

The people of Preston have a mixed feelings on whether 24 hour drinking will help ease the city's alcohol problem.

Most people interviewed disagree with plans to relax licensing laws to enable 24 hour drinking. Only two people gave a firm yes with one person unsure.

Figures for England show that out of 1.4million crimes in the second quarter of 2005, 318,000 were alcohol related. These figures also show that of the violent crimes more than half are believed to have been drink-fuelled.

This increase in drunken violence has prompted calls for the Government to halt the introduction of relaxed licensing laws which as many in Preston would argue will make matters worse.

David Hemming, 21, a 3<sup>rd</sup> year psychology student said: "People will just get more drunk than before, causing more problems to society and costing the police more to contend them." He added: "Its likely to result in an increased number of people with alcohol related problems, whether psychological or physical."

Amy Piggot, 27, a waitress at a Preston restaurant agreed. Originally from Holywell, North Wales, she said: "It's a bad idea. Extended drinking hours will result in less and less people making it to work on a morning so unemployment will rise. It won't be good for family structure either, parents will be given the opportunity to stay in pubs till all hours."

Sheila Hill, aged 67, retired and living in Fulwood said: "You see the results of people drinking too much on television almost every day now. They're either causing trouble or getting in to it. This will just mean more disruption. It can be very frightening living on your own and seeing drunk people outside your home."

**M/F**

Others who disapprove of the proposal were Phil Anwyl and Nicola Griffiths, a bar worker, both 21 and students at the University of Central Lancashire. Megan Ram, 36, who said; “There’s enough drunken yobs and crime without the influence of alcohol 24hours a day.” And 25 year old owner of Booze Brothers Off-Licence, Vijay. He said: “It could be good for business but it definitely isn’t for people. They make trouble on the street outside and it won’t help people’s health.”

Despite a strong opposing argument there are a few people who feel that the proposal to allow 24 hour drinking will benefit the community.

Dave Healy, aged 46, is the manager of The Old Vic Pub in Preston. He said: “People binge drink to fit more into their night before closing time. This just results in them getting legless and brawling on the street outside. With no closing time I don’t think we’d have this problem. People would be leaving at various times when they decided to and not quite as drunk hopefully. It gives them a choice.”

Also in favour is Amandeep Patel, who is 36 and a taxi driver. He said: “I know my job would be better if drinking was 24 hour. People will rush less to drink and not end up being sick in the back or getting aggressive.”

Not entirely convinced, Bryony, 21, Duty supervisor at Source Bar said: “It’ll stop trouble here in the bar. Its hard chucking people out at 2.00am because they always drink loads, very fast when they have to leave so this way they’ll take longer and possibly drink less. We won’t make anymore money from it and personally I don’t know if it’s a good idea.” It seems that Bryony’s divided opinion on proposals for 24 hour drinking is representative of many people in Preston and perhaps also the rest of England.

**END**