

**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino

S341

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 11:45  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Spearmint Rhino

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield. As a local resident of Sheffield I am in favour of the SEV license renewal: the club is unobtrusive in it's area, and closure of the club would have negative impacts in many ways. Closing the club will take away many waged positions (door, bar, management, cleaning staff) which provides for many families across Sheffield. It will also take away jobs for many women working as dancers at the club, many of whom are also parents or have caring responsibilities. Workers within the club consistently assert that they are there of their own free will, and that they enjoy their jobs, and the tight-knit community there.

While the dancers at spearmint rhino come from a variety of backgrounds and careers, for some the closure of the club will inevitably mean a move towards riskier, unregulated or higher contact forms of erotic dancing and sex work that they would not otherwise choose. It would also mean breaking up a close and supportive community of colleagues and friends, which will undoubtedly have a negative impact on many workers, their mental health and their financial wellbeing.

Spearmint Rhino Sheffield is a venue that has a place in Sheffield City Centre. It is a legitimate business that stimulates the economy like any other and the government recommends that objections based on moral grounds should not be considered when licensing Sexual Entertainment Venues: sexuality is a natural part of the human experience. Not everyone need visit or agree with such venues, but venues should not be closed on moral grounds objecting to sexual entertainment itself. Regarding alleged license breaches: the club has a record of legal and safe operation spanning over 15 years, and I believe the club should be given the chance to remedy any alleged misconduct and put in place measures to ensure such breaches are not allowed to take place.

Whilst it should be taken into consideration that the stripclub industry as a whole is not perfect, it is also important to note that dancers across the UK and in Spearmint Rhino Sheffield are unionising and fighting for their workers rights. Removing a safe and regulated venue from workers who are engaged in this fight does nothing to support them and in fact detracts from this aim by dispersing dancers who are already unionising at work further afield and distracting their focus to finding alternative venues and avenues of work. It is hard to fight for workers rights when you have to fight for the right to work at all! While it is important to focus on exploitation in any industry, it is paramount to listen to the views, experiences and wishes of workers currently in the industry, as it is those people who know best the conditions that will help them.

Finally, I would like to express my condemnation of tactics used by self-described feminist groups. Filming women in the nude without their consent or knowledge is not acceptable, nor is it acceptable to pay others to do so, and those concerned with women's rights more generally must also respect the rights of the women upon whom their actions and campaigns have the most impact. I urge the council to publicly condemn and reject such activities, and for action to be taken against those commissioning such **footage**.

Yours sincerely,

**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino

S342

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 11:37  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Spearmint Rhino

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield. As a local resident of Sheffield I am in favour of the SEV license renewal: the club is unobtrusive in it's area, and closure of the club would have negative impacts in many ways. Closing the club will take away many waged positions (door, bar, management, cleaning staff) which provides for many families across Sheffield. It will also take away jobs for many women working as dancers at the club, many of whom are also parents or have caring responsibilities. Workers within the club consistently assert that they are there of their own free will, and that they enjoy their jobs, and the tight-knit community there.

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Whilst it should be taken into consideration that the stripclub industry as a whole is not perfect, it is also important to note that dancers across the UK and in Spearmint Rhino Sheffield are unionising and **fighting** for their workers rights. Removing a safe and regulated venue from workers who are engaged in this fight does nothing to support them and in fact detracts from this aim by dispersing dancers who are **already** unionising at work further afield and distracting their focus to finding alternative venues and avenues of work. It is hard to fight for workers rights when you have to fight for the right to work at all! While it is important to focus on exploitation in any industry, it is paramount to listen to the views, experiences and wishes of workers currently in the industry, as it is those people who know best the conditions that will help them.

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Yours sincerely,

**Subject:** FW: Licensing

S343

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 13:29  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Licensing

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield. As a local resident of Sheffield I am in favour of the SEV license renewal: the club is unobtrusive in it's area, and closure of the club would have negative impacts in many ways. Closing the club will take away many waged positions (door, bar, management, cleaning staff) which provides for many families across Sheffield. It will also take away jobs for many women working as dancers at the club, many of whom are also parents or have caring responsibilities. Workers within the club consistently assert that they are there of their own free will, and that they enjoy their jobs, and the tight-knit community there.

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Yours sincerely,

**Subject:** FW: Licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield

S344

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 14:11  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield. It is a legitimate business that stimulates the local economy like any other and the government recommends that objections based on moral grounds should not be considered when licensing Sexual Entertainment Venues: sexuality is a natural part of the human experience.

Not everyone need visit or agree with such venues, but venues should not be closed on moral grounds objecting to sexual entertainment itself. Regarding alleged license breaches: the club has a record of legal and safe operation spanning over 15 years, and I believe the club should be given the chance to remedy any alleged misconduct and put in place measures to ensure such breaches are not allowed to take place.

Yours sincerely,

**Subject:** FW: Licensing

S345

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 14:22  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Licensing

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield. As a local resident of Sheffield I am in favour of the SEV license renewal: the club is unobtrusive in it's area, and closure of the club would have negative impacts in many ways. Closing the club will take away many waged positions (door, bar, management, cleaning staff) which provides for many families across Sheffield. It will also take away jobs for many women working as dancers at the club, many of whom are also parents or have caring responsibilities. Workers within the club consistently assert that they are there of their own free will, and that they enjoy their jobs, and the tight-knit community there.

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Whilst it should be taken into consideration that the stripclub industry as a whole is not perfect, it is also important to note that dancers across the UK and in Spearmint Rhino Sheffield are unionising and fighting for their workers rights. Removing a safe and regulated venue from workers who are engaged in this fight does nothing to support them and in fact detracts from this aim by dispersing dancers who are already unionising at work further afield and distracting their focus to finding alternative venues and avenues of work. It is hard to fight for workers rights when you have to fight for the right to work at all! While it is important to focus on exploitation in any industry, it is paramount to listen to the views, experiences and wishes of workers currently in the industry, as it is those people who know best the conditions that will help them.

