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News

City centre sees drop in weekend crime

SARAH HALL
28 July 2007 09:38

Drunken crimes and anti-social behaviour in the city centre have fallen since the new licensing laws - with weekend assaults down by almost half, according to police.

Despite predictions that 24-hour drinking would fuel alcohol-related crime, there has been an improvement in behaviour with less violent assault, criminal damage and drunken disorder. The improvements have been noticeable in the city's entertainment areas such as Prince of Wales Road, which was once dubbed "the most dangerous street in Norwich".

Recently released figures revealed assaults on Friday and Saturday nights have almost halved since the laws come into force in November 2005. In 2003 there were 141 offences relating to assault; this dropped to 74 by the end of last year.

At a meeting of the Norwich City Centre Licensing Forum this week Ian Streeter, senior licensing officer for Norwich City Council, said there had been positive changes over the past two years.

He said: "Since licensing laws were changed there has not been a rise in disorder. In fact we have seen violence and crime go down. There has been a marked drop in offences on Friday and Saturday evenings. There are also fewer complaints coming into the council about anti-social behaviour."

Mr Streeter added there were only two venues in the city centre which applied for 24-hour licensing, with the rest opting for licences until midnight, 1am or 2am for pubs and 3am for clubs.

Fears that groups of people forced out of pubs by the smoking ban could get involved in anti-social behaviour had also failed to be realised. "Smoke free regulations are now firmly in place," he said. "The majority of places have been compliant and the few that have not are given the guidance and action is taken accordingly."

Inspector Peter Walsh, who oversees the operation to manage the night-time economy in Norwich, said: "Our aim is to work with residents, local authorities and those managing and operating late-night establishments to make the city and market town centres safe and attractive places to work, visit and live. We must also acknowledge the work of volunteers, the SOS Bus crews and the new street pastors, who make a vital contribution to the safety of the mainly young people."

Julian Foster, chairman of the Norwich Citizens Forum and the Norwich Licensing Committee, said: "This is very welcome news. There was a lot of



Prince of Wales Road has become a more enjoyable destination for an evening out in Norwich.

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planning and the success is down to the continued work of the licensing forum and its relationship with residents and local licensees.”

Do you feel safer on the streets of Norwich since the change in licensing laws? Write to Evening News Letters, Prospect House, Rouen Road, Norwich, NR1 1RE, email eveningnewsletters@archant.co.uk or visit www.eveningnews24.co.uk/forums to have your say

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