

Glasgow Venue Owner Warns of Nightlife Crisis

August 7, 2025

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Scotland's nightlife sector is under mounting pressure from soaring operational costs, disjointed government policy, and weak infrastructure, prompting calls for the appointment of a dedicated 'nightlife minister' to steer the industry out of decline.

The Night Time Industries Association (NTIA), which represents venues and operators across the UK, says Scotland is now falling behind the rest of Europe in supporting its

nighttime economy. Industry leaders argue that without urgent strategic oversight, many hospitality businesses may not survive the current climate.

Mike Grieve, chair of the NTIA and owner of Glasgow's Sub Club, stressed that while COVID-19 reshaped social habits, the public's appetite for nightlife remains strong. Speaking to *STV News*, he said, "It's part of the human psyche, you want to go out and socialise and party... I just think some of the behaviour patterns have changed."

Grieve warned that rising wage bills, National Insurance hikes, and the absence of sufficient business rates relief are pushing small operators to the brink. "The cost base has grown significantly with inflation, and we're not in a position to pass those costs on to customers," he said.

The lack of reliable late-night transport, particularly out of Glasgow, is another concern affecting both safety and accessibility. "It's a problem across Scotland. People can get into the city, but getting home after midnight is another matter entirely," he added.

The NTIA is urging the Scottish Government to develop a coherent national strategy for the nighttime economy, with clear ministerial accountability. Grieve believes current oversight is scattered across departments, making meaningful reform difficult. Scotland needs a strategy that local authorities can adopt. At the moment, there's no cohesion."

The proposed strategy would include coordinated planning and licensing policies, industry training, and investment in transport and infrastructure. Grieve pointed to Ireland's model, which employs dedicated nighttime economy managers in eight cities, as a working example.

Despite this, the Scottish Government has defended its position, citing a 40% business rates relief for hospitality premises as evidence of support. However, industry leaders argue this does little for smaller businesses that are already operating on thin margins.

Business Minister Richard Lochhead responded by blaming Westminster's National Insurance increases for worsening the situation. "We welcome realistic contributions to grow Scotland's economy," he said, adding that Scotland continues to offer "the most generous small business rates relief in the UK."

However, critics argue that such statements fall short of the targeted, long-term support the industry urgently needs. With Scotland's cultural and economic identity heavily intertwined

with its nightlife, the pressure is now on Holyrood to act before more businesses close their doors for good.