Finally, I would like to express my condemnation of tactics used by self-described feminist groups. Filming women in the nude without their consent or knowledge is not acceptable, nor is it acceptable to pay others to do so, and those concerned with women's rights more generally must also respect the rights of the women upon whom their actions and campaigns have the most impact. I urge the council to publicly condemn and reject such activities, and for action to be taken against those commissioning such footage.

Yours sincerely,

**Subject:** FW: In support of Spearmint Rhino

S346

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 15:33  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** In support of Spearmint Rhino

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Sheffield's only strip club. As a local resident of Sheffield I am in favour of the SEV license renewal: the club is unobtrusive in its area, and closure of the club would have negative impacts in many ways. Closing the club will take away many waged positions (door, bar, management, cleaning staff) which provides for many families across Sheffield. It will also take away jobs for many women working as dancers at the club, many of whom are also parents or have caring responsibilities. Workers within the club consistently assert that they are there of their own free will, and that they enjoy their jobs, and the tight knit community there.

While the dancers at the venue come from a variety of backgrounds and careers, for some the closure of the club will inevitably mean a move towards riskier, unregulated or higher contact forms of erotic dancing and sex work that they would not otherwise choose. It would also mean breaking up a close and supportive community of colleagues and friends, which will undoubtedly have a negative impact on many workers, their mental health and their financial wellbeing.

This club is a venue that has a place in Sheffield City Centre. It is a legitimate business that stimulates the economy like any other and the government recommends that objections based on moral grounds should not be considered when licensing Sexual Entertainment Venues: sexuality is a natural part of the human experience. Not everyone need visit or agree with such venues, but venues should not be closed on moral grounds objecting to sexual entertainment itself. Regarding alleged license breaches: the club has a record of legal and safe operation spanning over 15 years, and I believe the club should be given the chance to remedy any alleged misconduct and put in place measures to ensure such breaches are not allowed to take place.

Whilst it should be taken into consideration that the stripclub industry as a whole is not perfect, it is also important to note that dancers across the UK and in Sheffield are unionising and fighting for their workers rights. Removing a safe and regulated venue from workers who are engaged in this fight does nothing to support them and in fact detracts from this aim by dispersing dancers who are already unionising at work further afield and distracting their focus to finding alternative venues and avenues of work. It is hard to fight for workers rights when you have to fight for the right to work at all! While it is important to focus on exploitation in any industry, it is paramount to listen to the views, experiences and wishes of workers currently in the industry, as it is those people who know best the conditions that will help them.

Finally, I would like to express my condemnation of tactics used by self described feminist groups. Filming women in the nude without their consent or knowledge is not acceptable, nor is it acceptable to pay others to do so, and those concerned with women's rights more generally must also respect the rights of the women upon whom their actions and campaigns have the most impact. I urge the council to publicly condemn and reject such activities, and for action to be taken against those commissioning such footage.

Kind Regards,

**Subject:** FW: Strip Clubs

S347 P1

**From:**

**Sent:** 27 May 2019 16:07

**To:** licensingservice

**Subject:** Strip Clubs

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you out of concern of the potential closure of Sheffield's last licensed strip club. In a world where women have just lost their bodily autonomy in the states, and are fighting losing battles all over the world, do not let Sheffield become part of the problem. I personally know men who visit this club, and women who work there. My friends enjoy their work, they feel empowered, they feel safe. Do not take that away from them. Please. Outlined below are points made by people working at this establishment, I hope you consider this before making your decision-

- Workers at Sheffield's only licensed strip club cite the benefits of their jobs as being:
- Flexible hours- work around health/family/academic/other career commitments
- Good pay on average
- Fun working environment
- Supportive atmosphere
- Tight knit community of colleagues, management, door and bar staff and performers
- Increased body confidence
- Financial means to support families, academic and creative pursuits, travel
- Meeting people from a wide range of backgrounds
- Closure of the club will:
- Push performers further afield to look for work- break up community, spend more on travel
- Completely take away the incomes of waged workers at the club (door, bar, management) many of whom are the main earner/support families, have children or are carers.
- Lead to fewer licensed clubs in the UK, creating more competitive working environments in the remaining clubs
- Push workers into more dangerous and higher contact forms of stripping or sex work which is unregulated and will involve more risky activities.
- Negatively economically impact Sheffield
- Ignore the fact that workers within the industry are already unionising for better working conditions (through United Voices of the World trade union)
- Break up a close and supportive community
- Adversely impact the mental health of those affected
- Take away worker's independence and ability to support themselves and their families
- The tactics used by women's rights organisations:
- Objectify performers
- by ignoring our voices- we have not been consulted on what would 'help' us, and the organisations have declined to speak with/work with us.

- by describing us as being 'bought and sold' rather than *selling our services and time* like in any other industry (dancers, models, manual labourers, therapists)
- Reducing us to stereotypes and objects 'damaged strippers' 'sexual objects'
- Violates our right to privacy, treating our naked bodies as tactics for use in political strategy
- Reduces us from complex human beings with complex experiences to 'symbols' for women's oppression
- Excludes strippers from feminism. We aren't the 'right kind' of 'respectable' woman and therefore our views and needs (and rights as women to choose our own career, to choose who sees us naked) don't matter to these organisations.
- Blames women, and punishes women (taking away our jobs, revenge porn tactics) for male sexual violence and harrasment
- Describes dancers fighting for their right to work as 'brainwashed' by the 'pimp lobby' instead of capable of making their own choices and forming their own opinions
- Breaches the law and our rights
- Contravenes GDPR regulations
- Breaches our consent over who can view our nude bodies
- Violates our right to privacy
- Negatively harms our mental health, perpetuates strategies of sexual violence by creating non-consensual footage of us nude
- Due to social stigma, if distributed or shown publicly has the potential to harm our social lives, mental health and careers
- The tactic of filming is reminiscent of revenge porn and also strategies undertaken by Peter Stringfellow to attempt to close rival clubs, disrespects the humanity, rights and wishes of the women
- filming potentially constitutes revenge porn/ voyeurism under UK law
- For those who are concerned about the stripping industry more generally and aren't sure about it: there is ongoing work across the country as more dancers are starting to unionise for better working conditions. We are and will be involved in this fight and will support other dancers and clubs too!
- For those concerned about house fees, commission, slow nights etc. many workers say that they choose this work with a full consideration of the pros and cons.
- Many dancers draw comparisons with other self employed workers such as a hairdresser or beautician not working out of a salon- sometimes you get no bookings in and earn no money! They describe learning to manage money accordingly, and describe that they choose to pay the club in order to have a safe and controlled working environment with cctv, door staff, supportive colleagues and management.
- In cases in the industry where workers dance because they have no other option, it seems better to fight for workers rights across the board in the industry rather than focus on shutting down individual clubs where such workers without other options would have to potentially take on more dangerous and higher physical contact work.
- Dancers in Sheffield are working with and represented by United Voices of the World trade union who are fighting for improved conditions across the whole industry.
- Where there are concerns about the specific venues, it is important to listen to workers concerns and wishes: not to close the club but to address, investigate and remedy any allegations of misconduct or exploitation. Strippers (and workers from many industries) are coming together to articulate their collective interest and voice collective concerns.

