

INTRODUCTION

I am naturally disappointed with the thrust of PC Michael Sullivan's review. It leaves the impression that The Good Ship and its staff are uncaring, lackadaisical and unprofessional when the exact opposite is true. I will address each point in turn, but can I just say at the start that I have jumped the gun and introduced all sorts of measures before they were suggested by the police (or anyone else) to ensure best possible security at the venue and best possible practice by the bar staff. I have also told both PC Sullivan and Ms Chan and Lavine in Brent Licensing, both by email and face to face, that the early closing measures proposed would make the business nonviable: it is important to note that PC Sullivan has expressly stated that he is not seeking to close the premises.

A MEASURE THAT WOULD SOLVE A LOT OF PROBLEMS

I approached Nick Mortimer, ex head of Brent Police Licensing in April of this year to say we needed some help and advice because Kilburn High Road had become more rough than it had ever been since we opened in 2005. This is from a low base too: Kilburn High Road is a very difficult high street at night and always has been. We do not shirk from our responsibilities of keeping order, and I see one of my main priorities is keeping my customers safe.

We are licensed until 4am (we recently voluntarily changed this to 3am) but last entry is at 2am. Now, this might seem simple on the face of it, just tell people that they cannot come in after 2.00 - but we get an average of 50 or so people come every weekend night after 2am and very few of them take a simple no for an answer. Foreign nationals particularly just do not understand why we would be open until 4am but cannot let them in after 2. We want to avoid conflict and keep everyone happy so we try and explain in a cordial way why it is impossible to let them in but unlike in many other areas these people have literally nowhere else nearby that they can go, and we are not going to pretend that somewhere up the road is open when it is not; so basically we have to deal with every single one individually, and believe me sometimes I spend half an hour with one individual explaining this.

Often these people will have friends inside who will then come begging to me too. We have taken to handing out letters to people but essentially it is a near impossible situation because the vast majority of people see a closing time and a last entry makes no sense to them. Half an hour would be a different story, that would smack of common sense and virtually everyone would accept that but because of what has been imposed upon us my door colleagues and I get abuse, threats and worse every single weekend. As you can imagine

recruiting and retaining great staff is a huge challenge and my staff are happy and motivated the vast majority of the time. Everyone dreads working the door after 2am though and I have lost staff because of it, being able to retain staff is also a very important security objective I am sure we all agree. I see last entry at 2:30 and closing at 3:00 as a solution to this problem.

As things stand, a crowd builds up. It would not be unusual to have between 30 and 40 people turning up between 2am and 230am. As you are all aware we have a very thin bit of pavement in front of the venue. With the best will in the world it is impossible to deal with that number of people in a courteous yet effective way whilst also trying to control the smokers who come out of the same door. We also need to keep one of the two front doors closed as much as possible to prevent escaping noise. If we did not have that crowd build-up then we would not have the hangers on appear either.

Now, around Kilburn the Brondesage is open til 2am with a last entry at 130am, The North London Tavern and The Black Lion are open until 1am with no last entry restrictions. Going into Camden you have Dublin Castle 130am 2am, Good Mixer 130am 2am, Blues Kitchen 3am 330am. I spoke to Mark McEvoy who is the Operations Manager at Shoreditch Bars Group, he has 11 bars under his control closing between 1am and 3am, just the one of them has a restriction on entry time at all. That is a historical 1am when they close at 3am. He says they have a few problems with that but not many because there is a plethora of other bars that the door people can suggest to them nearby.

In the meeting with the police and licensing, people who arrive after 2am were written off as people who have probably drunk too much anyway by PC Sullivan. I accept that that may true of some of them, certainly, but lots of them are absolutely fine and a very sizeable minority are people who live locally but work in hotels or bars centrally or locally and want to come in to unwind, indeed for their first alcoholic drink of the night. We let all local bar staff in for free but we have to turn anyone who comes after 2am away, how can that be fair? Changing this would not lead to more people coming to our door trying to get in, but it would mean that we would take 2/3rds of them off the street straight away and our doorstep would no longer be a magnet for troublemakers coming along to join in the jeering at our door staff.

