EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE LICENSING ACT 2003 (FIFA WORLD CUP LICENSING HOURS) ORDER 2026

2026 No. 520

1. Introduction

1.1 This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Home Office and is laid before Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

2. Declaration

2.1 Sarah Jones, Minister for Policing and Crime at the Home Office confirms that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.

2.2 Marcus Starling, Deputy Director for the Drugs and Alcohol Unit at the Home Office confirms that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.

3. Contact

3.1 Toby Pinnock at the Home Office can be contacted by email at the following address with any queries regarding the instrument: toby.pinnock@homeoffice.gov.uk

Part One: Explanation, and context, of the Instrument

4. Overview of the Instrument

What does the legislation do?

4.1 The FIFA Men's Football World Cup 2026 ('World Cup 2026'), will begin on 11 June 2026 and end on 19 July 2026. This instrument introduces a contingent Order which will provide venues in England and Wales with the option to extend licensing hours for the round of 32, round of 16, quarter-finals, semi-finals, bronze final (third place play off) and final of the FIFA Men's Football World Cup 2026 ('World Cup 2026'), so long as a home nation, as defined in the instrument as England or Scotland, is playing in a specified match.

4.2 The Order will apply to premises already licensed until 11pm for the sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises.

Where does the legislation extend to, and apply?

4.3 The extent of this instrument (that is, the jurisdiction(s) which the instrument forms part of the law of) is England and Wales.

4.4 The territorial application of this instrument (that is, where the instrument produces a practical effect) is England and Wales.

5. Policy Context

What is being done and why?

5.1 This Order will enable communities in England and Wales to come together at their local licensed premises to support England and/or Scotland if they reach these stages of the tournament and ensure their success in reaching this stage can be celebrated.

5.2 The Secretary of State considers the knockout stages of the round of 32, round of 16, quarter-finals, semi-finals, bronze final and final of the FIFA Men's World Cup 2026 (29 June–19 July 2026) to be a "celebration period" for the purposes of section 172(1) of the Licensing Act 2003 ("the 2003 Act").

5.3 Of the four home nations teams (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), only England and Scotland have qualified for World Cup 2026.

5.4 Therefore, should England and/or Scotland reach these stages of the tournament, the Government considers this to be an occasion of exceptional national significance warranting a licensing hours extension.

5.5 This instrument will extend licensing hours in England and Wales. For the specified matches in the relevant stages scheduled to take place from 5pm up to 9pm, hours will be extended from 11pm until 1am. For the specified matches scheduled to take place after 9pm up to 10pm, hours will be extended from 11pm until 2am. Matches that are scheduled to take place past 10pm are not in scope.

5.6 The Order will apply to premises already licensed until 11pm for the sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises. For the small number of businesses which will not be able to take advantage of the extension as their normal licensing hours are until 10:30pm, rather than the required criteria of 11pm to make use of the extension, a TEN may be submitted.

5.7 If neither England nor Scotland are due to play in any of the matches that fall within this scope, the Order will not apply.

5.8 For the avoidance of doubt, if neither England nor Scotland reach the round of 32, round of 16, quarter-finals, semi-finals, bronze final or final, then normal licensing hours will apply on the dates specified. For example, if either team were to reach the semi-finals but not make it to the final, no extension will apply on the date of the final match.

5.9 This instrument will permit licensed premises in England and Wales, subject to their existing licence conditions, to remain open for the sale and supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises. If a premises, licensed for the sale of alcohol, also serves food, they may continue to serve food during the extended hours and continue the provision of late-night refreshment (if the premises are also authorised at those times to sell or supply alcohol for consumption on the premises).

5.10 The Order will not apply to the off-sale of alcohol (i.e. consumption of alcohol off the premises).

5.11 Licensed premises will not need to pay a fee to extend their licensing hours, since the contingent Order will automatically apply to licensed premises and therefore the need for individual premises to submit temporary event notices (TENs) is removed. Without this contingent Order, it would cost individual premises £21.00 to submit a TEN application to their local authority. This Order will save businesses paying the application fee, and the time local authorities would have spent processing the applications. Unlicensed premises will not benefit from a relaxation in licensing hours and will still need to apply for a TEN to undertake licensable activities. As per the 2003 Act, knowingly allowing or carrying on unauthorised licensable activities carries a maximum penalty of six months imprisonment, or fine or both.[1]

[1] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/17/section/136

What was the previous policy, how is this different?

5.12 Previously, licensed premises would need to submit a TEN if they wanted to extend their licensing hours outside of what is specified on their premises licence in order to accommodate World Cup 2026 matches. This Order removes this requirement for specific scheduled matches, contingent on criteria being met.

6. Legislative and Legal Context

How has the law changed?

6.1 The 2003 Act provides that premises can be authorised to be used for certain activities (referred to as "licensable activities"), including the sale of alcohol by retail (for consumption on the premises) and the supply of alcohol by or on behalf of a club to, or to the order of, a member of the club.

