

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF CLUBS

Club Review

VOLUME 37 - Issue 3, 2024

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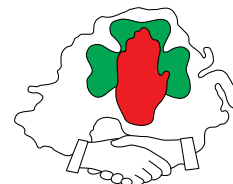
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Fax No:

Club Officers

Chairman:

Tel:

Secretary:

Tel:

Treasurer:

Tel:

The annual membership fee is £50.00 payable to:

The Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs

c/o Unit B7 Portview Trade Centre,
310 Newtownards Road,
Belfast BT4 1HE.

**For telephone queries call:
07889 681714**

(Please include your membership fee or completed standing order form with your application)

For administration purposes only

Accepted by: Secretary

Seconded by: Chairman

Date:

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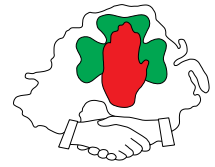
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Registered club sector thriving despite challenges



John Davidson, Chairman,
N.I. Federation of Clubs



Harry Beckinsale, Secretary,
N.I. Federation of Clubs

As we approach the halfway point in 2024 we are pleased to see that, despite the difficulties presented by increasing overheads, the registered club sector is certainly holding its own.

The hospitality sector in general has had a very difficult time, to a large extent due to staffing issues and more recently the 10% increase of the adult National Minimum / Living Wage introduced in April.

We never thought for one moment that the increase would do anything other than provide the opportunity for other various costs to be increased, particularly energy, car insurance and supplies of product. Added to this is the fact that the individual tax allowance hasn't increased, creating fiscal drag, resulting in

additional tax receipts for the Treasury.

With many businesses, including registered clubs, continuing to face up to the challenge of managing the day-to-day running of their business, staff hours and other associated costs have been to the fore, meaning it is imperative to seek guidance from your HR provider or the Labour Relations Agency as to what you are or are not permitted to do.

Most importantly this month, the Federation will be hosting its first AGM since 2019, in the RAOB HQ, Belfast, from 10am to 12 Noon on Saturday 25th May 2024. We encourage you to make a special effort and ensure your club is represented at this very important occasion, the first since Covid-19 brought

the nation to a standstill in March 2020.

Covid-19 may have brought the nation to a standstill but your Federation continued to operate. We continued to publish Club Review to ensure much needed outreach to our membership, highlighting and explaining the detail of the many emergency measures brought in by national government during this time.

We also continued to work on the legislation changes for the hospitality sector and are delighted that our efforts and input on the many changes needed to bring Northern

Ireland into the twenty-first century were finally implemented in full earlier this year too, with much needed modernisation of draconian laws being completed and passed into law.

In closing, we are of course aware that Saturday 25th May is FA Cup and Scottish Cup Final day, but nevertheless we urge members to ensure they are represented at the meeting.

We look forward to meeting friends old and new on 25th.

John Davidson
Chairman

Harry Beckinsale
Secretary



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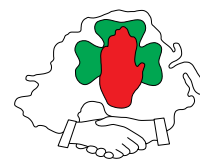
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Minutes of the Executive Meeting



Hosted by the Harland & Wolff Welders FSC
on Wednesday 10th April 2024

The April meeting opened with Chairman, John Davidson, requesting that the Secretary, Harry Beckinsale, read the minutes of the previous meeting. These were duly proposed and seconded as a true record by Philip Mallon and Tommy McMinn.

Similar to the meeting in March, a further discussion took place on details for the forthcoming AGM to be held on 25th May 2024 in Belfast. We are of course mindful that this is both the FA Cup and Scottish Cup Final Day.

Details to be highlighted will focus on the current

difficulties faced by management committees in the day-to-day management of their clubs, not least of which continues to relate to employment legislation.

The cost of supplies and other increased overheads are naturally a matter of some concern, and the knock-on effect of this is the need to increase costs to the consumer. However, these increases are now seemingly an everyday occurrence in the times we live in and clubs must be creative in thinking of ways they can repay club members for their loyalty. One such way has seen some

clubs introduce a bonus card scheme that features points awarded which are the redeemable at any given time within the club.

A financial report was provided by the Treasurer, David Larmour, which was passed as a true record by Joe Patterson and Gerry Gallagher.

The series of meetings with suppliers, suggested at the previous meeting, will follow the AGM, by which time we will have a more comprehensive list of issues to raise on behalf of members.

The number of registered clubs discussed in March (*approximately 500 with a respective membership of 247,000 of the adult population*) naturally makes the sector a major player in the hospitality industry and one we are certain suppliers will view as being important.

At this point the meeting was brought to a close, with thanks being made to the management of Harland & Wolff Welders for providing the generous hospitality.