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOOD SHIP

In PC Sullivan's introduction he suggests that The Good Ship is a music venue that also hosts comedy nights. This is true, but it is also a nightclub and that is what it was when I took control of what was the Zd Bar in September 2005. The idea was always that the venue was going to be event driven but I had to

accelerate that process of creating an identity for the bar, an intrinsic part of which was putting on live music and attracting the kind of lovely audience that attracts, because if you were just a late bar for the locals it would be attracting the kind of audience that a couple of the other bars in Kilburn have, which with all due respect is not what we wanted. The clientele and the versatility of what we do at The Good Ship has improved hugely from those days but it is nevertheless true that at least 50% of people who come to The Good Ship come solely for the DJs that play on a Friday and Saturday night. We appreciate that live music and comedy are a bit of a niche market and without a doubt they are a better behaved and more respectful crowd generally, but we find that the better of the weekend crowd rub off with these people really well, and that is why typically on a Friday or Saturday night the atmosphere is excellent and very friendly with a combination of these two crowds.

When we opened we were one of 3 venues in Kilburn that put on live music, which brought much needed revenue and kudos to the area (lots of people over the years who I have spoken to said they moved locally because of how much was going on in Kilburn) but sadly we are now the only one. Moreover, with the demise of the Corrib Rest in Queens Park we are now the only option for anyone wanting to privately hire a space for more than 120 people for weddings, christenings, significant birthdays and the like. Plus we tend to make all our hires free, valuable to not only those people but to countless charities, voluntary and community groups down the years.

As an example we have a monthly film afternoon where we show a film of their choice to a group of local senior citizens and give them free tea and coffee. That costs us probably all of £40 to put together but it is worth much more to see the good it does for a neglected section of our community.

We have a tolerant, non sexist, non homophobic and non racist policy and have provided space for sections of the community that would not necessarily be as welcomed elsewhere. That said, we are selective within that and will not hire to anyone that we think will be troublesome in any way. Plus when we employ staff we look for people who do actively do stuff in their community too.

The difficulties of being a grassroots music venue are well documented and the rate of closures is higher than that for average pubs, which in themselves have been high the last few years. What The Good Ship does though is not just give a platform for touring and international acts, bringing some of the best up-and-coming contemporary musicians in the world to Kilburn, but also provides a platform for relatively unknown bands, many of whom are fairly local.

There cannot be many bands at all in Brent who have not played at The Good Ship.

In PC Sullivan's witness statement of 3rd October he says that "Mr McCooke has stated that closing at 2 will lead to the closure of the venue and affect other bars in the restaurant in the area, but has not explained how. I disagree with this." Well, I can assure the Committee that The Good Ship would absolutely not survive closing at 2am. Furthermore, coupling that terminal hour with a last entry at midnight would be certain death for the club. The Good Ship is well known for paying new bands better than the average venue, pays all staff better than the average rate locally and has reasonably priced drinks. Our main reason for being is to put on new bands and no one wants to eat during sound check so we do not sell food. Neither do we open early: the only way we can survive is by doing what we do. Plus, a large majority of our customers come from a long way away and they absolutely do use the neighbouring bars, shops and restaurants.

A BRIEF BIT ABOUT ME

I am 49 and I devised and have been running The Good Ship for 11 and a bit years. I am from Kilburn and although I live in Brighton now I still come here every week and am well known in the community. I speak occasionally to BRAT and Eleven Streets local neighbourhood forums and am on the former's email list. I have mobilised numerous people on lots of occasions to sign petitions against gambling shops and money lenders on Kilburn High Road. I volunteered for a number of school holidays at Salisbury School Refugee After School Club and when I am in London I pretty much spend all my time and money in Kilburn, I am very well known in Spicy Basil and Anjanas Indian restaurant on Willesden Lane.

