

# OBJECT PRESS RELEASE

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## MPs say yes to reform of lap dance club licensing

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods' Ten-Minute Rule Bill calling for reform of lap dance club licensing today passed unopposed in the House of Commons. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport also indicated it is to consult local authorities on proposals outlined in the Bill<sup>1</sup>.

The Ten-Minute Rule Bill aims to close a legal loophole which allows lap dance clubs to operate with just a Premises Licence – a licence also used for cafes, restaurants and karaoke bars, and proposes enabling local authorities to licence lap dance clubs as Sex Encounter Establishments<sup>2</sup>. This will give local authorities the same licensing powers as apply to sex shops, peep shows and sex cinemas.

Under current legislation local authorities must treat lap dance applications in the same way as any other Premises Licence applications. However lap dance clubs are part of the commercial sex industry and the current licensing regime has facilitated rapid expansion of the industry whilst curtailing the ability of local authorities or local communities to have a say in this process<sup>3</sup>.

Dr Blackman-Woods' proposal is backed by *Stripping the Illusion*, a national campaign led by pressure group Object, which calls for reform of lap dance club licensing. Campaigners today sought to highlight the issue by setting up a café scene in Parliament Square complete with a mounted strip club pole. They were joined at the 'stripclub café' by Dr Blackman-Woods, fellow Labour MPs Lynda Waltho, Barbara Keeley, Celia Barlow and Fiona Mactaggart; Liberal Democrat MP Dan Rogerson and Conservative MP Peter Bottomley.

Jeremy Coutinho, spokesperson for Object said: "The fact that no MPs opposed this Bill shows there is widespread support for action to close the loophole. Our campaign strips the illusion that buying a lap dance is no different to buying a cappuccino. We urge the Government to take note and amend licensing so that the social impact of lap dance clubs can be fully taken into account".

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP said: "This is not about moralising. This Bill does not seek to ban lap dancing clubs. It merely seeks to strengthen and add to the criteria that can be taken into consideration when deciding whether to license one in a particular location. The

Government is clear that it wants to be on the side of the people. I agree with that, and here is an excellent example of how to put that sentiment into action”.

Celia Barlow MP added: “I am pleased that Members of all parties supported this Bill as it passed unopposed through the House. Hopefully this will be a significant step in rectifying the situation which sees lap dancing clubs licensed in the same way as cafes”.

## **Notes to Editors**

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<sup>1</sup> The DCMS is this week writing to every local authority for feedback on the licensing of lap dance clubs:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldhansrd/text/80604w0003.htm>

<sup>2</sup> A sex encounter establishment licence is currently applicable to venues such as peep shows where (visual) entertainment is provided for the purpose of sexual stimulation.

<sup>3</sup> At least 25 local authorities across England have had problems with licensing and in London alone 16 local authorities are concerned about their ability to regulate lap dancing clubs post the Licensing Act 2003. Please see the report *A Growing Tide* Object 2008 for further information: [www.object.org.uk](http://www.object.org.uk)

**ENDS**