Harry Beckinsale
Secretary

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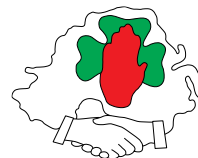
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Secretary/Office: 07889 681714

Email: info@nifederationofclubs.com • Web: www.nifederationofclubs.com

2024 FEDERATION AGM!

Dear Secretary, I would be delighted if your management committee could be represented at the
N.I. Federation of Clubs Annual General Meeting being held in the
RAOB HQ, Belfast on SATURDAY 25th May 2024 from 10.00am to 12.00noon.

We are mindful of the issues which continue to be problematic for management committees,
so be assured, your attendance and support at the AGM plays an extremely important role.

Matters on the agenda are as follows:

- Implications of the National Minimum Wage
- The potential benefit of seeking a rates review
- Sky TV tariff for registered clubs with a sports registration
- Opening hours for clubs with and without a sports registration
- Employment/employee issues, and the importance of following the guidelines provided by your club insurance policy or your independent HR Advisor
- PRS/PPL & MCPL licenses
- Any other business

As in previous years, refreshments will be provided following the AGM.

Please make a special effort to have your club represented.

John Davidson
Chairman
N.I. Federation of Clubs

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Legislation changes to take note of

National Living Wage

The National Living Wage (NLW, also known as the National Minimum Wage) increased on 1st April 2024.

For employees on the NLW this will mean that their hourly pay should have gone up from £10.42 to £11.44. If you have staff on your payroll who are paid the NLW you must ensure they are paid the new rate.

This is a lift of £1.02 per hour, and a typical full-time employee on the NLW will receive an average yearly pay increase of around £1,800.

Meanwhile, clubs should also be aware that the NLW has also been extended to 21

and 22-year-olds, fulfilling a recommendation the Low Pay Commission first made in 2019.

The 18 to 20-year-old rate rises by £1.11 to £8.60, and the 16 to 17-year-old and apprentice rate both rise by £1.12 to £6.40.

This is clearly a challenge for many hospitality venues, but it should also mean that people have more money in their pockets which can assist in boosting bar revenue.

In that vein, it is worth mentioning that the State Pension is also being increased. The increase applicable persons got from the State Pension went up in April due to the government

keeping the triple lock - which came back into effect in 2023 after it had been suspended. It means that the State Pension has increased by 8.5%, in line with average earnings growth between May-July 2023, which is the second-biggest increase to the State Pension on record.

The rise means that those qualifying for a full new State Pension will now receive £221.20 a week (up from £203.85) and those who reached State Pension age before April 2016, who are on the older basic State Pension, will now receive £169.50 - up from £156.20.

Tipping

Clubs may have heard in the news of the Employee

(Allocation of Tips) Act 2023. This means hospitality businesses must pass on 100% of gratuities received from customers without deductions.

Many clubs have rules which do not permit tipping so it is unlikely this Act, when it is formally introduced, will have any effect.

That said, in the event that the club is affected, then please ensure that 100% of tips go to club employees without any deductions being made.

Currently the introduction of the legislation has been postponed until 1st July 2024.



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15 top tips for maximising your club's revenue

Broaden The Offer

Change the menu and run events that you never used to do, such as quiz nights, special events and coffee mornings. Think about having themed food nights with pizzas, curries and steaks - but you cannot do these too often as the novelty will wear off. You have to remain very mindful of what you are doing to maintain the basics whilst giving people a new reason to visit the club.

Utilise Outdoor Space

Arguably, the days of people just turning up and spending money are long gone. Clubs now need to stand out. If you have outdoor space make sure it is utilised. During Covid people even got used to sitting outside, so it can even help all year round. Do not keep your garden space a secret - if you have it, make sure it is advertised at the front of the club. If you have live music inside on a Saturday evening, consider occasionally having it on a Sunday lunchtime in the garden.

Cocktail Madness

Clubs may be primarily wet led, but given this is often the case, make sure you do not discount what you can gain from a cocktail offering. It is great if you can mix cocktails to demand, but if you cannot, then cocktails now come in good quality pre-made canned versions, or you can easily pre-mix some cocktails like Negronis in advance. Think about having a themed night for a specific cocktail every now and then. Google Whitebox Freezer Martini for an idea of what you can offer straight from the fridge.

Be Creative

Clubs probably have a membership database which may comprise just three items

of information - name, date of birth and contact details. Offer members a free drink if they pop in on their birthday.

Bar Snacks

Go beyond crisps and hold nights with an offering of different foods, such as olives and meze. Or once a week on a Wednesday offer free cooked mini sausages to any members to visit the club. Cooked in bulk means it is inexpensive and gives people a reason to visit the club.

Sort Out Your Wine Offering

These days, replying 'white or red' when people ask about your wine selection is not good enough. Have a selection of wine - it does not need to be extensive but it does need to cover a few basics. Wines can be obtained in box versions to reduce waste and also small 175ml bottles to avoid the need of opening a full size bottle but still allowing you to offer a good range of wine to your members.