MY RESPONSE TO THE CRIMES IN PC SULLIVAN'S REVIEW DOCUMENT

1901214/16

Nothing to add. One of my doormen was hit by someone that we decided to removed from the premises.

1909824/16

We discuss all incidents when we have a meeting, and the girl who was the aggressor was identified and then barred. She had been coming to the club for about 6 weeks and had been no trouble before; but obviously this behaviour was unacceptable and the next time she tried to come in she was told she was permanently barred and has not been seen since. She is known

as "Tee" and also "Lainey Brown". I am satisfied that my staff and security did everything in their power to control and placate the situation. As for the drunkenness of the two females in question, it is difficult to comment accurately other than to say that victims and aggressors often seem drunker than they are with the adrenaline of an incident and the confusion of how it all happened. We have very defined in-house policies on drunkenness at the bar and go above and beyond what the average bar does including no upselling, no cheaper pricing on larger drinks and no shot advertising. Plus we look after those who appear drunk rather than just throwing them on the street.

1910383/16

Pc Sullivan suggests that this assault took place "outside The Good Ship" but then in the next paragraph suggests that the assault starts outside JP Morans which starts a good thirty feet from our door. My information on the night from both my security team and bar manager was that they saw a fight start down the road and it appeared to be started by a particularly unpleasant group of people that were never going to get into the venue and had in fact just been turned away. Otherwise, they were nothing to do with The Good Ship.

The following information is obviously historic but "Enquiries are still ongoing in relation to CCTV at The Good Ship...each time officers have attended the premises have been closed or employees can't work the system." Well, with all due respect we do not open every day until 5pm, which is clearly labelled on the door. All of the managers on duty in the week after that did know how to pull CCTV off the system so I am a little confused as to the police claims here. My manager on the night of the incident made no mention of it because in his opinion it had nothing to do with the venue; but I do not understand why the police did not interview him or ask for CCTV on the night because he would have been absolutely able to provide it. Moreover, PC Sullivan and Ms Lavine and Chan will confirm that we have been asked to provide a lot of CCTV this calendar year and also that my phone number is very visible on the website and posters on the front of the venue so it would have been fairly easy to get in touch with me in this respect.

1912435/16

The week after this incident I spoke to Nick Mortimer (ex head of Brent Police Licensing) when my then Assistant Manager Sam Williams and myself went to meet him to discuss this and security generally. There are some discrepancies between what the victim claimed and what actually happened but that is to be expected in the circumstances. What we told Nick and what I repeat now is that the claim that we told them to not call the police is simply not true.

During this period I was writing to Nick regularly with what was happening incident wise at (or usually outside) The Good Ship and indeed I wrote to him that night with a brief description before I went to bed. I watch Crimewatch and Police Camera Action and shows like that all the time, and I take it a bit personally when someone claims I am obstructing police who are carrying out an investigation. The victim was a nice chap and I remember that he simply could not remember how the incident started. He seemed a bit embarrassed and absolutely did not want to call the police; but his friend (who was hugely aggressive to every single one of us) said he was going to. I told him to do what he wished, I was far more concerned that his friend was ok.

When an ambulance did not come quickly I indeed suggested that we call a taxi as I felt that it was better that he get to hospital sooner rather than later and he was completely compos mentis. Moreover, I thought the aggressive friend might create another incident. The aggressive guy did not want this but eventually relented and the ambulance came just after we called the cab, which we subsequently cancelled.

Us clearing the scene was naivete on my behalf, I was busy dealing with the victim and it was the first fight I had witnessed inside the venue for well over a year. My big regret from the incident was the amount of time it took us to reach the victim, I was actually closing down a till, my aforementioned colleague Sam Williams got there first, the victim disappeared and then Sam went to get the security staff who were at the front door. In the melee I had no idea who the aggressor was, it was a couple of minutes before my brain went from the victim to him and I asked around as to who had done it. There was a little bit of confusion with various different descriptions, and then we realised he had gone. It is not fair to suggest that we do not try and catch perpetrators of crime.

