demand that the licence-holder installs CCTV, introduce expensive forms of noise control, or breathalyse people entering the premises. Despite an evident demand for opening new bars and pubs, large parts of England and Wales have been designated as areas where no new alcohol licences will be granted unless the licence-holder can provide assurances that their trade will have no adverse consequences.

Yet the effect of the launching of a new night time venue is not simply determined by the workings of the venue itself. The nature of community life, the quality of available services such as transport, the style of policing, and the level of collaboration between local officials and policy makers and representatives of the NTE all contribute to the quality of the night time experience.

The NTE has a major role to play in the revitalisation of urban life and in enhancing the quality of life in British towns and cities. That is why instead of seeking to confine and regulate its activities; policy makers should work towards providing the optimal conditions for the realisation of the NTE’s considerable potential. Policy should move away from a one-dimensional dependence on regulation towards the forging of genuine partnerships. Imaginative initiatives are required, which enhance the perceived and real security of everyone involved in the NTE.

6. Recommendations

Policy makers need to adopt a more positive attitude towards the NTE - a sector of economic life that is likely to continue to expand into the indefinite future. As part of this, restraint on their current default position to hyper-regulate the NTE must be curbed for the industry to thrive and contribute to society. Recommendations:

1. For the night time economy to flourish in the UK the industry needs to work together to collectively gain favour with policy makers and the police.

2. The evident social and cultural readjustment to the night time should be accounted for through fair regulation across licensing, planning, entry procedures and crime. The police and local authorities need to realise the value the NTE has to local communities.

3. Nationally, licensing frameworks should work with operators to better support venues while ensuring the safe and effective operation of the industry.

4. Crime classifications need to be revisited so as to recognise that crime associated with the night time economy is not committed by venues, but against them.

5. Serious crime statistics should be changed omit mobile phone thefts.

6. Police makers should consider individual responsibility with regards to crimes committed under the influence of alcohol rather than the knee-jerk reaction to penalise night time operators.

7. We should be encouraging a nationally accepted code of conduct for the industry, which ensures best practice, and protects the individual venues that are operating to the standards imposed and accepted by the industry.

8. The nature of the conversation around the industry needs to change – to support and champion one of the UK’s most culturally significant industries, rather than belittle and stifle it.

9. Regular research into the quantitative value of the NTE should be undertaken, to ensure that policy makers and industry are made aware of the contribution to UK culture, economy and society.
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