6.2 The authorisation by a licensing authority for the sale of alcohol must be made without impeding on the four licensing objectives under the 2003 Act: the prevention of crime and disorder, the prevention of public nuisance, public safety and the protection of children from harm. Indefinite authorisation for a premises is given by means of a premises licence or club premises certificate (for members' clubs), and this authorisation sets out which licensable activities may be carried on, during which hours and subject to what conditions.

6.3 Section 172 of the 2003 Act gives the Secretary of State the power to extend licensing hours by means of a Licensing Hours Order (LHO) if they consider that a period (the "celebration period") marks an occasion of exceptional international, national or local significance. This power has been exercised in recent years to mark major football tournaments, including the 2014 FIFA World Cup, the UEFA Euro 2020 final (2021), the UEFA Euro 2024 semi-final and final and the UEFA Women's Euro 2025 semi-final and final.

6.4 A LHO can be used to relax licensing hours in licensed premises in England and Wales during a period not exceeding four days, as per section 172(5)(a) of the 2003 Act. A LHO may be applied to all licensed premises in England and Wales.

6.5 The exercise of the power in section 172 is subject to a condition that the Secretary of State must consult such persons as s/he considers appropriate. Following the Licensing Hours Extensions Act 2026 coming into force in February 2026, the 2003 Act now specifies that the parliamentary process for an order is the negative resolution procedure.

Why was this approach taken to change the law?

6.6 It is possible to make use of the TENs process whereby individual businesses would have had to apply and pay for an extension to their licensing hours should they wish to do so. However, large numbers of TENs put a strain on local authorities who process them, and those submitting a TEN must pay the associated fee. Reviewing TENs also places additional burdens on local police forces. A LHO reduces burdens for licensed premises and local authorities and allows for celebration in a moment of national importance.

7. Consultation

Summary of consultation outcome and methodology

7.1 The Home Office ran a public consultation for six weeks from 4 December 2025 to 15 January 2026 on the proposal to extend licensing hours for the FIFA Men's World Cup 2026. The consultation concluded with 74% (28 out of 38) of respondents in favour of extending licensing hours for the semi-finals and final of the tournament, providing the extension should only apply to the sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises. The results can be found on GOV.UK.[2]

7.2 The consultation received a total of 38 responses. In addition, 20 partial responses were received and were discounted from this analysis having been deemed invalid. Therefore, the analysis was based on 38 complete responses.

7.3 The key respondents were members of the public, Police and Crime Commissioners, members of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), health representatives and trade organisations. Within the consultation there were three closed questions and one open question.

7.4 In response to the first question, which asked whether licensing hours should be extended if any of the home nations are successful in reaching the semi-finals, out of those 38 respondents, 28 agreed with the extension to licensing hours, and 10 opposed the proposal.

7.5 The second question asked whether licensing hours should be extended if any of the home nations are successful in reaching the final. Out of those 38 respondents, 28 agreed with the extension to licensing hours, and 10 opposed the proposal.

7.6 The third question asked whether the extension should only apply to the sale of alcohol on the premises as opposed to off sales. Out of the 38 respondents, 28 agreed that the extension should only apply to on sales, and 10 disagreed.

7.7 The final question invited written responses to expand upon the views expressed, specifically seeking reasoning if they disagreed with the proposal and views on whether the scope of the extension should be wider and, for example, include the quarter-finals. Out of those 38 respondents, 28 answered this question. These responses fell broadly into two categories - wanting to expand the extension to cover more matches in the tournament or raising concern about potential crime, disorder and general disturbance. A small majority of respondents who answered the question were in favour of increasing the scope of the extensions.

7.8 Having considered the responses to question four, the scope was subsequently expanded to include the quarter-finals. Two further, targeted consultations were carried out in January and February 2026 to gather additional views from key stakeholders in relation to the rounds of 32 and 16 matches, including the NPCC Lead for Alcohol Licensing and Harm, the Local Government Association (LGA), the Institute of Licensing (IoL) and UK Hospitality.

7.9 The NPCC Lead for Alcohol Licensing and Harm raised concern about the increased potential for violence and disorder as the tournament progresses. The LGA tested the proposals with their licensing expert forum, and while there was less support than there was for extensions for the latter stages of the tournament, they were receptive to the

[2] www.gov.uk/government/consultations/relaxation-of-licensing-hours-for-the-mens-football-world-cup-2026/outcome/contingent-relaxation-of-licensing-hours-during-the-semi-final-and-final-of-the-fifa-mens-football-world-cup-2026-consultation-outcome

overall proposal and the idea of some extensions lasting until 2am. The IoL and UK Hospitality were also supportive.