Moreover in PC Sullivan's witness report page 7 of 7 he states that "In particular Mr McCooke received text messages from the licensing team during the week prior to the FA Cup informing him that the police believed a large group of ticketless Manchester United fans...were arranging to meet and view the game from premises in Kilburn". In fact, I did not receive any such text, although I did get a phone call from a WPC either before or on the day, mentioning something similar, and I told her that we were not and indeed do not open for football matches but that I would keep an eye out for anyone arriving afterwards. I was on the door of The Good Ship all that night and we did not let anyone in until 8pm and none of the Manchester United fans that we had in (there were probably 10-12 or so in about 3 or 4 groups) were drunk or aggressive and absolutely none were wearing football shirts, that is a very strict rule of ours and we check under their jackets or jumpers.

The aggressor was indeed a Manchester United fan but was wearing a leisure top, not obviously a football shirt having removed his jumper or jacket.

PC Sullivan's report makes our IDing regime seem very half-hearted but it was something that we were experimenting with and after that incident we implemented the current policy which was to record all IDs every weekend and keep them on file.

1921942/16

At the start of this report it says that "at 02.46 police were called...police arrived at the venue a short while later". I do not believe that this is actually correct, I believe that the police actually arrived and attended the event quite a good way up the High Road near Brondesbury Station and never actually came to speak to the doorman who put in the call. I was told this by one of the investigating officers who attended the venue the next day. (So, where it says "the victim was not aware that the police had attended the venue" is not right, although it's not really important.)

Those two policemen were first class, they went through the CCTV that we had and helped placate the victim's stepdad, who was very upset, understandably, about the whole affair.

The fight was started by a guy who approached the venue from the north starting a fight with two very aggressive guys who were at the door busy abusing our doorstaff, who were rightly refusing them entry. Whether that was some sort of weird ploy to start a big fight against some of our patrons who were standing outside I really do not know because it goes off camera. We have an internal investigation with every incident and our intelligence told us that this was a gang from Lisson Grove or Mozart estates who happened to trouble our door. Now, in my meeting with PC Sullivan he suggested that we could have done more to stop this fight starting but I fundamentally disagree, this was a bunch of people that was hellbent on violence and frankly we did very well to keep them out of the venue. The CCTV footage also shows lots of other people arriving at the scene from elsewhere to join in the melee, what is very important, but not mentioned, is that none of these people were in the venue.

That said I do agree with some of his other comments. We had our latest set of door instructions for the security team that they had both read and signed that very night, and some very basic ones in those instructions were just ignored. There was one example where one security guard was inches from a group of smokers outside the venue and both he and they were completely blocking the footpath in absolute contravention of our policy that smokers need to all be sent around the corner to the smoking area. The upshot of their

slackness was that this young lad had his arm broken. His step dad phoned me when he saw news of the licence review to say that the council have been asking him to make a representation against us but he was happy with the way we handled it and he has no desire to cause us any problems.

Going back to the security guards, I was livid with this situation and told the security company that these two were never to work our door again. I was not especially happy with at least one of the new guards for the next fortnight either (it is impossible to know until you see them in action) but eventually they found a pair who we felt could follow our guidelines.

NICK MORTIMER'S ACTION PLAN 26th MAY 2016

Nick Mortimer's action plan was no problem to us whatsoever. (He is ex head of Brent Licensing.) I would happily be under that action plan for the duration of the life of The Good Ship. All the staff on joining are absolutely taught about their responsibilities concerning the rules surrounding intoxicated people. Not only that but they are sent a monthly reminder too. Our in-house position goes over and beyond what was asked of us, not only do we have a duty of care, we utterly do care and we do not want people on our premises who are too drunk. We have measures in place to deal with it and more generally as a bar. We -

- do not advertise shots
- never upsell
- do not have discounts on doubles
- provide glasses of water in the middle of the bar after 2am at weekends that anyone can help themselves to.
- have door stamps that say PEACE and LOVE
- play music designed to make people feel happy

PC Sullivan states that "still nothing has improved" but these things are hard to measure. The very vast majority of troublesome incidents that we have are outside the building and caused by people that are not our customers. There has been no physical assault inside the building since the 22nd May 2016.

