

London Mayoral Pledge to Act Against Binge-Drinking and Late-night Violence

Late-night revellers in Kingston have had the chance to put their views to London Mayoral candidate, Councillor Alan Craig of The Christian Choice about the problems of binge-drinking and late-night violence. Taken out into the early hours of the morning by Kingston's Street Pastors scheme, Alan Craig took time to listen to the public's views on the problem.

Kingston is one of west London's nightclub destinations, with cinemas, restaurants and discos attracting tens of thousands of clubbers a week. Speaking to activists in Kensington on Monday, Councillor Craig outlined his campaign strategy and explained what he'd learned. He is now publishing the steps he would take as London Mayor to tackle binge-drinking and associated late-night violence on London's streets.

Councillor Alan Craig said: "At 2.00am in the morning in Kingston, I saw a mix of boisterous youngsters out to have fun, together with vulnerable young people who'd had too much to drink and had got themselves into trouble. All credit goes to the Street Pastors and to London's hard-working police for their work in trying circumstances.

"Clearly, Labour's idea of 24-hour drinking has failed. I saw no evidence that a 'cafe-culture' in Kingston had changed behaviour. But I did see a need for London politicians to act, even if the government won't. What is clear is that voluntary regulation is failing. It is possible to have fun without becoming dangerously drunk and every agency needs to emphasise that."

Alcohol misuse costs the National Health Service £1.7billion a year and at peak times 70% of A&E admissions in hospitals are alcohol-related. The government is expected to publish its review of the Licensing Act, which introduced 24-hour drinking, later this week. Last month, President of the Association of Chief Police Officers, Ken Jones, said it was time to take a "hard look" at the issue of teenage binge drinking which he said had reached "epidemic proportions".

Outlining a series of steps The Christian Choice would take, Alan Craig said greater corporate responsibility on the part of the drinks industry was needed if London is to move away from a culture of binge drinking and late night violence.

Alan Craig's Action Points:

An end to under-18 Cinema Advertising:

London's boroughs will be urged to use their licensing powers to ban alcohol adverts or sponsored features for all films with BBFC ratings less than 18.

The end of deep discounting:

Cut price alcohol promotions from some of the UK's leading supermarkets are putting teen drinkers at greater risk than ever. These must be challenged at borough level. Small off-licences on estates in London are also linked to under-age sales. The Metropolitan Police will be pressed to use existing law as priority in these areas to end illegal sales.

Independent GLA regulation:

Compliance with the various regulatory codes is not working. To improve greater transparency, The Christian Choice will establish an independent body under responsibilities for promoting health through the Greater London Authority. It will monitor industry adherence to any standards and ensure that the exercise is a rigorous and credible one.

Responsible premises management

There is much that pubs, bars and clubs can do to minimise binge-drinking and the violence and disorder that this can lead to. The industry will be pressed to improve practice across London, by making food available, providing seating and ensuring that empty glasses and bottles are quickly cleared away. Support will be given to roll out the Street pastors scheme to every London borough.

ENDS

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Visit London Campaign website: www.thechristianchoice.org.uk or www.cpaparty.org.uk

In 2000 and 2004 the Christian Peoples Alliance Mayoral candidate Ram Gidoomal won votes from almost 100,000 people in London.

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