Encourage Future Visits

Clubs are often busiest in November and December. Why not give everyone who visits during these months a voucher for a half price drink in January and February to encourage them to keep visiting the club during the quieter months.

Sorry, I'm Driving

Make sure you are invested in a non-alcohol alternative - diet coke will not cut it anymore. Have at least one or two good quality non-alcohol beers on offer and consider adult soft drinks - why not stock kombucha in a can for those who want to go out but may not be drinking that night.

Know Your Regulars

All clubs have a core membership component that



are the hardcore. Make sure your employees greet these members by name and make a special effort in welcoming them each time they arrive. If you have just brought in a new beer or gin, make sure it is mentioned that it is something they might want to try.

Use Your Event Space

Have a great function room but no one knows? Publicise it to the local community, rent it out for weekend events to help your revenue, and give the space away free for community groups that want to use it mid-week. The more people you can get through the door - for any reason - the more potential future members you have.

Promotions

Is the club dead on a Tuesday night? Offer 10% off drinks for the entire evening. You are already paying for wages, heat and light - you may as well encourage members to visit with a special drinks promotion.

Warm Space

When it is cold outside, encourage members to stop by the club and keep warm. They do not need to buy several drinks, encourage them to just

pop in and say hello and keep warm if they want to.

Holding Beer Prices?

If you are holding beer prices do not keep it a secret - tell your members what you are doing. If you have had to raise prices on some lines but not others, make a point of informing your members that you are putting extra effort into keeping the prices on key beer lines as low as possible.

Free Prize Draw

Start a free prize draw on a quiet night. The only rules are it is drawn between 7pm-9pm, all members are automatically entered and they need to present themselves within five minutes of their name being called. If they are not there in time add another £10 to the pot and it rolls over to the next week and someone else has a chance of winning the prize.

Keep the Momentum Going

Once you have done the above, do not stop. Keep thinking of ideas to motivate your members. Put on a gin or wine tasting evening, host a local beer event. Having a Fawlty Towers themed quiz evening. Once you build the initial momentum you will find enthusiasm for many ideas going forwards.



Q. We have a candidate for membership who has twice been refused in the past, and it is likely his present application will also be refused. We are concerned though that a future committee may admit this person as a member. Can we create a bye-law preventing a person from applying for membership if they have been refused twice in the past?

A. You would not be able to introduce a bye-law since it would be in conflict with the

rule which states that persons can reapply again after the twelve month period has elapsed. You can of course alter the rule in question, but you would need the members' approval.

Our advice is not to worry about this situation. Ultimately there is an argument that if a future elected committee wishes for this person to become a member then the current elected committee should not be attempting to take steps to prevent such a decision from being made. We must always be open to the club's members electing a new committee and going in a new direction, and I would advise the current committee not to unduly spend too much time trying to prevent a possible future committee from making certain decisions.

Q. During our refurbishment, we considered if we could

create space for disabled toilet facilities. We do not have enough space for a full disabled toilet but we can create enough space to enable us to construct an ambulant toilet which would meet the needs of those who have mobility issues but are not fully confined to a wheelchair. Would this be sufficient to discharge our legal obligations?

A. If the club is able to provide disabled facilities then you should do so, although you are not expected to do so if presently the cost would be too high or if it would be physically difficult to find space to install such facilities. If this is the case, then you can simply make a note to refer to this case every so often to see if anything has changed. As and when the club is in a position to provide disabled facilities then you should aim to do so.

We would therefore suggest that you do what you can, even if you cannot currently offer a complete package of disabled facilities. At least if you are showing that you have considered the situation affecting disabled persons and you have done what you can at this time, this will prove that the club is taking its responsibilities seriously and hopefully in the future further improvements can be made.

Q. A committee member has offered to help out behind the bar when help may be required. They do not want to be paid for this and would just consider it as volunteering. Our chairman has said that this will cause a "conflict of interest" and that other staff would feel "threatened" by a committee member working behind the bar. Does the Federation have a view?

A. There is no legal reason that a committee member cannot volunteer behind the club's bar. Some clubs

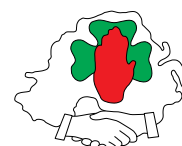
operate exclusively with volunteers, others utilise a mixed approach, I am not sure I agree that employees would feel threatened by working with a committee member, but if there is any reason to think this would be the case, it should certainly be considered and discussions held with the club's employees.

Whilst we respect the view of the club's chairman, this is ultimately a committee decision to make. I therefore suggest that this proposal is put to vote at the next committee meeting. With any employee or volunteer it is, of course, always necessary to ensure some formality is adhered to when anyone is responsible for handling cash, and this can be a consideration regarding how and when the committee might allow volunteers to assist behind the bar.

Q. We have received a letter of complaint from a member who would like it read out at our AGM. We do not consider that this constitutes a valid agenda item. Do you agree?