PC SULLIVAN'S FURTHER NOTES

PC Sullivan goes on to say "In total there have been 13 crimes reported at or linked to the venue this year" compared to 9 this year and (notwithstanding that I would suggest 1910383/16 for example has nothing to do with the venue) I agree that it has been a particularly difficult year. Remember, *I went to Nick Mortimer to talk about this* and we have been on red alert pretty much

every weekend since. The very biggest problem has been outside and I think there are a few reasons for this.

-Less police presence on the streets generally

-Lots of angry people about, more angry than they used to be. I think there are all sorts of reasons for this. People are more brutalised because of recent terrorist outrages, working class people feel a bit under threat because footballers earn monies they can never dream of and the price to watch it has risen way above inflation. Council tenants are being shunted to outer London areas and they are not happy about it.

- Other late bars being closed down or restricted in some way. Betsy Smith had a huge crackdown at the start of the year and Nick Mortimer suggested we were probably getting some of their undesirables. Love and Liquor likewise and probably most pertinently The Lower Ground Bar in West End Lane all closed down either permanently or for a time and alas some of the people who would traditionally go to these came to us. All the trouble makers we could identify were previously unknown to us.

-We had a very aggressive drug dealing gang hanging around the venue for a couple of months during the summer. These people made a death threat against my main doorman and I spoke at length with Nick Blackburn about them. Eventually, intelligence that we provided to PCs Thomas Surr and Martin Redhaw led to them launching an operation against them, thankfully they have not been seen for a couple of months.

-Kilburn High Road has been much quieter this year than last. Now this may seem an odd addition but we have noticed that there is more potential for trouble when it is not very busy. I'm not sure why, but when it is busy with our average crowd everyone has a nice time and the good atmosphere rubs off on people. Maybe the troublesome types get bored when there are fewer people around.

Obviously, none of us can do much about the first two points but all those other bars have or are just about to reopen, the Tricycle is getting closer to reopening and we will always report any of the kind of activity I just spoke about to the police so I know the situation can absolutely improve.

RESIDENT AND BUSINESS COMPLAINTS

PC Sullivan suggests that "the council have had numerous complaints from residents and local businesses." I have not been told how many residents are

complaining.

Management from JP Moran, the building supplies company next door have been unpleasant to me or my staff on numerous occasions, especially when a supplier to us has gone up Drake's Courtyard which separates the 2 businesses. We tell all suppliers not to but on a rare occasion it happens. They are also trying to buy the premises and I have spoken to Kevin Moran about this on two occasions, as he wants to make an offer to the landlord to buy me out.

We have also been discussing them putting up a gate to stop people using the alleyway and I told him that would be really helpful because it would stop undesirables unconnected to The Good Ship nevertheless interfering with our customers. I told him during these conversations in mid October about problems over the summer with drug dealers hanging around our venue and why this gate would go a long way towards helping undesirables not having a place to congregate yet 3 months later there is still no sign of it.

Moreover, their document for the previous review dated 19th July mentions that people are "perhaps even doing drugs", yet the objection of 20th October says "we have also witnessed the selling of drugs whereby they store it in the scaffolding". The scaffolding came down some time in August. Unless they have actual proof of this on CCTV I find it difficult to believe that he is not making this claim from the information I gave him!

We clean the alleyway every night and that includes rubbish that was not left by us. Martin Moran called me in early summer when there was an occasion where that did not happen, completely fair enough and I mentioned that to Kevin Moran in our phone conversation a fortnight ago. He replied that was much improved - yet his secretary wrote to PC Sullivan to say that they have vomit and urine greeting them in the alleyway most Monday mornings. Well, unless that is happening by roaming drunks on a Sunday when we are largely closed I find this quite difficult to believe.

