

Pints down the plughole the last resort for struggling landlords

Pouring out-of-date pints down the plughole is the last resort for struggling pub landlords. That is the advice from Scotland's environmental watchdog, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), concerned about the environmental impact of the disposal of waste alcohol.

The guidance, published on the regulator's dedicated [coronavirus information hub](#), is designed to help landlords and licence holders make practical decisions on drinks disposal.

It comes against a backdrop of 10,000 licensed premises having closed during the lockdown and an estimated 7 million pints no longer fit to serve as a result.

SEPA knows the challenges faced by Scotland's pubs and licensed business, which is why the short, simple guidance has been issued.

It's part of a series of temporary regulatory guidance adopted by the agency, aiming to support Scottish businesses during the current global pandemic and to help them recover.

For affected alcohol, and where the recovery of full or part full beverage containers may be possible (as determined by a suitable risk assessment), licensees should liaise with their supplier to consider, in the following order:

1. Can it be re-routed to another manufacturing process, e.g. distillation to produce industrial alcohol or malt vinegar, or to make animal feed?
2. Can it be taken to an anaerobic digestion or composting facility?
3. Can it be applied to land? Only where there is agricultural benefit, and there may be restrictions on the volume that can be applied.
4. Can it be returned to the source of manufacture for disposal?

As a last resort, or if the drinks containers can't be safely removed from the premises, licensees may be able to dispose the waste drinks to the sewer. However, in order to do this, they must get permission and guidance from Scottish Water.

Terry A'Hearn SEPA's CEO, said:

"We know pubs and licensed premises across Scotland are facing challenges due to the COVID-19 lockdown, and some are in the unavoidable and unusual situation of having out of date or spoilt casks and kegs on their premises.

"We're trying to lessen their headache where we can by offering advice on how to dispose such alcohol in a safe manner by re-routing, recycling, returning or, as a last resort, disposing of through the sewer network in a controlled

manner.”

Colin Wilkinson, Managing Director of The Scottish Licensed Trade Association (SLTA), said:

“The SLTA welcomes the guidance produced by SEPA following the relaxation of rules on beer ullage by HMRC. The Industry has produced best practice guidance for this, taking environmental concerns into consideration, and SEPA’s guidance will add to the safe and responsible destruction of beer and lager into the drainage system. We would emphasize that all licensees should also check that they have received a communication/instructions on this issue from their supplier before they do anything.”

Emma McClarkin, Chief Executive of the Scottish Beer & Pub Association, said:

“We welcome these guidelines from SEPA which build on the best practice advice from industry. As a sector, pubs and bars fully understand the importance of their environmental impact. It is why, since closure in March, we have been working closely with Government and the water industry to ensure that pubs are able to dispose of their unsaleable stock, including destroying beer that has become unsaleable as a result of the COVID-19 shut down and ensuring that it is done in a safe, environmentally-sound manner. We strongly encourage all operators to follow these guidelines and ensure all appropriate measures are taken.”

Licensees who intend to recover duty paid on alcoholic beverages are reminded they must liaise with the appropriate brewers before embarking on any disposal process.

SEPA’s temporary guidance around the disposal of waste alcohol can be found on its coronavirus hub at www.coronavirus.sepa.org.uk.

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