



People for Proper Policing in North Wales

Underage booze sting in Flintshire

Sep 20 2008 By Carl Butler Daily Post

NEARLY a quarter of off licences tested in Flintshire sold booze to school children. Trading Standards boss Ron Hughes yesterday described the shocking figures as "unacceptable".

During the school summer holidays, Flintshire's trading standards officers carried out undercover tests at a sample of **50 off-licences** – including some of the big supermarkets. Eleven shops failed the test and sold alcohol to youngsters aged 16 – and in one case 15 years of age.

Mr Hughes said: *"This is very disappointing and unacceptable. We need to make every effort possible to ensure that young people who are underage are not sold alcohol. The problems associated with children being involved in alcohol are well known and very serious. Anyone who made the sale is now subject to a fixed penalty fine and the licences of the businesses involved are very much at risk."*

*When trading standards first launched their undercover campaigns **some years ago about 40% of off-licences were selling to under age youngsters**. Basically at that time off-licences were not expecting it and did not realise we could do something like this. We **undertook a programme of advice** and gradually things improved and we got the figure down and we have got it down to around 10%. Even that is unacceptable but at least it was improving. That is why I am disappointed that these latest figures are as high as they are."*

The individuals who have sold the alcohol have all been given fixed penalty fines of around £80.

"This will go against their licence and we will be doing follow-ups. If they sell alcohol to anyone under aged a second time representations will be made against their licences. In fairness we have not got to that situation yet," said Mr Hughes.

To try and get the message across, trading standards is inviting all off-licencees in the county to a seminar in Clwyd Theatr Cymru at Mold, on Thursday, September 25 at 2pm.

Mr Hughes said: *"The intentions of this seminar are to make businesses aware of their responsibilities and to offer any help in explaining the steps that can be taken to avoid the serious consequences of children being sold alcohol. The seminar will also address the issue of the other ways that children access alcohol including when an adult buys on their behalf and how this can be minimised."*

The PPP comments.... Over several years we, the tax payers have been paying trading standards and the police to control this situation. We would like to know how many licences have been revoked?. Zero tolerance does not equate to cautions or £80 fixed penalties. After this symposium, again at our expense any infringement should result in loss of licence. One problem is there are in any case too many liquor outlets.

The major supermarkets are still using cheap beer as a loss leader and they admit it is antisocial but claim they need government to lead any changes in Policy, i.e. none of them will go it alone! Two days later the same Post reporter posted the following story ...

Drunken youths terrify OAPs

Sep 22 2008 by Carl Butler, Daily Post

A GET tough call for zero tolerance against those selling booze to under-age drinkers was made yesterday as drunken youngsters make **life a misery for pensioners**.

Connah's Quay Councillor Bernie Attridge, chairman of Flintshire County Council's licensing committee, said there should be a £1,000 fine for first-time offences – not £80 on-the-spot fines against those selling to under-aged youngsters.

At the weekend, **Coun Attridge said** *he had several telephone calls from worried pensioners in the Isabella Court sheltered housing scheme in Connah's Quay.*

*"On Friday and Saturday nights, I had calls that about 30 youngsters were at Isabella Court with bottles and cans of drink, making life a misery for pensioners. I called the community beat managers. The youngsters are frightening the OAPs to death. They may only be drinking and loud but this is a regular thing and some of the pensioners when it comes dusk, just won't go out and are virtually prisoners in their own homes. You have people aged 80-90 and one person who is 101 years old, and it's horrible for them. **An £80 spot fine is no deterrent at all, it's an insult.***

"It's not just Connah's Quay, other areas of Flintshire suffer and it's nearly always down to drink. I believe in one strike and you're out. Those who sold the alcohol to these youngsters have created misery for the pensioners in Isabella Court. The mess left at Isabella Court was shocking. I will make sure that any off licence or supermarket that continues to sell to under-age children will be stripped of their licence."

The PPP comments ... at Police/Community meetings across North Wales the problem of underage drinking is a main concern and has been for years. Holyhead Police and traders have initiated a scheme to ID the source of drink that is confiscated. We believe that the enforcement policy needs managing at force level and the councils should also get organised and appoint a senior councillor and a trading standards officer to coordinate their activity and work with and put pressure on the Supermarket and other chains' management. **North Wales police have 138 officers of Inspector or higher rank, we need an able ONE to get to grips with this problem NOW. If we need changes in Government or local political policies to enable the force to get the job done let's hear about it.**