Moran's finish with "It would certainly be in our interest if The Good Ship had their licence revoked" Revoked! It certainly would be in their interest! They know that if The Good Ship is unable to operate that they are likely to be able to expand their property empire at a cheaper price.

I have had 3 noise complaints over the entire 11 years of The Good Ship. I have dealt with them all courteously and swiftly. Each case has been different and I have spent a lot of money, nearer £2,000 than £1,000 on getting things

right for these neighbours. I offered Mr Dede my phone number and email address on 1st July via Martin Wood of the Brent Nuisance Control Team and again when he wrote to me on August 24th, yet he has never utilized it. Mr Dede made a lot of exaggerated claims in his representation, as well as, to be fair, a number of things that were fair enough; but he claimed he had come to speak to some doormen at The Good Ship and so when I searched his Facebook to ask them if they recognised him I discovered that he was advertising his own night club on his page at a venue which is literally next door to a large block of apartments. I'm afraid that I just do not find him credible.

LIST OF HISTORIC COMPLAINTS FROM THE COUNCIL LICENSING TEAM

29th September 2008 – I do not recall the precise details of this one but if the complainant got in touch with us then I imagine that we have solved the problem for them. I asked Susana Figueiredo at Brent for further details but she did not have any. The nature of the complaint is erroneous in that we only open til 4am on Friday and Saturday. Though licensed til 2am in the week, music usually stops about 11pm.

16/17 October 2013 – Again I do not remember the specifics of this one and asked Martin Wood and the Noise Team generally for further details on August 18th but received no reply. Again there is an inaccuracy in the complaint in that we were open one Sunday a month on average around this time.

26th February 2014 – I am afraid that the only conclusion I could reach about this complaint was that it was mischievous. As for "*Complainant stated that they contacted the owner to inform him of what had happened and he showed little interest,*" the exact opposite is true. I took great interest in his story, telephoned him the day that it happened and when he replied a week later I told him to get me a better timeline because his version of events made no sense. He also wanted me to pay for his windscreen when there was no evidence for his claims. I advised him to get in touch with the police and get CCTV to verify his claims but never heard from him again.

25th January 2016 – The complainant states; "... that the venue is open till 4am nightly." I say again, 4am at the weekends and licensed till 2am but usually closed between 11 and 12 during the week! I know nothing about this complaint and again asked the Nuisance Control team on August 18th but still

I have no reply.

1 st July 2016 – I received this representation from Martin Wood on the 1st July and replied on the same day inviting the complainant to get in touch with me so that I could help sort out his problems. I am still waiting. He was the person who made the representation in September and when he resubmitted the complaint he neither signed nor dated it. I told him he would need to do that to proceed and also mailed "Martin Wood from Brent will have been in touch with you to suggest that you contact me with any issues and that offer still stands, you can reach me on here or on 07949 008253." I want to help this gentleman but he is not helping me to help him.

9th October 2016 – This was the last night of our old security company, they would have been removed sooner but it takes time to find the right supplier. Both I and my Bar Manager went out of the premises to try and deal with the situation the minute that the DJ informed us that there was a fight outside. There has been a problem with the security company saying that they were only insured on our premises, so my manager and I tried to sort out what we could despite that putting us in potential danger. You will also see me talking with one of the groups along with the police officers. It seems that there was some argument over a girl and the group who called the police had one guy who had taken a load of pictures. I asked them by email for those pictures so we could identify the potential trouble makers to investigate and potentially bar them but they did not reply. At the meeting with PC Sullivan he did suggest that if an incident happens well away from the premises then it is no longer our problem. Of course though we do not want any incidents in or near the venue and we want everyone to leave having enjoyed the night rather than having a fight but I feel that we did everything we could in the circumstances and offered the ID file to the policemen present.