

PRESS RELEASE

OBJECT

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Contact: Sandrine Levêque 07975 897 005

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STRIPPING THE ILLUSION: The Sex Industry comes to Parliament's doorstep

A strip club pole will surprise MPs and visitors to Parliament today as campaign group Object¹ launches 'Stripping the Illusion: The Re-Licence Lap Dancing Campaign' in Parliament and then stages a photo-stunt in Parliament Square². Object is calling for lap dancing clubs to be licensed as Sex Encounter Establishments and today releases a new report 'A Growing Tide' which highlights how local authorities are restricted by inadequate licensing laws for lap dancing.

- A lap dancing club is currently licensed in the same way as a cafe
- The number of lap dancing clubs in the UK is estimated to have doubled since 2004³

Lap dancing is part of the commercial sex industry. However a loophole in the law prevents local authorities from applying regulation otherwise used for the sex industry to lap dancing clubs. Since the Licensing Act 2003 was introduced local authorities have had to grant clubs a Premises 'one size fits all' Licence, also used to licence cafes and karaoke nights. This has restricted local authorities both in terms of the conditions they can attach to licences and in the way they consider the views of local people⁴. The report finds that the current law needs to change to reflect the social impact of lap dancing clubs:

- Women living and working near lap dancing clubs face increased levels of sexual harassment and 'no go' zones
- Women working in lap dancing clubs face poor working conditions such as paying to work, paying fines for being late or not sticking to dress codes and high performer to customer ratios. These working practices lead to the buying and selling of sex in some clubs
- Lap dancing clubs reinforce the increased sexual objectification of women

Object is working with a coalition of MPs, Peers and Durham MP Roberta Blackman-Woods towards a 10 Minute Rule Bill which will seek to remove this loophole and licence lap dancing clubs as Sex Encounter Establishments across England and Wales.

Sandrine Leveque, spokesperson for Object commented: "Our campaign strips the illusion that you can licence cappuccinos in the same way as you licence lap dancing. The law currently makes it easy for lap dancing clubs to open, and difficult for local authorities to regulate them or listen to the views of people affected by them. The industry has used this to its advantage and very quickly expanded."

"Re-categorisation of lap dancing clubs as Sex Encounter Establishments will take power out of the hands of clubs operators and put it back in the hands of local authorities and local people. It's time to start licensing lap dancing clubs for what they really are: part of the sex industry."

For more information or for interview requests please contact Sandrine Leveque, Advocacy Officer on 07975 897 005

NOTES TO EDITORS

¹ OBJECT challenges gender stereotyping and sexual objectification of women www.object.org.uk

² Stripping the Illusion will launch on Tuesday 22nd April, 12.00 – 13.00, Committee Room 17. Speakers will include Baroness Gould, Roberta Blackman-Woods MP, Julie Bindel; author of the 2004 lap dancing report 'Profitable Exploits' commissioned by Glasgow City Council, and Prof. Marion Roberts, Night-time economy specialist at Westminster University.

The launch will be followed by a photo-stunt in Parliament Square; 13.30pm to 15.00pm. Contact Sandrine Leveque: sandrine@object.org.uk / 07975 897 005 to register a place at the launch or for further information.

³ The first UK lap dancing club, *For Your Eyes Only*, opened in 1995 and by 2004 an estimated 150 clubs operated across the UK. Today there are an estimated 300 lap dancing clubs across the UK
http://www.stripmagazine.com/mmagazine/new_welcome.php?subaction=showfull&id=1172265443&archive=&start_from=&ucat=2&category=2

⁴ At the moment local authority regulation of lap dancing and resident's views must strictly relate to 4 licensing objectives as set out in the Licensing Act 2003:

1. Public Safety
2. Public Nuisance
3. Public Order
4. Protection of children from harm

Residents may only have say in licensing if they live within 100-200m of a proposed venue.

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