Kind regards,



**Subject:**

FW: [REDACTED]

S348

**From:**

**Sent:** 27 May 2019 20:48

**To:** licensingservice

**Subject:**

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

As a Sheffield native I am in favour of the SEV license renewal; the club is unobtrusive in it's area, and closure of the club will take away many waged positions (door, bar, management, cleaning staff) which provides for many families across Sheffield. It will also take away jobs for many women working as dancers at the club, many of whom are also parents or have caring responsibilities. Workers within the club consistently assert that they are there of their own free will, and that they enjoy their jobs, and the tight-knit community there. My friends who work in the club have frequently reported feeling completely safe at the venue, and fear being pushed out and forced into less safe and less respectful clubs in other cities. I worry that taking away this secure and legal establishment will push women into dangerous and risky unregulated sex work.

Spearmint Rhino Sheffield is a venue that has a place in Sheffield City Centre. It is a legitimate business that stimulates the economy like any other and the government recommends that objections based on moral grounds should not be considered when licensing Sexual Entertainment Venues: sexuality is a natural part of the human experience. Not everyone need visit or agree with such venues, but venues should not be closed on moral grounds objecting to sexual entertainment itself. Regarding alleged license breaches: the club has a record of legal and safe operation spanning over 15 years, and I believe the club should be given the chance to remedy any alleged misconduct and put in place measures to ensure such breaches are not allowed to take place.

Finally, I would like to express my condemnation of tactics used by self-described feminist groups. Filming women in the nude without their consent or knowledge is not acceptable, nor is it acceptable to pay others to do so, and those concerned with women's rights more generally must also respect the rights of the women upon whom their actions and campaigns have the most impact. It is nobody's place to tell women what they should and should not do with their own bodies, and that includes the opinions of other women who mistakenly believe they are "helping" workers by shaming and policing their bodies in the same way they call men out for doing. I urge the council to publicly condemn and reject such activities, and for action to be taken against those commissioning such footage.

Yours sincerely,

**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino

S349

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 20:39  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Spearmint Rhino

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield. It is a legitimate business that stimulates the local economy like any other and the government recommends that objections based on moral grounds should not be considered when licensing Sexual Entertainment Venues: sexuality is a natural part of the human experience.

Not everyone need visit or agree with such venues, but venues should not be closed on moral grounds objecting to sexual entertainment itself. Regarding alleged license breaches: the club has a record of legal and safe operation spanning over 15 years, and I believe the club should be given the chance to remedy any alleged misconduct and put in place measures to ensure such breaches are not allowed to take place.

Yours sincerely,

**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino

S350

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 20:11  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Spearmint Rhino

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I am writing to ask you to renew the license for Spearmint Rhino. It's important to note that dancers across the UK and in Spearmint Rhino Sheffield are unionising and fighting for their workers rights. Removing a safe and regulated venue from workers who are engaged in this fight does nothing to support them and in fact detracts from this aim by dispersing dancers who are already unionising at work further afield and distracting their focus to finding alternative venues and avenues of work. It is hard to fight for workers rights when you have to fight for the right to work at all! While it is important to focus on exploitation in any industry, it is paramount to listen to the views, experiences and wishes of workers currently in the industry, as it is those people who know best the conditions that will help them.

Yours sincerely,

**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino, Sheffield.

S351

**From:**

**Sent:** 27 May 2019 19:49

**To:** licensingservice

**Subject:** Spearmint Rhino, Sheffield.

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield. It is a legitimate business that stimulates the local economy like any other and the government recommends that objections based on moral grounds should not be considered when licensing Sexual Entertainment Venues: sexuality is a natural part of the human experience.

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Yours sincerely,

**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino needs to keep its license

S352

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 19:44  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Spearmint Rhino needs to keep its license

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield. Please renew the SEV license: the club is unobtrusive in it's area, and closure of the club would have negative impacts in many ways. It will also take away jobs for many women working as dancers at the club, many of whom are also parents or have caring responsibilities. Workers within the club consistently assert that they are there of their own free will, and that they enjoy their jobs, and the tight-knit community there.

While the dancers at spearmint rhino come from a variety of backgrounds and careers, for some the closure of the club will inevitably mean a move towards riskier, unregulated or higher contact forms of erotic dancing and sex work that they would not otherwise choose. It would also mean breaking up a close and supportive community of colleagues and friends, which will undoubtedly have a negative impact on many workers, their mental health and their financial wellbeing.

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Yours sincerely,

**Rhodes-Evans Emma (CEX)**

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**Subject:** FW: Support for Spearmint Rhino licence renewal  
**Attachments:** Spearmint Rhino letter of support.docx

S353 P1

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**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 19:38  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Support for Spearmint Rhino licence renewal

Hi all,

I hope you will please read and consider my attached letter regarding Spearmint Rhino's licence consultation.

