**PRESS RELEASE**

**13 February 2015**

**BELFAST NIGHTCLUB BREACHES DRINKS CODE**

The Independent Complaints Panel (ICP) that oversees the Northern Ireland Responsible Promotion and Retail of Alcohol Code in Northern Ireland has upheld a complaint against Villa nightclub.

A complaint was received regarding the ‘III Behaviour-Breaking Bad’ promotion operated by Villa nightclub in Belfast. The ICP found that there was a breach of Section 11 (i) of the code and 11 (k) *No alcohol promotion in Northern Ireland will: have associations with bravado, violence, anti-social or criminal behaviour or make direct or indirect reference to drug culture or illegal drugs in promotional material.*

Having considered the available information the Independent Complaints Panel has upheld the complaint and found that the promotion breached the Code.

**Debbie Donnelly, Vice Chair of the Independent Complaints Panel overseeing the Code, said:**

“Following a detailed process, the Independent Complaints Panel has upheld the complaint against Villa nightclub. Whilst we are not against licensed premises offering good value promotions to their customers, it is the responsibility of every licensee to ensure they do so within the terms of the Code.”

“We would like to note however that Villa Nightclub has not been subject to any previous complaints, ceased the promotion immediately and have been extremely cooperative throughout the review process”.

**ENDS**

For further information, please contact Arlene O’Connor at MCE Public Relations on 028 90 267099/ 07736 049 754 or [Arlene@mcepublicrelations.com](mailto:Arlene@mcepublicrelations.com)

**NOTES TO EDITOR:**

**ABOUT THE CODE**

* The Joint Industry Code for the Responsible Promotion & Retail of Alcohol in Northern Ireland (2012) was launched on 23rd May 2012.
* Following its launch it was rolled out for a three month adjustment period to allow the industry to adapt to the new measures.
* The code came into full effect on 1st September 2012.
* A copy of the full code can be found at [www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org](http://www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org)

**HOW THE CODE WORKS**

* If an individual thinks that an alcoholic drink promotional activity or sales practice might breach the Code, they can complain to an Independent Complaints Panel. All they have to do is send a letter enclosing a flyer or describing the promotion or sales practice in question, with as much information as possible.
* The individual lodging a complaint will be notified (within 7 working days of receipt) if the complaint is one which can be dealt with under the Code.
* If it is, it will be investigated by the Independent Complaints Panel which meets regularly and is independent of the alcohol industry. If it is not, it will be explained why.
* The Panel will inform the company that a complaint has been made and ask for their response.
* The complaint and the company’s response are then adjudicated on by the Panel. The individual will be informed when the Panel is meeting to consider the complaint.
* If the Panel does not uphold the complaint it will be explained why not. The decision is final.
* If the Panel does uphold the complaint, the decision is provisional and the company is given the opportunity to make further representations. This is because finding against a company may have serious business and reputational repercussions. The Panel will then meet again to consider any further representations before a final decision is made. If the company does not challenge the provisional decision, then the decision becomes final.
* The individual who initially lodged the complaint and the company are then informed of the Panel’s final decision.
* Further information on how to make a complaint and the timescales involved can be found on the website [www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org](http://www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org)