

The Highland Licensing Board

Meeting – 28 October 2025

Agenda Item	8.1
Report No	HLB/79/25

Application for a major variation of premises licence under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005

The Ambassador Hotel (formerly Strathness House), 4 Ardross Terrace, Inverness, IV3 5NQ

Report by the Clerk to the Licensing Board

Summary

This report relates to an application for a major variation of premises licence by Black Sheep Management Services Limited, Tom-An-Oir, Invergarry, PH35 4HR.

1.0 Description of premises

1.1 The Ambassador Hotel (formerly Strathness House) is a small boutique hotel situated just metres from the River Ness and within easy walking distance of Inverness Town Centre and Ness Islands.

2.0 Summary of variation application

2.1 Variation sought

The applicant seeks to vary the premises licence as follows:-

(1) Amend capacities at Section 7 operating plan to reflect updated capacities following extensive refurbishment/reconfiguration of premises.

(2) Amend outdoor dining/drinking area to reflect refurbishment of premises.

(3) Extend licensed footprint to encompass newly extended and refurbished restaurant, bedrooms and outdoor dining/drinking area.

(4) Change name of premises from Strathness House to Ambassador Hotel.

(5) Change of description of premises to read: 'Ambassador Hotel' is a small boutique hotel situated on the banks of the River Ness.

The ground floor of the premises comprises of a Vestibule, Reception and Lounge, Restaurants(s), Bar area, Kitchen , Storerooms and toilet facilities.

The first floor of the premises comprises of seven en-suite letting bedrooms.

The second floor of the premises also comprises of seven en-suite letting bedrooms.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 On 8 August 2025 the Licensing Board received an application for a major variation of a premises licence from Black Sheep Management Services Limited.
- 3.2 The application was publicised during the period 25 August 2025 until 15 September 2025 and confirmation that the site notice was displayed has been received.
- 3.3 In accordance with standard procedure, Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service and the Council's Community Services (Environmental Health) and Planning and Building Standards were consulted on the application.
- 3.4 Notification of the application was also sent to NHS Highland and the local Community Council.
- 3.5 Further to this publication and consultation process, no timeous objections or representations have been received.
- 3.6 The applicant must nevertheless be given the opportunity to be heard before the Board determines the application and has accordingly been invited to the meeting. The applicant has been advised of the hearings procedure which may also be viewed via the following link:

www.highland.gov.uk/hlb_hearings

4.0 Legislation

- 4.1 The Licensing Board must in considering and determining the application, consider whether any grounds of refusal apply and if none of them applies, the Board must grant the application.

Relevant grounds of refusal may be: -

1. the grant of the application will be inconsistent with one or more of the licensing objectives;
2. having regard to (i) the nature of the activities carried on or proposed to be carried on in the subject premises, (ii) the location, character and condition of the premises, and (iii) the persons likely to frequent the premises, the Board considers the premises are unsuitable for use for the sale of alcohol in accordance with the proposed variation;
3. that the Board considers that, if the application were to be granted, there would, as a result, be overprovision of licensed premises, or licensed premises of the same or similar description as the subject premises, in the

locality.

4.2 For the purposes of the Act, the licensing objectives are-

- (a) preventing crime and disorder,
- (b) securing public safety,
- (c) preventing public nuisance,
- (d) protecting and improving public health, and
- (e) protecting children and young persons from harm.

4.3 The Board only has power either to grant the application and make a variation of the conditions to which the licence is subject or to refuse the application.

4.4 If the Board refuses the application, the Board must specify the ground for refusal and if the ground for refusal relates to a licensing objective, the Board must specify the objective in question.

5.0 Licensing Standards Officer

5.1 The LSO has provided the following comments:-

Ambassador Hotel is the former Strathness Guest House situated on the banks of the River Ness which has undergone a complete renovation and reconfiguration whilst increasing the footprint of the premises and which will now trade as a boutique hotel with restaurant and 14 letting bedrooms.

- (i) An application for a major variation is sought following the major renovation and reconfiguration of the premises to increase the licensed footprint to incorporate the extension of the premises into an adjoining building to expand the ability to sell alcohol within the operating plan.
- (ii) An application has been made to increase the existing outdoor area to cover an area directly outside the extended restaurants to be incorporated within the licensed footprint of the premises. The extent and location of the outdoor area is such that in the opinion of the LSO neighbouring properties will not be adversely affected by operations in this outside area.
- (iii) Amended layout plans encompassing all changes have been submitted with the application.
- (iv) In summation, the LSO has visited the venue and is of the opinion that none of the proposed changes to the operating plan affect the licensing objectives adversely and are all within Board policy.
- (v) The previously operating history of these premises has been incident free.
- (vi) During the public consultation phase of this application, one objection

was received by the Board in relation to the outdoor area.

In summation, the objection related to late licence social related issues and increased noise as the main concerns and the effect that this would have on nearby residential premises.

Following discussion with Ms Fraser – agent acting on behalf of the owners – she confirmed that her clients were open to a compromise of 2200 hours for the use of the outdoor area Sunday to Thursday whilst retaining the current 2300 hours for Friday and Saturday for the existing outdoor area, to alleviate the concerns of nearby residents regarding late night noise in the vicinity of the outdoor area.

Following discussion with the objector and confirmation of the applicant's compromise, the objector was satisfied with the proposed compromise and the objection to the application has been withdrawn.

6.0 HLB local policies

6.1 The following policies are relevant to the application:-

- (1) Highland Licensing Board Policy Statement 2023-28
- (2) Highland Licensing Board Equality Strategy

7.0 Conditions

7.1 Mandatory conditions

If the application is approved the mandatory conditions set out in Schedule 3 of the Act will apply.

7.2 Local conditions

Existing local conditions will continue to apply (m. to be amended) and it is recommended that the following additional local conditions be attached:

(l) The boundaries of any outside area will be effectively demarcated to the satisfaction of the Licensing Standards Officer.

(m) After 2200 hours Sunday to Thursday and 2300 hours Friday and Saturday, alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks shall not be consumed in any outdoor drinking area.

(o) The licence holder shall ensure that consumption of drinks (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) in any outside drinking area is permitted only by customers seated at the tables and chairs provided in the outside drinking area and not by customers standing in that area.

(p) The licence holder shall ensure that all outdoor tables are regularly cleared of used glassware, crockery, cutlery and refuse.

7.3 Special conditions

No special conditions are considered necessary.

Recommendation

The Board is invited to determine the above application and if minded to grant the application, to agree the proposed local conditions detailed at para. 7.2.

If the Board is minded to refuse the application, the Board must specify the ground for refusal and if the ground for refusal is in relation to a licensing objective, the Board must specify the objective in question.

Reference: HC/INBS/653
Date: 15 October 2025
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