Many thanks,

Dear all,

S353 P2

I am contacting you on behalf of your connection to Sheffield City Council's Licencing Committee decision on whether to renew Spearmint Rhino's licence. **I would like to write in favour of my renewal of the licence, and ask you to please consider the decision fairly, with an open mind and from all perspectives.**

I am writing to you as a young person who considers Sheffield their home – I have grown up in Sheffield, gone to school here, attended university here, worked across different industries here before working for several councils across Yorkshire, including within the Licencing service; so I understand the pressures and politics behind issues such as this which I can appreciate are sensitive, complex and controversial.

I am also writing this as someone who knows personally some of the employees at Spearmint Rhino in Sheffield.

I understand the ongoing discourse around Spearmint Rhino club and its licence renewal, and have heard about the underhand tactics used by objector groups to try to shame the club and its employees. I feel this was very unfair and the club's licence is being questioned for reasons unjustified and unbalanced.

As far as I am aware the dancers working at Spearmint Rhino have not been contacted or engaged with by these groups opposing the club's licence. I maintain everyone has a right to voice their opinion and it should be respected, however it seems like all of the opposition to renewing its licence are either groups who have had no experience of the industry and no direct engagement with the women working within it, or they are large organisations looking to profit from its closure. How can opinions be taken seriously without any first-hand research, experience or consultation? It is narrow-minded opinion not based in fact or evidence, and that should not dictate decisions made by local government. Of course all opinions should be considered, but they should be equal and from all sides. I urge you to not be swayed and let the conversation be dominated by the power of large institutions who want to gain from the club's closure. It must be fair to all those who work in and are affected by it. Neither of those opposers seem like a sensible basis for a decision to be made upon.

There should be a proper consultation with the dancers and employees themselves as it is them being directly affected, it's their livelihoods, and importantly their wellbeing and apparent 'exploitation' being called into question. That is fairness and democracy. There should also be proper consultation with surrounding businesses too as well as those publicly opposing its licence.

Spearmint Rhino has been in the city for years and within that time has not caused any trouble and has complied with the council fully.

Whilst Spearmint Rhino has a central location it is extremely discrete and understated. Having lived and worked here for years and having attended Sheffield Hallam University at the central campus myself, I can honestly say I would walk past every day and barely notice it day or night, and never heard of any issues. That is the same view you would get from students of the university too. It makes absolutely no impact on who chooses to study in Sheffield or at Sheffield Hallam and has no

impact on their time at university. I don't think it is shocking for an entertainment club to be in a city centre. It's commonplace in many towns and cities.

It's important that it remains in the city centre and not hidden away somewhere as this contributes to it being a safe workplace for women, particularly when they are working at night. It would inevitably make it less safe if it were to move outside of the city centre, thinking about these women getting to and from work in the early hours. You will be aware there are enough issues around safety for women in (but not exclusively) the night time economy, including using taxis, so by closing down this club or asking it to move premises would be directly targeting the safety of women in a world where their safety is already extremely compromised and far below that of men.

I also think we need to celebrate the diversity of our economy and all the organisations and people who work within it. This club operates completely legally, local people work in it and are customers of it, it pays taxes to the council, it contributes to the local economy and therefore it should not be excluded from the local community or shunned out of sight. It's 2019, we need to accept that this is a business that people enjoy using and promote its safe and respectful use.

As I mentioned I personally know some of the dancers at Spearmint Rhino so I've talked to them about their experiences working there and have heard nothing but positive feedback, with the good management being mentioned too. They have said they feel safe, well looked after, very supported by all the other staff, part of a community and they are happy and enjoy going to work there. Especially in comparison to their experience in other workplaces. It really does sound like best practice is taking place at Spearmint Rhino, with the safety and wellbeing of its employees being held highly by managers. Whilst talking to the women myself I thought the management and working environment sounds better for staff at Spearmint than a lot of other companies in other industries! We've all heard stories of how poorly treated staff are in the retail and hospitality industries, it seems a shame to shut down a business that is treating its staff right and so many other companies could learn from in that regard.

The women that work there have created a lovely and diverse community, formed from women from a variety of ages, backgrounds and ethnicities. This employment is providing many with a higher income and a quality of life they didn't have access to before, allowing them to support their children (both monetarily and with more time to spend with them), of which around half the dancers who work there have. It also may enable women to undertake other jobs in important but typically lower salary roles, for example as social and care work in the NHS, or to undertake other opportunities such as university study which perhaps they wouldn't be able to without this supplementing them. I highly encourage you to go and speak to these women and find out their stories yourself. Find out why they do it, how it benefits them and what could happen if they lose this employment.

It's 2019, women are still living in a society where their safety is threatened daily, where they have less freedoms than men (particularly in the night time economy), gender discrimination still exists, male privilege still exists, the gender pay gap still exists. We shouldn't be telling women what they can and cannot do with their bodies, we should be educating them and empowering them to make



their own decisions. If they enjoy working in this environment and are enjoying the benefits, that is their decision which should be respected and supported.

The role of the council and particularly Licensing is to ensure citizen safety. These women are not being forced to do this and they aren't being exploited. They are enjoying a safe working environment, a positive and feminist community with excellent management and working practices, operating in a legal and regulated way.

Whilst I don't know myself, there may well be other clubs in the UK which aren't working to such a high standard, and I'd be saddened to hear if any were exploiting women, but from my research and experience of Spearmint Rhino in Sheffield, this isn't one of them. This club contributes positively to the night time economy and looks after its workers. Resource should instead be focussed around regulation and support for women working in this industry in Sheffield, or to support women who may be being exploited in other companies / industries.

These are hardworking women of Sheffield; revoking this licence will have a negative impact on their lives and could push them to other cities with poorer practices or potentially unsafe and unregulated work. This would be a real shame and a disaster at the hands of council. The full consequences of this decision and the reality of its impact must be considered.

With the massive uncertainties already facing our country presently, this now creates even more damaging instability for these women who are wondering whether they will still have employment in a few months' time. And have that same fear each year you question this licence for no provoked reason. Please don't make a very misinformed and illogical mistake for the sake of political ease. We need to be educating and having discussions about these topics, working closely with clubs to improve their practices and put women's safety at the heart of the matter rather than simply shutting them down and displacing the women.