A. You are correct that this request is not a legitimate motion and therefore cannot be included on the agenda of the AGM. I suggest that you treat this complaint as a letter to the committee and put the letter before the committee at the committee meeting. The committee can then decide how they wish to reply. The committee could decide to reference the points raised in one of the reports given by the committee at the AGM.

If you have any questions you need answered for your club, then please send them to us at: info@nifederationofclubs.com



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Disciplinary challenges: 12 mistakes employers must avoid!



RKM Solutions have over the years supported many companies through the disciplinary process. Quite often, when they arrive to support or take over a process, a fundamental mistake has already been made. Here is a list of 12 of the main mistakes that they have noticed organisations make.

Ignoring Early Warnings:

Employers often overlook the early signs of problems with employees, which can let small issues escalate into major ones. Addressing problems early helps prevent misunderstandings and maintains standards.

Vague Accusations: Not clearly defining the misconduct or providing enough evidence before a disciplinary hearing can leave employees unprepared to defend themselves, resulting in decisions that may appear unfair.

Not Explaining the

Consequences: It's crucial for employers to inform employees about the possible outcomes of disciplinary actions, including dismissal. This transparency allows employees to correct their behaviour or prepare for potential consequences.

Holding Grudges: Employers must avoid letting previous grievances affect their judgment in new disciplinary situations. This ensures decisions are based on facts and not influenced by past conflicts.

Jumping to Conclusions:

Deciding the outcome of a disciplinary case before all evidence and mitigating factors are considered can lead to

unjust conclusions. A fair review of all details is essential.

Unnecessary Suspensions:

Suspensions should be justified and as brief as possible. Employers must provide a valid reason for suspension and ensure it is a last resort, maintaining trust and fairness.

Using the Wrong People:

Different stages of the disciplinary process should ideally be handled by different individuals to avoid bias. This is especially important in larger organisations to ensure impartiality.

Forgetting to Mention

Support: Employees should be informed about their right to be accompanied by a colleague or union representative at disciplinary hearings. This ensures the process is perceived as fair and supportive.

Poor Record Keeping:

Detailed documentation throughout the disciplinary process is vital. Clear records support the credibility of the disciplinary actions and are crucial in case of legal challenges.

Ignoring Appeals:

Employers must provide a clear avenue for employees to appeal disciplinary decisions. This not only shows fairness but also allows for reconsideration in light of new evidence or arguments.

Overlooking Training Needs:

Failure to provide appropriate training can lead to repeated employee mistakes and misconduct. Employers should identify and address any gaps

in employee training to prevent future issues.

Neglecting to Communicate

Effectively: Effective communication throughout the disciplinary process is crucial. Employers should ensure that all communications are clear, timely, and consistent to avoid misunderstandings and increase trust.

By addressing these pitfalls, employers can manage disciplinary actions more effectively, ensuring a fair, transparent, and productive workplace.

Having strong policies and procedures, along with a comprehensive manager's guide and training, is essential for maintaining a transparent and fair process in any organisation. These tools provide a clear framework for addressing issues, ensuring consistency and fairness in handling disciplinary actions and other managerial decisions. They help prevent misunderstandings by outlining expectations and consequences, thereby supporting a culture of trust and accountability.

Additionally, well-defined guidelines equip managers with the necessary information to make informed decisions and offer employees a clear understanding of what is expected of them, fostering a positive and productive work environment.

Another important tool in an organisation is a clear and accessible employee handbook. This is crucial as it clearly



Ronnie McCullough,
Managing Director
Tel: 07835 255794



Nicola Curry,
HR Consultant



Alan Hall,
Health & Safety Specialist

communicates company policies and expectations to staff, ensuring consistency and fairness. It serves as a reference point for both new and existing employees, helping to foster a transparent, inclusive, and well-organised workplace culture.

If you believe your organisation would benefit from a policy review, a manager's guide, training or employee handbook please contact RKM Solutions.

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Live sports extravaganza

Let Sky Sports light up your club this summer

Make May and June unmissable months of live sport in your club. There's all the action from the climax of the Premier League season, where the race for the title, the fight for European spots and the battle for top-flight survival look like going right down to the wire, with the final round of games on Sunday 19th. You'll be able to catch all the biggest matches live on Sky Sports, along with some huge games in the EFL playoffs, including the 'richest game in football', the Sky Bet Championship playoff final at Wembley Stadium on Sunday 26th.

May also sees the thrilling conclusion of the Premier League darts season, with the semi-finals and final at The O2 in London on Thursday 23rd. Michael van Gerwen is the defending champion, but he faces a huge challenge from the likes of red-hot teenage sensation Luke Littler and reigning world champion Luke Humphries.

