



2021 CHAPTER 7

PART 1

LICENSING

*Miscellaneous*

**Independent review of licensing system including surrender principle**

**23.—**(1) The Department for Communities must, before the first anniversary of this Act receiving Royal Assent, appoint an independent person (“the reviewer”) to conduct a review of the system in Northern Ireland for authorising the sale by retail of intoxicating liquor (“the licensing system”).

(2) The review must include the following—

- (a) an assessment of the operation of the surrender principle, an examination of options for reforming it and an assessment of the implications of those options for licence holders;
- (b) an analysis of the geographical distribution of licensed premises in Northern Ireland;
- (c) an analysis of the economic and social impact of the licensing system and the impact of the licensing system on personal and public health;
- (d) an assessment of the extent to which the licensing system meets consumer demand and local community needs, when set alongside the impact it has on personal and public health and on public order;
- (e) whatever recommendations for improving the licensing system that the reviewer considers appropriate.

(3) The reviewer must complete the review within two years of the appointment being made.

(4) The reviewer, having completed the review, must provide a report to the Department; and the Department, having received the report, must—

- (a) lay the report before the Assembly, and
- (b) arrange for it to be published.

(5) The Department must, within six months of the publication of the report, publish a plan setting out how it proposes to respond to the report.

(6) The Minister for Communities must, within six months of the publication of the report, make an oral statement to the Assembly about the plan published under subsection (5).

(7) The Department for Communities may by regulations modify subsection (3), or modify subsection (6), so as to substitute a different period for the period for the time being specified there.

(8) Regulations may not be made under subsection (7) unless a draft of the regulations has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.

(9) In this section—

- (a) the reference to an independent person includes a reference to a group of independent persons, an independent organisation or a group of independent organisations,
- (b) the references to intoxicating liquor, licences and licensed premises are to be construed in accordance with the Licensing Order, and
- (c) the reference to the surrender principle is a reference to the part of the procedure for granting a licence that is provided for in Article 7(4)(e) of the Licensing Order.