**I urge you to renew the licence of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield and provide more stability regarding its long term licence for the employees who work there.**

I look forward to hearing from you,

**Rhodes-Evans Emma (CEX)**

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**Subject:** FW: READ THIS- DISREGARD EARLIER VERSION  
**Attachments:** SEV Spearmint Rhino Dancer Representation [REDACTED] v2.docx

S354 Revised

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 23:55  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** READ THIS- DISREGARD EARLIER VERSION

To whom this may concern,  
Please see an amended version of my representation regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield as a dancer.  
Please let me know if I need to amend it to add my legal name (\*\*\*\*\* \*) instead of my performer name.  
Kind regards

**Rhodes-Evans Emma (CEX)**

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**Subject:** FW: SEV Spearmint Rhino Dancer Representation  
**Attachments:** SEV Spearmint Rhino Dancer Representation [REDACTED].docx

S354 P1

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 21:24  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** SEV Spearmint Rhino Dancer Representation

To whom it may concern,  
Please find attached my representation regarding the upcoming SEV license renewal for my place of work:  
Spearmint Rhino Sheffield.

I am using my performer name but please do let me know if you would rather I use my legal name and address, and I will amend my letter accordingly.  
Kind Regards,

To Whom it may concern,

I am a dancer at Spearmint Rhino Sheffield, and I am writing to support the renewal of the SEV license for my workplace.

Summary:

1. Closure of the venue would take away income from 40+ employees, predominantly women, many of whom support children or dependants.
2. There is a great amount of support from local residents, students, businesses, political and campaign groups, academics and feminists.
3. There is no reliable evidence linking SEVs with increased sexual violence. More independent research must be done before something as drastic as closing a venue happens on these grounds.
4. Arguments against SEVs are clearly rooted in moralistic views on sexuality and classed and gendered notions of respectability, despite Home Office guidance that "Objections should not be based on moral grounds/values".<sup>1</sup>
5. Strip Club performers have high levels of job satisfaction.<sup>2</sup>
6. Feminist groups have undertaken tactics of consent violation reminiscent of revenge porn against female performers at Spearmint Rhino. I urge Sheffield City Council to condemn and thoroughly investigate these activities, and for the licensing committee not to condone these actions by using any evidence obtained in this way.
7. Where there are concerns within the venue, closure would be a mistake: there should be opportunity for remedy. After 15+ years of compliant operation, 40+ workers should not be penalised or harmed by loss of income by actions of one or few.
8. Workers at Spearmint Rhino are unionising through United Voices of the World Trade Union for improved working conditions and to save their workplace. They are some of the first strippers to do so. Management is so far supportive of this movement.
9. The whole industry is watching: this is an opportunity for Sheffield City Council to support better working conditions and worker's rights through unionisation across the entire industry. There can be no workers rights without a workplace.

### Job Satisfaction

While worker's enjoyment of their job is not an explicit consideration for licensing decisions, it is important in this context, where myself and my colleagues are described as homogenously 'exploited' in order to support the closure of our workplace. I enjoy so many aspects of the job, as do many other performers:<sup>3</sup> I love performing, pole dancing, sewing my own outfits and making accessories for other girls, meeting new people that I would never ordinarily meet and learning from their careers, experiences and perspectives. My work is valid and can frequently be fulfilling. Our work as performers involves physical labour (dancing, performing), aesthetic labour (upkeep of a normatively 'beautiful' appearance, wearing our outfits and heels), emotional labour (companionship, maintaining a friendly and fun disposition) as well as more broadly providing

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<sup>1</sup> Home Office, 2010. Sexual Entertainment Venues Guidance for England and Wales

<sup>2</sup> Sanders, T. and Hardy, K., 2013. Sex work: the ultimate precarious labour? Teela Sanders and Kate Hardy assess sex work within wider processes of 'flexibilisation'. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 93(1), pp.16-17.

<sup>3</sup> A 2013 study found "Almost three quarters (74.1 percent) of dancers reported high levels of job satisfaction. No dancers rated their job satisfaction as poor." Ibid.

feelings of intimacy, connection and practising empathy. Many of these forms of labour are also found in other work: caring and therapeutic professions, manual labour, modelling, entertainment and hospitality industries.

Through my experience as a dancer, I have learned to love my body exactly as it is through appreciating a variety of women's bodies, to be confident and proud of who I am and my capabilities and personality. I have become more friendly and confident in my daily life too, I can more comfortably socialise and get to know people, build friendships and I am just generally more secure in myself. Most days I am excited to go to work, even on quiet nights I have a great time with my colleagues. I am frequently impressed by the love, humour, openness, solidarity and warmth expressed within our group, especially when facing conflict and the difficulties we are currently embroiled in. I am so proud of my friends and colleagues who have dedicated an enormous amount of time to this campaign, and to supporting each other through it all. As a disabled student, without the flexible, well paid income I am able to access as a performer at Spearmint Rhino, it is likely I will have to withdraw from my studies and leave Sheffield after nearly five years in this wonderful city.

The most fulfilling aspects of my work itself has been where I have had meaningful conversations with clients. I have comforted someone who's partner was experiencing a severe mental health crisis, drawing on my own experiences to provide empathy and warmth. I have offered advice and guidance to a parent whose child had recently come out as LGBTQIA+, enabling them to express unconditional support to their child. I have spent a night supporting someone who had been affected by suicide. I have spoken with somebody struggling with undiagnosed mental health conditions who had never disclosed their struggle to anyone else. I have spoken to multiple army veterans who have experienced horrific violence and bereavement due to war and conflict.

I pride myself in these experiences, and having been able to support someone who often has nobody else they feel comfortable talking to, and who do not find formal talking therapy accessible. I feel fulfilled in my work when I feel that I have been able to provide someone with a safe ear, and more simply, where I have provided entertainment that brings joy and connection into someone's life, and been paid well for it! Human sexuality is completely natural, and frequently ties into a wider human need for connection and love, as well as the more basic drive for fun, enjoyment and entertainment in all its forms.

