

## **End the restrictions on music and dance.**

### **Please support the petition on the Prime Minister's web site.**

The Licensing Act 2003 effectively introduced a tax on singing. You might have thought singing was a fundamental human freedom, but since the act became law, if you want to sing (or dance, or make any kind of music, or be entertaining), you need a licence for it from the local council. A few hard cases have made the papers, notably carol singers and people singing happy birthday, but the effects of the act are much more far-reaching.

Before the act was introduced, it was claimed that it would promote live music, and that it would make it easier for people like publicans to get the correct license. All they would have to do was tick an extra box when applying for their normal pub license. In practice, publicans don't want to tick the box, because they know that doing so will cost them a huge amount both in money and in hassle.

There are many groups of people affected. One such group is those who enjoy traditional music. The usual format is for musicians to meet regularly in a pub and spend the evening playing music together. Anyone can turn up, learn the tunes and join in. Many of these sessions have been running for years on the basis of same place, same time next week, but since the act several long-running sessions have been forced to close because of licensing problems. More such closures are expected.

That's just one example of ordinary people trying to enjoy ordinary activities without the government putting unreasonable barriers in their way. Jazz musicians, rock musicians, choirs, orchestras, you name it - are all feeling the pressure.

It's not just pubs that are affected. Since the act, many places that previously didn't need a license now have to have one.

The licensing system is not about preventing nuisance. There were already very active local council officers taking care of that. If a pub was too loud, that could be stopped. Under the Licensing Act, it's perfectly possible to have a pub full of noisy football fans watching the match on a large screen; the entertainment isn't being provided by a person, so it's OK.

The Licensing Act may have been the result of good intentions gone wrong - who knows? All we can say now is that it's a problem that needs to be fixed. Until it is, lots of people will be denied harmless activities that have gone on for decades or even centuries without the need for a license. You may say, let people pay for licenses, but even if they were affordable, as often as not the person who needs the license isn't the person whose enjoyment is being spoiled. How fair is that?

Please visit the Prime Minister's web site and sign the petition:

**We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to recognise that music and dance should not be restricted by burdensome licensing regulations.**

***The recently introduced changes in licensing law have produced an environment where music and dance, activities which should be valued and promoted in a civilised society, are instead damaged by inappropriate regulation. We call on the Prime Minister to recognise this situation and take steps to correct it.***

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/licensing/>