

Further taxes would undermine ambitions of Westminster night-time strategy

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Westminster City Council's proposal to consult on a late-night levy would be a "mistake", according to [UKHospitality](#).

In its response to the consultation on Westminster City Council's 'Westminster After Dark' strategy, UKHospitality issued its support for many of the initiatives proposed, like late-night entertainment zones, but reiterated firm opposition to the potential implementation of a late-night levy.

Kate Nicholls, Chief Executive of UKHospitality, said that imposing further costs on hospitality businesses would threaten the success of the strategy and ultimately undermine enhancing Westminster's night-time economy. She said the Council should abandon plans to consult on introducing a levy.

What else was proposed?

The trade body said it supported the principle of proposed late-night entertainment zones, but said this must not result in businesses outside those zones being penalised by its exclusion. For example, Soho and Leicester Square are not in the proposed zones, but are the biggest night-life areas of Westminster.

Its response also signalled support for proposals to expand the night bus and tube, significantly increase CCTV, pursue a unified licensing policy framework, embed the agent of change principle and improve digital connectivity across Westminster.

The need for businesses to maintain freedom and flexibility in how they operate was also emphasised. It's crucial that venues are able to respond to changing consumer demands and meet the needs of its

audience.

Kate Nicholls, Chief Executive of UKHospitality, said: “Much of what Westminster City Council has proposed is positive for the night-time economy, but these initiatives would be undermined if further, unnecessary costs are forced on hospitality businesses.

“Venues are already battling with the additional £3.4 billion annual increase imposed upon them in April and implementing further taxes in some of London’s most well-known and vibrant areas, like Soho, would be a huge mistake.

“I hope Westminster City Council abandons its proposal to consult on implementing a late-night levy and changes course, because there is much else to support in this strategy.

“The introduction of late-night entertainment zones would be bold and innovative, the expansion of night-time transport would be beneficial for consumers and hospitality staff, and a significant expansion of CCTV would greatly help public safety and policing.

“It’s clear the council wants to work with the night-time economy to enhance its late-night offering and that’s something we completely support. My overriding message to the council would be to work with the sector collaboratively to make this a success, and recognise that its own ambitions could be jeopardised by simultaneously imposing unnecessary costs on the sector.”