

## **APPG for the Night Time Economy**

### **Formal Meeting Notes**

**Date:** Monday 23rd June 2025

**Time:** 17:00–18:00

**Location:** Microsoft Teams (Virtual)

**Chair:** Paul Kohler MP

**Facilitated by:** Sam Tarry Former MP and Former Vice-Chair of the APPG

### **1. Meeting Overview**

This meeting convened stakeholders across government, local authorities, and industry to discuss structural challenges, cultural significance, and policy gaps affecting the UK's night-time economy (NTE). Attendees included MPs, local councillors, council officers, operators, venue owners, and representatives from trade bodies and industry associations.

### **2. Key Themes and Points Raised**

#### **a. Cultural and Economic Importance**

- The night-time economy (NTE) contributes approximately £153 billion to the UK economy.
- It encompasses a broad ecosystem spanning security, hospitality, and creative industries, playing a vital role in the social fabric and cultural identity of towns and cities, particularly in places like London and Manchester.
- While some sub-sectors, such as themed and cocktail bars, have shown signs of growth, the overall sector has contracted by nearly 14% since 2020, with late-night venues down by 25%, signalling ongoing structural vulnerability.

#### **b. Structural Vulnerabilities**

- Continued impact of rising business rates, VAT, National Insurance, energy costs, and COVID loan repayments.
- 40% of NTE operators report they may close within the next six months.
- Independent venues and SMEs are most at risk.

#### **c. Policy Blind Spots and Government Inaction**

- The latest Government Industrial Strategy omitted the night-time economy entirely.

Calls for targeted inclusion in policy and fiscal planning were made.

- Lack of transport infrastructure, especially outside of London, and reduced safety were highlighted as barriers to participation.

#### **d. Workforce and Business Viability**

- Hospitality sector has shed ~50,000 jobs post-Budget.
- Talent shortages persist despite redundancies.
- Living wage and NI increases are unsustainable for many.
- Accommodation costs and transport challenges further compound staffing issues. **e.**

### **Racial Inequality in Licensing Practices**

Charisse Beaumont (Black Lives in Music) presented findings from the REMEL (Race, Equality and Music Event Licensing) project:

- Disproportionate licensing refusals and police interventions affecting Black and Asian promoters.
- Events perceived as “high risk” without evidence, despite clean records.
- Informal practices persist despite the repeal of Form 696.
- Report due September 2025, with proposed frameworks for licensing reform. **f.**

### **Regulation and Local Authority Engagement**

- Overregulation at local level is harming operators (e.g. extended licensing, use of outdoor space).
- Encouragement to work closely with Combined Authorities and devolved administrations.
- Westminster’s “After Dark” proposals (to shift nightlife outside of Soho) were criticised as lacking in practicality and potentially politically motivated.

### **g. Security and Safety Concerns**

- Ian Haworth (Hippodrome) raised urgent concerns about rising crime and lack of policing, particularly in the West End.
- Anne-Marie Chebib (UKCMA) echoed the importance of safety investment and crowd management to support safe night-time environments.

### **h. Fiscal Relief Suggestions**

- Sacha Lord and Shaun Kesey proposed VAT reform, including:
  - A flat VAT rate expansion up to £1m turnover for small venues.
  - Reduced VAT rates on alcohol to align with European partners.
- Consensus that VAT reform is unlikely nationally but should be pursued regionally via devolved

structures.

### **3. Actions and Next Steps**

- NTIA to circulate the new government report and corresponding NTE sector response to all participants for comment.
- NTIA to coordinate a group of supportive MPs to co-sign a letter to Secretary of State Lisa Nandy, calling for:
  - Inclusion of the night-time economy in the forthcoming Creative Plan within the UK's wider industrial strategy.
  - Regular engagement between DCMS, HM Treasury, and NTE stakeholders.
  - Consideration of sector-specific fiscal and non-fiscal support mechanisms to bolster resilience and recovery.
- Participants are invited to submit written feedback on the NTIA's findings and recommendations, and to take part in upcoming roundtable meetings and consultation sessions.