There's hard-hitting boxing too, with the headline fight of the month seeing Tyson Fury take on Oleksandr Usyk for the title of undisputed world heavyweight champion on Saturday 18th. All the action from the undercard and the main event is live on Sky Sports Box Office.

The stars of golf will be competing in the second Major of the season when they battle it out in the PGA Championship at Valhalla Golf Club, while Formula 1 fans can enjoy all the racing action from the Emilia-Romagna and Monaco Grands Prix.

This is also a huge month for cricket fans - as well as the final matches of the Indian Premier League, the start of the domestic T20 Blast and the County Championship, England's cricketers return to home soil, where they take on Pakistan in a fast and furious T20 series as they warm up for June's T20 World Cup.

Of course, that's not all: there's every match live from the Super League, plus tennis, European Tour and PGA Tour golf, basketball, Bundesliga football, IndyCar racing and much more.

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A selection of sports fixtures in May & June:

Wednesday 22nd May	Cricket: England v Pakistan (1st T20)
Thursday 23rd May	Premier League Darts: Finals (London) Scottish Premiership: play-off first leg 8.00pm
Friday 24th May	Formula 1: Monaco Grand Prix
Sunday 26th May	EFL Championship: play-off final 4.30pm Scottish Premiership: play-off second leg 12.00pm Formula 1: Monaco Grand Prix Cricket: Indian Premier League Final
Thursday 30th May	DP World Tour: European Open PGA Tour: RBC Canadian Open LPGA: US Women's Open Cricket: England v Pakistan (4th T20)
Tuesday 4th June	England v Scotland (T20 World Cup)
Wednesday 5th June	India v Ireland (T20 World Cup)
Saturday 8th June	Australia v England (T20 World Cup)
Sunday 9th June	Formula 1: Canadian Grand Prix
Thursday 13th June	Golf Major: US Open

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May 2024 - There's no better a month to reduce your club's gas & electric bills

Who are MJ Utilities?

Since 2014 we have established ourselves as a leading Commercial Energy Broker, negotiating thousands of contracts and helping our clients save money on their business electric and gas bills. We have worked with the NI Federation of Clubs for almost nine years, helping many members reduce their energy spend and consumption.

What does an energy broker do?

You know the meerkats you see on television who help find you the best insurance deals? Well, we're bit like that, only for commercial electric and gas prices.

What's the benefit of using an energy broker?

Knowledge: Energy brokers have a good understanding of the commercial energy market. They constantly monitor gas and electricity market prices, enabling them to help clients make informed business energy buying decisions.

Independence: A fundamental advantage of using a broker is their impartiality. Because we work independently of all the gas and electricity suppliers, our service is unbiased.

Competitive: The price paid for energy is largely down to 'Supply & Demand'. Think of it this way... smaller businesses

often get a raw deal when it comes to energy prices. Larger businesses often benefit from lower prices due to their higher consumption. We give suppliers the opportunity for dozens of accounts every month, however they must compete for the business. Competition is a good thing - it means margins get lowered, resulting in better prices for our clients.

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Game of Thrones Studio Tour partners with Ulster Rugby

The world's only official Game of Thrones Studio Tour recently teamed up with Ulster Rugby for a one-of-a-kind experience that brought the Iron Throne to fans in April and May.

Covering the home games between Ulster and Welsh side Cardiff Rugby, Italy's Benetton Rugby, and Irish rivals Leinster, the collaboration saw the Game of Thrones Studio Tour bring the iconic Iron Throne to the Kingspan Stadium in Belfast to create a once-in-a-lifetime photo opportunity and offer fans attending the game a chance to win Game of Thrones Studio Tour tickets and merchandise.



Ulster Rugby stars Mike Lowry, Ethan McLroy, and John Cooney, along with Game of Thrones Studio Tour Marketing Executive Holly Rydout and Glenda Willett, Ulster Rugby's Business Development Manager.

Situated along the Dublin-Belfast corridor, Game of Thrones Studio Tour invites guests to explore actual Game of Thrones film sets including Kings Landings, Winterfell and Dragonstone.

For more information, visit www.gameofthronesstudiotour.com

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Smoking ban for individuals born in or after 2009

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has actively pushed for a prohibition on smoking throughout the UK, with Members of Parliament endorsing the government's initiative to establish a "smoke-free generation" and mitigate smoking-related fatalities.

What does the smoking ban entail?

The regulations will impact the sale of cigarettes in the UK rather than the act of smoking itself. According to the new legislation, the legal age for purchasing cigarettes, presently at 18, will incrementally rise by one year annually. Consequently, individuals born in or after 2009 will be permanently barred from legally purchasing cigarettes. However, those already permitted to

purchase cigarettes will remain unaffected.

To combat underage tobacco and vape sales, the government plans to implement £100 on-the-spot fines for non-compliant shops in England and Wales, with local authorities retaining the proceeds for law enforcement. This enforcement effort will complement existing £2,500 fines that courts can impose. Additionally, the government intends to allocate funds towards enforcement, including addressing cigarette availability on the black market.

