

Thursday, December 21, 2023 10:22 PM

Dear Members of the Licensing Committee,

The Nelson Trust is writing to emphatically oppose the license renewal application of Under the Prom's Sexual Entertainment Venue License for the March 2024 race week and November 2024 race meets submitted by Eroticats. The Nelson Trust objection to Sexual Entertainment Venues remains steadfast and is rooted in profound concerns over sex equality. The strong opposition echoed in the October 4, and November 18 Licensing Committee meetings by numerous groups, local residents and Alex Chalk, MP, only reinforces the community's collective stance against the normalisation of SEVs. Our line of reasoning has not changed and as such we submit our previous objection below.

We believe that where Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) operate there are always multiple harms that cannot be mitigated. Our objection to this application is based on years of frontline professional experience supporting women involved in the sex trade.

The Nelson Trust is a gender-responsive and trauma-informed organisation that works with women involved in the sex trade in Gloucestershire to help address their complex and multiple needs. There are strong links between lap dancing and selling sex, with a UK Home Office report finding that the majority of lap dancers also sell sex. The longer a woman has been stripping, the more likely it is she will be selling sex ([Prostitution and Sex Work Report.pdf](#)). Other research studies also indicate that alcohol and drug abuse is standard in the lap dancing industry, if not integral to the job ([The occupational milieu of the nude dancer: Deviant Behavior: Vol 18, No 2 \(tandfonline.com\)](#)), both by dancers and punters. This places women both in and outside of SEVs at even more risk of assault. Research also indicates considerable use of Class A drugs, initiated after entering the trade.

This published evidence supports our experience on the ground; most women we support have been through adverse childhood experiences, have been involved in domestic abuse relationships and often use drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism. Women often are unable to realise the harms of the sex trade until they are out of it. One of the women we supported to exit wrote her story in her own words, and here is an extract of how someone might end up involved in the sex trade: *'I was forced into selling sex at the age of 17 and it then became a choice I made with an addict's insane mind that I could fund my habit selling my body. But what I didn't realise is that I was not just selling my body, but I was selling a part of my soul each time I did this. And chipping away at my self-worth, my self-esteem and slowly but surely losing any empowerment as a woman I had or could have.'* This woman's story is not uncommon, and it is a voice that does not often get heard, as many women do not have access to support to address their unmet needs and increase their life choices, including the opportunity to exit the sex trade.

The CBC's responsibility to foster good relationships between men and women, in accordance with their Public Sector Equality Duty seems to conflict with the granting of new and/or variation of licenses for SEVs.

After carefully considering the published evidence, the CBC's legal responsibilities, our professional experience, and the voices of women who have exited, The Nelson Trust vehemently opposes the granting of SEV licenses and/or variations to licenses as we believe they are incompatible with women's rights, safety & equality. CBC has an opportunity to show leadership and enforce their Public Sector Equality Duty by rejecting this licence renewal application.

We stand with GRASAC, Alex Chalk, MP, and many local people who are object to Sexual Entertainment Venues in our communities. We urge the committee to contribute actively to the council's pledge for women's safety and use its influence and the legal means available to it to close the frequency exemption permitted under UK law. This move would align with the community's aspiration for a safer, more equitable environment.

With kind regards,
The Nelson Trust