7.10 Police deployments and resourcing are operational matters. During previous tournaments where licensing hours have been extended, police have put in place appropriate local plans to minimise and mitigate any increased risk of alcohol-fuelled disorder, and no significant large-scale disorder incidents have occurred during recent licensing extension. The time for which the extension may last is limited to 2 to 3 hours, dependent on the match specifics, and the extension is contingent in nature, taking a proportionate approach to mark these events. The Government consultation response is available on GOV.UK[3].

7.11 Overall, the extension is considered appropriate on the basis that, if England and/or Scotland progress past the group stage of the tournament, these matches would be of exceptional national significance, and the public should be able to come together and celebrate. This Order will also support the hospitality sector and reduce potential burdens on local authorities.

8. Applicable Guidance

8.1 The Government is not issuing guidance in relation to this Order. This is because this power has been previously used on several occasions to mark other occasions of exceptional national significance. Premises may wish to refer to the Section 182 Guidance which accompanies the 2003 Act and is published on GOV.UK for further information.[4]

Part Two: Impact and the Better Regulation Framework

9. Impact Assessment

9.1 A full Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this instrument. An Economic Note has instead been prepared. This will be published alongside the instrument on the legislation.gov.uk website. The Economic Note estimates that the benefits of the measure will outweigh the costs. The benefits are made up of time savings for businesses that do not need to apply for a TEN and the reduced processing cost for Licensing Authorities (LAs) and police. The only monetised costs are the familiarisation costs to publicans who are notified of this change in legislation. Overall, the Net Present Social Value is estimated to be £0.99 million, with a range between £0.58 million and £2.97 million. Likewise for businesses, the overall impact will be positive, with an estimated Business Net Present Value in the range of £0.55 million and £1.70 million with a best estimate of £0.88 million. All the above estimates assume that England and/or Scotland will reach at least the semi-final stage of the tournament.

Impact on businesses, charities and voluntary bodies

9.2 The main impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies is that premises already licensed to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises that wish to remain open beyond their normal licensed hours will save time and costs from not having to apply

[3] www.gov.uk/government/consultations/relaxation-of-licensing-hours-for-the-mens-football-world-cup-2026/outcome/contingent-relaxation-of-licensing-hours-during-the-semi-final-and-final-of-the-fifa-mens-football-world-cup-2026-consultation-outcome#consultation-responses

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/explanatory-memorandum-revised-guidance-issued-under-s-182-of-licensing-act-2003

for a TEN. Licence holders will welcome the option to extend their trading hours should the criteria of the Order be met. There is no impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies that do not hold a premises licence or club premises certificate to sell alcohol on the premises or provide regulated entertainment. The central estimate of savings for businesses is £877,000 through licensed premises not having to go through the TENs application process, assuming that a national team reaches the semi-final stage of competition. However, there may be a small familiarisation cost as businesses will have to educate their staff on the legislation change, albeit a small cost estimated to be £6,500 which is offset through the large savings outlined above.

9.3 The legislation does not negatively impact small or micro businesses as it should save them time and costs from not having to apply for a TEN. There will, however, be a small number of businesses which will not be able to take advantage of the extension as their normal licensing hours are until 10:30pm, rather than the required criteria of 11pm to make use of the extension. This will aim to stop unsuitable licensed premises e.g. hairdressers from making use of the extension to extend their hours until 1am or 2am, which would not be necessary or appropriate.

9.4 The impact on the public sector is likely to lead to some modest time savings for police forces, environmental health authorities and licensing authorities from not having to review an increased number of TENs from premises that choose to stay open late during this period. The central estimate of savings to the public sector is comprised of £803,000 for licensing authorities' time saved, which would be compensated by the receipt of TEN application fees under regular licensing policy, and a further estimated £123,000 for police time saved. This estimate assumes that one of or multiple of the national teams in scope for the licensing extension reach the semi-final stage of the competition. If the teams fail to reach the latter stages of the tournament, the impacts will be reduced.

9.5 Whilst some stakeholders have suggested that the licensing extension may lead to an increase in alcohol-related crime and disorder, there is an absence of reliable data to determine whether there is an impact on crime when relaxing licensing hours for nationally significant events. Thus, it has not been possible to state what the potential impact might be or to monetise any potential additional policing costs associated with managing this crime and disorder. However, there is no evidence that past extensions have led to a significant increase.

10. Monitoring and review

What is the approach to monitoring and reviewing this legislation?

10.1 There are no plans to review this instrument. The Order will only apply on the specified days. A review is not required by the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015 as the provisions will cease to have effect before the end of the period of five years beginning with the commencement date.

Part Three: Statements and Matters of Particular Interest to Parliament

11. Matters of special interest to Parliament

11.1 None.

12. European Convention on Human Rights

12.1 As the instrument is subject to negative procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

13. The Relevant European Union Acts

13.1 This instrument is not made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, the European Union (Future Relationship) Act 2020 or the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 ("relevant European Union Acts").