

*These notes refer to the Licensing Act (Northern Ireland)
2016 (c.24) which received Royal Assent on 12 May 2016*

Licensing Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

3. The Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (“the principal Order”) requires a person wishing to sell alcohol in the course of business to hold a licence. A licence may be granted in respect of premises such as public houses, off-licences, hotels, guest houses, restaurants, conference centres, higher education institutions, and places of public entertainment.
4. The building of the SSE Arena (formerly the Odyssey Arena) in Belfast triggered consideration of the need to amend the principal Order. Indoor arenas were an entirely new type of facility for Northern Ireland and were not envisaged when the original legislation was being formulated, and therefore were not listed as a type of premises which could hold a licence. This issue was addressed by the Licensing (Indoor Arenas) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004.
5. In September 2010 the Northern Ireland Executive announced plans for state-of-the-art sports stadia to be redeveloped at the GAA’s Casement Park, Ulster Rugby’s ground at Ravenhill and the IFA’s Windsor Park. This £110m redevelopment of Northern Ireland’s three sports stadia was not anticipated when the Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 was introduced, and as such, an application for a liquor licence cannot, therefore, be made for such premises. This Act would enable such an application to be made.
6. The first of these stadia to be redeveloped relies on the use of Occasional licences to allow the sale and consumption of alcohol on the premises. In order to obtain an Occasional Licence an existing licensee must apply to the courts with decisions often granted very close to the date of the event. Also, under an Occasional Licence young people must be away from the licensed areas of the premises by 9pm which is often earlier than the end of a sporting event. This Act would relax the restrictions on the presence of young persons in licensed areas and would put outdoor stadia on the same operational footing as an indoor arena in Belfast, meaning they could deliver family entertainment in a controlled environment.