**Independent Complaints Panel**

**Responsible Retailing Code NI**

**Press Release**

**[EMBARGO]: 6am Friday 25th October (25.10.2013)**

**Derry/Londonderry nightclub breaches responsible drinking code**

The Independent Complaints Panel that oversees The Joint Industry Code for the Responsible Promotion and Retail of Alcohol in Northern Ireland has upheld a complaint against Envy Bar & Nightclub located on the Strand Road in Derry/Londonderry.

The nature of the complaint was based on the short amount of time that customers had to drink under the offer.

The ‘free bar’ promotion encouraged customers to consume alcohol to the value of £10 within a fixed period of two hours.

Having considered the available information and following representations from the nightclub owner, the Independent Complaints Panel has upheld the complaint and found that the nightclub breached the code which states that no alcohol promotion in Northern Ireland will:

* *‘Condone or encourage illegal, excessive or irresponsible drinking such as binge-drinking, drunkenness or drink-driving, nor refer in any favourable manner to the effects of intoxication’.*

**Duncan McCausland, Chair of the Independent Complaints Panel overseeing the code, said today:**

*“After investigating the complaint, the panel took the decision that the promotion in question clearly breached the Responsible Retailing Code NI.*

*The panel was unanimous in their view that this offer encouraged customers to engage in excessive and irresponsible drinking in a defined period of time.*

*We have now met with the owner of the venue who cooperated fully with this process and acted as soon as the compliance issue was brought into question. We welcome the fact that they have amended the promotion to comply with the code guidance and advice.*

*Irresponsible drink promotions have a negative impact and that is why the Independent Complaints Panel moved swiftly once this complaint was drawn to our attention.*

*The Code is there to ensure a good basic standard for those involved in the alcohol industry to adhere to. Responsible retailing, a positive attitude toward the consumption of alcohol and a strong enforceable code makes and creates a safe environment for people to enjoy themselves”.*

**Colin Neill, Chief Executive of Pubs of Ulster, said irresponsible drinks promotions were not welcome.**

*"Irresponsible drinks promotions and practices have no place in our industry and as the representative body of the trade, we are committed to ensuring that our members comply with all aspects of the Code.*

*The pub industry has made much progress in becoming more responsible and accountable for their events, promotions and marketing output.*

*We want to ensure that we continue to maintain our quality product and that people can have a good time. We are encouraged that bad practice is being flagged and that the Independent Complaints Panel is acting effectively.*

*We hope this decision serves as a reminder to all licensees that the Code and its panel have a zero-tolerance approach to irresponsible practices”.*

Full details of the Responsible Retailing Code can be found at

[www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org](http://www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org)

**For further information please contact:**

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**Notes to editors**

* The Joint Industry Code for the Responsible Promotion and Retail of Alcohol in Northern Ireland (2012), which aims to address the current attitude and culture in Northern Ireland in terms of alcohol misuse and abuse, applies to all suppliers and retailers of alcohol in Northern Ireland.  It has been developed with the support of the Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland as well as the representative bodies of the drinks industries in Northern Ireland.  It is hoped that compliance with the code will eventually become a condition of the granting or renewal of both liquor and entertainment licenses across Northern Ireland.

**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. The decision will be notified to the press, the company’s local PSNI and Council, as well as being published on the website and in the Annual Report.
* 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)