### Campaign

This year, we dancers have formulated a comprehensive campaign collectively in order to save our club. We want to demonstrate we are not passive or voiceless and we are willing to fight for our workplace. This campaign has involved regular meetings with dancers, local businesses and collectives, academics, local residents, political and campaign groups and other supporters. Through this we formulated a series of events<sup>4</sup> and resources: on the 21/5/19 dancers collaborated with Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) Students Union Women's Officer, Gabby Willis to host a public 'Ask a Stripper Anything Panel/Q&A' event at SHU students' union. This event was intended to address myths and misconceptions around the industry, as well as dispel stigma against those working in the industry. It was a welcoming and fun atmosphere and we received some really positive feedback from attendees who described the event as "well set up and a really comfortable experience for both women and attendees I feel.", which included local residents, students, feminists and SHU staff.

<sup>4</sup> <https://sites.google.com/view/sossheffield/events>

Following this, on the 22/5/19, at Sheffield University, supporters and dancers hosted a placard making event, with multiple media organisations in attendance. One dancer has produced a website: [www.saveourstripclubsheffield.co.uk](http://www.saveourstripclubsheffield.co.uk). There is also a Facebook page: SOS Sheffield Solidarity. A local academic and supporter has produced an open letter to Sheffield City Council which currently has over 950 signatures: <https://platform.organise.org.uk/campaigns/open-letter-to-sheffield-council-spearmint>.

*Treat others as you would like to be treated:*

**I would, as a stripper, like to be listened to, respected, and treated as an autonomous human whose views, experiences, hopes, desires and dreams matter.** That the opponents of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield fail to respect our capacity to choose, and actively seek to restrict the (safe and legal) choices available to us, is not feminist. By speaking 'for us', such groups neglect to listen to our voices, our lived experiences, and respect our financial, physical and mental wellbeing. Strippers are not seen as able to produce independent thought: we are described as "brainwashed by the pimp lobby"<sup>5</sup>.

The implication that women cannot make choices in the absence of some unseen patriarchal influence perversely reinforces the notion that feminists seek to subvert: that women are not free to make their own choices.

### Evidence of Alleged License Breaches

In recent months, 'Not Buying It', a feminist group purporting to "challenge sexual exploitation"<sup>6</sup> collaborated with several other feminist groups: Women's Equality Party, One Billion Rising and Zero Option Sheffield on the commissioning and dissemination of the alleged contents of a potentially illegal and undoubtedly immoral invasion of privacy, filming performers at Spearmint Rhino Sheffield in the nude, at work non consensually, and in contravention of GDPR. This operation has also targeted other clubs across the country.

This action was reminiscent of sexual violence many women experience regularly. Such actions are the more hurtful because they were undertaken by our feminist sisters who claim to desire to support and save us from violation and exploitation. The aftermath of this 'feminist sting' going "under enemy lines"<sup>7</sup> included an implication that video footage would be released online, or be shown publicly. This has massively impacted my colleague's and my own mental health. **Paying men to film women's nude bodies, especially in a sexualised context, without their knowledge or consent is abhorrent and cannot be justified.** This action is described by stripper and activist Stacey Clare as "highly reminiscent of the criminal act of [revenge porn](#).... the act of sharing private sexual materials with the intention of causing distress".

"There can only be two outcomes of the sting operation: either the dancers caught on camera lose their jobs, or the club closes in which case all the dancers lose their jobs. **There can be no question**

<sup>5</sup> "Rakoff claimed that feminist support for the clubs show how "comprehensive the infiltration of the pimp lobby has been" <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sting-at-spearmint-rhino-lays-bare-feminist-split-over-sex-work-g9ffxwnm>

<sup>6</sup> [www.notbuyingit.org.uk/about-us-2/](http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/about-us-2/)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sting-at-spearmint-rhino-lays-bare-feminist-split-over-sex-work-g9ffxwnm>

that sharing this material with the council is intended to cause distress.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, there is a potential that sharing this footage would out workers to friends or family members, with negative repercussions.

While feminist objectors to the industry are rightly concerned with sexual violence against civilian women, they seem to have no qualms with funding, being associated with or condoning **consent violations and tactics of sexual violence being used against strippers if it furthers their political cause**. We are women, feminists, human beings, we refuse to be collateral damage in the war for women’s liberation.

I urge the council to condemn this action, and to take necessary measures against all persons or groups involved in the commissioning, storing and dissemination of such footage. Moreover, the licensing committee should avoid condoning this action by refusing to use evidence obtained in this manner to inform licensing decisions.

After 15 years of compliant operation, I also argue that, considering the potential wide reaching negative impact upon families all across Sheffield and further afield, including a predominantly female workforce, and the impacts on unionising efforts locally and nationally, the venue should be given a chance to remedy any alleged breaches, or demonstrate that they have already undertaken remedial measures.

Furthermore, licensing procedures must involve and consult **current workers**, who are experts on their own industry, and must be allowed to voice their own needs.

#### Public Sector Equality Duties, Nil Cap and Nature of the Locality

‘Not Buying it’ refute ‘pop up’ strip clubs but push for implementation of a ‘zero club’ policy and the closure of all licensed and legal clubs despite the fact that there is no reliable evidence that strip clubs inform sexual violence against women.<sup>9</sup> The study used to defend this opinion,<sup>10</sup> failed to exert even a rudimentary command over statistical analysis, clumsily mistaking correlation for causation and failing to take into account other variables such as change in population density and makeup. Such ‘zero option’ campaigns make it harder to address concerns about working conditions within the industry. The focus on restricting the number of SEVs “shifts political focus away from workers’ rights and issues of worker exploitation”.<sup>11</sup>

Regarding the campaign for a nil cap on strip clubs linked to arguments of the ‘inappropriate nature of the locality’, our venue is closed during other local business and institutions operating hours, moreover, the presence of an educational institution does not make sexual entertainment inappropriate: university students are adults, and university students work in the club. Education and sexuality are not mutually exclusive, they can coexist, and indeed in the same geographical locality.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.dazeddigital.com/life-culture/article/44368/1/womens-equality-party-not-buying-it-secretly-filming-strippers-spear-mint-rhino> Emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup> Magnati, B. 2011. The impact of adult entertainment venues on rape statistics in Camden: a re-analysis.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/47185652/Green-Paper-Camden-Lilith-rape-stats>

<http://strippingtheillusion.blogspot.com/2012/03/we-need-to-talk-about-lilith.html>

<sup>10</sup> Eden, 2007. The Lilith Project.