These new regulations will extend to all duty-free shops in the UK, although individuals may legally bring cigarettes purchased abroad into the

UK. The government aims to enforce these measures by 2027 and collaborate with the governments of Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland to ensure nationwide implementation.

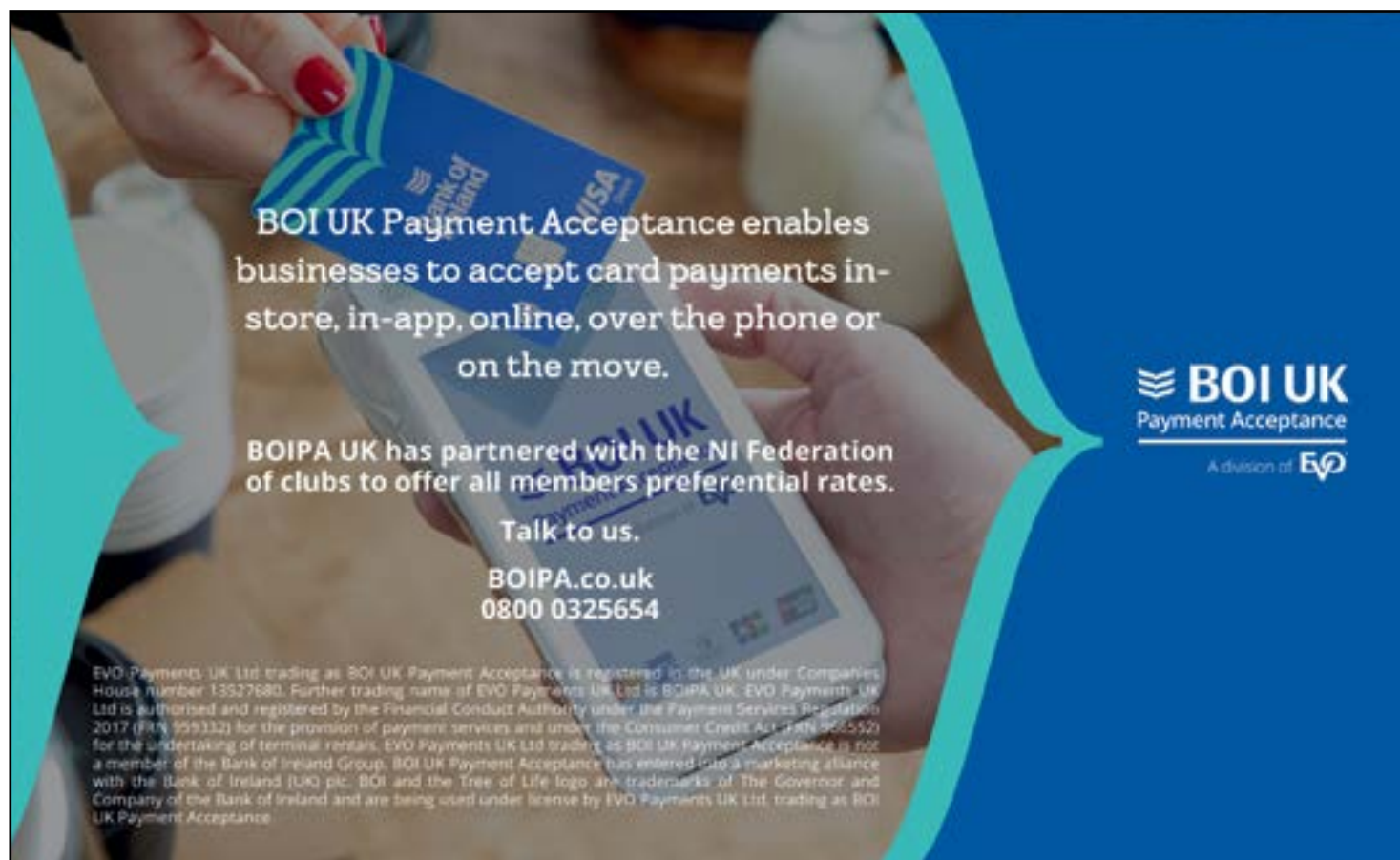
Why the focus on smoking and its associated risks?

The government underscores smoking as the leading preventable cause of death, disability, and illness, resulting in approximately 80,000 fatalities annually in the UK. Establishing a "smoke-free generation" is projected to prevent over 470,000 cases of heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and other diseases by the end of the century.

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill additionally aims to address

vaping among non-smoking youths. While vaping is deemed less harmful than smoking, health experts caution against its initiation for non-smokers, citing potential long-term damage to lungs, hearts, and brains. The government plans to ban disposable vapes in England by April 2025, with intentions to extend this ban nationwide.