[http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/userfiles/file/uploads/inappropriate\\_Behaviour.pdf](http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/userfiles/file/uploads/inappropriate_Behaviour.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Colosi, R., 2013. Over ‘sexed’ regulation. p.242.

Similarly, concerning local businesses in the cultural quarter such as art galleries and cinemas: the arts and sexuality and sensuality are frequently wedded. Concerns about strip tease as seedy (where burlesque, sex scenes in cinema, or nude oil paintings are not) or 'lowering the tone' of an area are implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, classed. Research in this area also demonstrates that where women claim to avoid walking near clubs, this unease has been found to be "more related to morality and disgust than fear."<sup>12</sup> Such "disgust appears prompted by the disavowal of respectable standards of sexual behaviour and comportment",<sup>13</sup> and reflects classed and gendered notions of disrespectable masculinities and femininities. As such, "Opposition expressed to lap dance clubs can be interpreted as part of an attempt to police the boundaries of middle-class respectability".<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, I'm not aware of any evidence that our customers increase crime in the area, and indeed the presence of our door staff may provide a reassuring presence on an otherwise quiet street.

Regarding the alleged normalisation of objectification and male entitlement to our bodies: Feminist campaigns against us objectify us through almost all of Nussbaum's seven criteria:<sup>15</sup> instrumentality, inertness, fungibility, violability and denial of subjectivity and autonomy.<sup>16</sup> Objectification is present in all layers of society: a model is objectified by the very nature of her work, but must not be blamed for male sexual violence. Therapists suspend their own emotions and personal issues while working, as do other workers in hospitality or entertainment industries. We consent to and receive payment for for objectification in the same way these other workers to, and I argue that strippers and sex workers should not be forced out of safer working conditions (facing real danger and harm) to protect civilian women from some hypothetical form of abstract harm that is not evidence based.

Feminist objectors also neglect that this industry offers an opportunity for the terms of a consensual encounter to be directly expressed, indeed it is expected that they be discussed and asserted by workers, in contrast to many other gendered and sexualised encounters. I begin all my dances with the question of whether a customer has bought a lap dance before, and regardless of their response I direct them to sit in a certain way and say "you know the rules don't you? Hands by your sides and no touching". When these rules are broken I can remind the customer of the agreement and they often apologise profusely and leave the encounter having experienced a woman asserting her boundaries with actual consequences (the ending of a dance, and the customer being asked to leave). This work has empowered me to voice my boundaries, and offered me the rare experience of certainty of having those boundaries positively enforced by people who are concerned with my wellbeing and welfare. **This actually directly counters male sexual entitlement: we are empowered to exert immediate consequences over those who feel entitled to attempt to violate the boundaries of women.** Moreover, customers are curious and frequently care about our wellbeing, they want to know about our working conditions, our safety, our income, our relationship with other dancers and with management.

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<sup>12</sup> Hubbard, P. and Colosi, R., 2015. Respectability, morality and disgust in the night-time economy: exploring reactions to 'lap dance' clubs in England and Wales. *The Sociological Review*, 63(4), p.783

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.787

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.797

<sup>15</sup> Nussbaum, M.C., 1995. Objectification. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 24(4), pp.249-291.

<sup>16</sup> I offer a more in depth explanation which can be accessed here:

<https://sites.google.com/view/sos/sheffield/the-campaign-against-us#h.p.q5pFpnbActH> on the [www.saveourstripclubsheffield.com](http://www.saveourstripclubsheffield.com) website.



### Objections based on Moral Grounds/Values

Despite assertions that workers in the industry are often from already marginalised communities, the undercover tactics undertaken by feminist groups, of 'rescue' by exploiting imagery of and reference to our nude bodies without the consent or consultation of those concerned actually 're-marginalises' us and our 'subaltern' voice is further repressed, solidifying our "invisibility, and our illegitimacy as commentators"<sup>17</sup> on issues that affect us directly. We become symbols for use in feminists' debates rather than people with voices. This exclusion from mainstream feminist discourse on stripping and sex work extends to policy making, where there is "little acknowledgment of the sex-workers' narratives in existing policies (O'Neill, 2007)."<sup>18</sup>

These vicious **campaigns against women working in the stripping industry are, moreover, directly linked to the precarious and 'exploitative' conditions they seek to abolish.** Feminist campaigns against strip clubs in the 2000s and 2010s led to stricter licensing regulations and the introduction of "Section 27 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 [reclassifying] lap dancing clubs as sexual entertainment venues"<sup>19</sup> spurring clubs to bring in house-fees, fines and higher dancer-to-customer ratios to recoup the increased costs of licensing.<sup>20</sup> These are the conditions now cited as representing the 'fundamentally exploitative' nature of the strip club industry. Conceding to these 'feminist' demands by closing more and more licensed clubs creates a competitive environment in remaining clubs, further afield, for workers to feel pressure to do more than they are comfortable with, and at the very least makes us work harder to access an income, spending more time with customers we could otherwise avoid.

Feminist groups objecting to our venue and the industry more broadly claim you can't simultaneously enter an industry through economic need, as well as finding it empowering. This demonstrates an inability to understand nuance. **Jobs can be great one day and rubbish the other or even both at the same time, or completely neutral.** What feels more empowering than keeping a roof over your head and feeding your children, and often have fun while doing it? Our work allows mothers to spend more time with their children, and to be able to afford better lives for their kids.