The substantial increase in cigarette prices in recent years, with a packet now exceeding £15, including £6.33 in taxes, has served as a significant motivator for smoking cessation. Research indicates that half of those attempting to quit smoking did so for health reasons, while a quarter cited cost concerns.



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Scientists' new approach in fight against counterfeit alcoholic spirits

In the shadowy world of counterfeit alcoholic spirit production, where profits soar and brands are exploited, the true extent of this illegal market remains shrouded.

Now scientists from the International Centre for Brewing and Distilling (ICBD) at Heriot-Watt University, in Edinburgh, Scotland, working alongside Dr John Edwards of Process NMR Associates, based in New York, are compiling a database to test, compare and log alcoholic spirits.

The research has featured in a paper, titled, *Worldwide Illicit and Counterfeit Alcoholic Spirits: Problem, Detection, and Prevention*, published in the *Journal of the American Society of Brewing Chemists*.

The team have spent the last six months using lab-based analytical techniques to detect the chemical fingerprint of hundreds of authentic international spirits, including whisky, tequila, mezcal, and bourbon.

Michael Bryan of the ICBD at Heriot-Watt, is leading the research as part of his PhD project. He said, "Once complete, this database will provide in-depth analysis of hundreds of legitimate spirits, becoming an information source to determine the authenticity of a product.

"At present, testing apparatus, methodology and human resource is ridiculously expensive, costing up to half a million or more pounds. And the analysis machinery is huge, they can be size of a car or

bigger. So, it's a very difficult process and what I want to do is to take a different approach.

"Let's transfer the heavy lifting from analytical services to comparative mathematics."

While counterfeit spirit production is sizeable, the paper acknowledges there is no single solution, with tougher legislation and increased fines not proven to be significant deterrents. It highlights the need for the development of low-cost methods to determine the authenticity of a product without the need to physically open a bottle.

Working with Process NMR Associates, the scientists are using a variety of analytical tools, including near infrared spectroscopy (NIR), ultra-violet visible (UV-Vis) spectroscopy, liquid chromatography (HPLC-DAD), and nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy (NMR) to determine the chemistry of sample spirits.

Michael continues, "By having a database of hundreds of spirits, outlining the legitimacy of a product, we can use less expensive techniques to sample a product. If it doesn't meet those benchmarks, then we can quickly determine that it requires further analysis. This will ultimately save time and resources and ensure that we focus efforts on products that we suspect of being counterfeit."

The true scale of counterfeit spirit production is unknown, however the World Health Organisation estimates that at least 25% of all spirits



consumed are illicit. Many other authorities, including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, place this figure at over 40% in some areas.

Counterfeit spirits are commonly sold through online marketplaces, social media, and black-market websites, making them difficult to regulate and allowing sellers to hide their identity. In many cases, the buyer of counterfeit spirits does so willingly, often due to affordability.

A major impact of illicit spirit production relates to public health. Some counterfeit spirits can contain harmful ingredients including, in extreme cases, aviation fuel or embalming fluid to increase the alcoholic concentration. Consequently, cases of liver damage, blindness, and death result.

Only last year, Iran saw a rise in fatalities linked to counterfeit alcohol and poisoning in the north of the country with 14 deaths and at least 120 additional poisonings.

As much as 33% of tested old and collected Scotch whisky is said to be counterfeit. A figure underlined in 2018 when the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre tested 55 bottles of Scotch Whisky that were old and considered rare. These were obtained from private collectors, auctions, and retail. The test concluded 21 bottles (38%) were faked, and every bottle from before 1900 found to be counterfeit.

Professor Annie Hill from Heriot-Watt University is the academic supervisor for the project. She said, "The Scotch Whisky Association drives the fight against counterfeit Scotch, and The Scotch Whisky Research Institute is a world leader in the detection of counterfeit spirits. This paper defines the problems and highlights potential solutions and our continuing research aims to further increase awareness, and to develop accessible and affordable methods to enable wider detection and identification of illicit distilled spirit products."



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£50 raised could bring two community leaders together for a day.

£185 could pay for an action-packed programme for kids who don't usually meet one another.

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For further information on Club Fundraising contact our Supporter Relationship Manager Catherine O'Hara at:
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Sale di Mare offers NI drinkers a taste of Italian coast

United Wines launches newest member of Birra Moretti 'famiglia' in N. Ireland

A refreshing new Italian beer with 'a hint of sea salt' has reached Northern Ireland's shores, courtesy of leading lager brand **Birra Moretti** and Craigavon-based drinks distributor **United Wines** (UW).

Sale di Mare, which translates as 'salt of the sea', is the newest member of the Birra Moretti 'famiglia' and promises to refresh the local lager market with an authentic taste of the Italian coast. Harvested from Sicily, Sale di Mare (*pronounced 'sah-lay dee mah-ray'*) is a naturally unfiltered, medium-bodied premium lager (4.8% ABV), brewed with Italian passion and the finest quality ingredients.

Slightly hazy in colour, its extra hop aromas give a fuller taste than Birra Moretti L'Autentica, with herbal aromas of citrus and pine.

With sea salt commonly used in food to enrich flavours, Sale di Mare isn't just great as a stand-alone beer, but also paired with food, its taste profile perfectly complements some of Italy's finest coast-inspired dishes.

UW Brand Manager David Greenlees believes the new lager will tempt 'curious' drinkers and encourage more people to discover beer this summer.

"We are absolutely thrilled to introduce Sale di Mare to the Northern Ireland market," said David.



BELLA BIRRA! United Wines Brand Manager David Greenlees enjoys a first sip of Sale di Mare, a refreshing new Italian beer with 'a hint of sea salt' from leading lager brand Birra Moretti. Launched in Northern Ireland recently, Sale di Mare promises to refresh the local lager market with an authentic taste of the Italian coast.

"With its crisp, refreshing taste and very cool Italian coast vibe, it's a perfect beer for the summer, so let's hope we get some well-deserved sunshine over the next few months! If not, just close your eyes, take a sip and imagine you're basking in the Sicilian sun," he laughed.

"The launch of Sale di Mare in Northern Ireland gives local outlets a great opportunity to build on their premium continental lager offering with a huge market-leading brand."

For more information, visit <https://unitedwines.co.uk/brand/birra-moretti-sale-di-mare/>

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United for twenty years!

Three employees at United Wines have been recognised for their long service, having worked for the company for a combined total of 60 years.



Company Accountant Rory Hill from Banbridge, and brothers Conor McStravick (Stock Controller) and John McStravick (Goods In Manager) from Aghagallon, were each presented with a

Rory Hill (second from right) John McStravick (left) and his brother Conor McStravick (right), pictured with United Wines Managing Director Martin McAuley.

commemorative plaque and a gift voucher from Managing Director Martin McAuley to mark 20 years' service at the company's County Armagh base.

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Northern Ireland Football Awards 2024

Kyle McClean was named the Dream Spanish Homes Player of the Year at the NI Football Awards held at the end of April.

The Linfield midfielder scooped the big award of the night, as he was voted the Dream Spanish Homes Player of the Year at the star-studded gathering of Northern Ireland footballing elite.

The 25-year-old has come of age to become a key driving force in the Windsor Park engine room this season, which has included a man of the match performance in the BetMcLean Cup Final against Portadown in March.

McClean came out on top of a strong three player shortlist which also included Cliftonville's Rory Hale and Larne's Andy Ryan.

Loughgall were also big winners on the night, as the Villagers picked up two of the other major awards. In their first season back in the top-flight since 2008, Loughgall have impressed many with their performances on the pitch, which has included some huge results that had the club chasing a place in the top six prior to the split, instead of looking the other direction.

Dean Smith was awarded with the Reavey's Solicitors Manager of the Year award, coming out on top of a very strong shortlist, which included David Healy (Linfield), Tiernan Lynch (Larne) and Jim Magilton (Cliftonville).

Young starlet Benji Magee caught the attention of many in his breakthrough season in the Sports Direct Premiership for Loughgall, and he was presented with the Young Player of the Year award.

Outgoing Crusaders boss, Stephen Baxter, was inducted into the Dr Malcolm Brodie Hall of Fame by the NI Football Writers' Association as his trophy-laden 19 years as manager of the Shore Road club came to a close.

The retiring Glenavon Chairman, Adrian Teer, was acknowledged by the NI Football League for over 40 years' service to both Glenavon and the League. Also honoured for off-the-pitch activity was popular statistician Marshall Gillespie, who was presented with the NI Football Writers' Association Merit Award.

Institute's Shaun Leppard won the Championship Player of the Year, with Alex Pomeroy of Limavady United going home with the Premier Intermediate League Player award.

The newly formed PFA NI presented their Player of the Year awards to Rory Hale of Cliftonville (Premiership) and Jordan Jenkins of Dundela (Championship).



Linfield midfielder, Kyle McClean is the 2023/24 season Player of the Year.



Loughgall's Dean Smith is the proud recipient of this year's Manager of the Year award.



NIFWA Chairman Michael Clarke presents outgoing Crusaders boss, Stephen Baxter with his award inducting him into the Dr Malcolm Brodie Hall of Fame.



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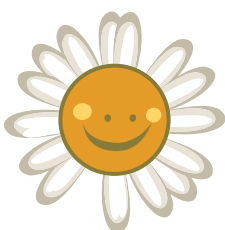
Photo: Sophie and her Cancer Support Specialist Karen

To find out more about leaving a gift in your will:

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DEE
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