Moreover, a lot of us are very skilled at our jobs and earn a good living. We enjoy it for many reasons. Many of us use our jobs to fund our educations, alternative careers, creative endeavours, travelling and supporting families. We should have the right to choose, and closing this venue would close an avenue by which we can afford these endeavours. Hypothetical 'exit plans' won't help us when we are already on a road towards a career such feminists find 'respectable' and would actually hinder our progress towards these academic or creative endeavours and other careers. Not buying It claim to have systems in place by which they work with women in the industry to provide help as well as meaningful exit plans and financial and career support. Their website claims "We are working with women from the industry to raise awareness and devise exit plans"<sup>21</sup>

However, they actually admit that **they refuse to work with women currently in the industry**, or who wish to continue work in the industry, as they claim online, because they view lap dancers as

<sup>17</sup> Smith, M. and Mac, J., 2018. *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights*. Verso Trade.p.5.

<sup>18</sup> Colosi, R., 2013. Over 'sexed' regulation and the disregarded worker: an overview of the impact of sexual entertainment policy on lap-dancing club workers. *Social Policy and Society*, 12(2) p.243.

<sup>19</sup> Home Office. 2010. Sexual Entertainment Venues Guidance for England and Wales

<sup>20</sup> Mac and Smith, 2018. *Revolting prostitutes*. p.187

Smith, P. 2014. 'East London Stripper Collective is standing up for strippers rights' *Vice*, Vice.com

<sup>21</sup> [www.notbuyingit.org.uk/background](http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/background)

brainwashed by the 'pimp lobby'<sup>22</sup> and unable to make our own decisions, but also, more concerningly we apparently hurt their feelings by 'name calling'<sup>23</sup>. Not Buying It directly concede this: "Lap dancers call objectors to strip clubs sexually repressed, hysterical<sup>24</sup> 'sex work' haters and then *wonder why we don't work with them*".<sup>25</sup> This neglect actively silences our voices on how to end violence against us and excludes us from the conversation completely. We are treated as voiceless and objectified by the very people who claim to want to save us from objectification. We are described as objects bought, sold and used, we are "products"<sup>26</sup> and our work is reduced to women "wrapping their implants around the nearest pole"<sup>27</sup> **instead of human beings with complex and varied experiences, who simply want the right to work and the right to work safely. We want rights not 'rescue' especially not from ill-informed outsiders.**

### Harms Resulting from License Revocation

The focus on protecting women by shutting clubs is misplaced and will likely push women into more dangerous work: "Where the licenses of SEVs are denied or revoked, as well as exposing women to poverty through unemployment, **those who wish to continue to work as dancers, but are unable to find work in SEVs, may have no alternative but to seek work in unregulated spaces of erotic dance, increasing their risk of experiencing further exploitation.** There is evidence to suggest that those working in unregulated spaces of erotic dance are exposed to more risks, including non-payment of labour, and increased incidents of sexual and physical violence."<sup>28</sup>

While it is the case that stripping is often not the only thing a woman can do, it is also the case that women choose work in the industry for varying reasons and should be allowed to do so safely. **Finding our work morally distasteful is not enough cause to stop us doing it** and directly harming us in the meantime. Beyond loss of livelihood, 'stigma kills'.<sup>29</sup> It's well evidenced that stigmatising language and policy informs violence against women under the guise of protecting us because fundamentally it denies our agency, personhood and voice. It pushes us further into the margins.

It emboldens men who want to enact violence against strippers and sex workers (and derivatively, all women) because we are described as objects, as fundamentally damaged, disposable and lacking autonomy: our voices are suppressed, and we are disrespected by feminists and the patriarchy alike. **We will never move beyond hegemonic patriarchal violence and oppression until we listen to the**

<sup>22</sup> "Rakoff claimed that feminist support for the clubs show how "comprehensive the infiltration of the pimp lobby has been" <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sting-at-spearmint-rhino-lays-bare-feminist-split-over-sex-work-g9ffxwnm>

<sup>23</sup> [www.notbuyingit.org.uk/myth-buster/](http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/myth-buster/)

<sup>24</sup> This is a false claim to a character attack. The quote reference concerns Stacey Clare of the East London Stripper Collective critiquing Sasha Rakoff's (CE of Not Buying It) descriptions of strippers as damaged and victimised and Rakoff's use of "stigmatising language and such inflammatory language which is aiming to kind of try and *whip up this sort of hysteria* within the public." Emphasis added. Lap dance objectors were in this context not described as *being* hysterical but as contributing to public hysteria with inflammatory language.

<sup>25</sup> BBC (2019) 'The feminist strippers who hate feminists BBC 5 Live.'

[www.YouTube.com/watch?v=wWjQWYbq1S8](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=wWjQWYbq1S8) Emphasis added. This video was posted by a YouTube channel under the name 'Not Buying It' and is linked to on the Not Buying It website

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/Myth%20Buster%20Starter.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/Myth%20Buster%20Starter.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Dr Rachela Colosi, University of Lincoln. <https://www.uvunion.org.uk/news/2019/4/womens-equality-party-covert-filming>

<sup>29</sup> Mac and Smith. 2018. Revolting Prostitutes. p.216.

**voices and experiences of all women. Not just those who behave within patriarchal norms of modesty and 'respectable' behaviour.**

It is clear that those trying to end the strip club industry are not concerned with helping us but see us as enemies. Such campaigns reinforce stigma and objectification of us, painting us as homogenous brainwashed victims and objects of abuse rather than autonomous political subjects who are able to make choices for ourselves and our families including asserting our worker's rights. We are objects and symbols of oppression rather than subjects who choose.

It is also clear in this kind of discourse that the **actual and direct material harms experienced by a woman in the industry whose club risks closure takes a back seat to hypothetical harms experienced by all women.** We must take seriously the concerns of those who believe that stripping harms women, but we must also respect the gravity of the harms that have been done by revenge porn-esque tactics against us, as well as the loss of community and livelihood we face if our workplace is closed. Whilst 'evidence'<sup>30</sup> that strip clubs inform sexual violence against women, has been rigorously debunked<sup>31</sup>, I emphasise the need for more independent and reliable research into the area, to fill current gaps in the literature, and in order to make more rigorous, informed and evidence-based policy and licensing decisions. Current section 27 policy is not "sufficiently evidence based"<sup>32</sup> and "overall the worker, who should not be put in jeopardy by legislation, is in fact subjected to further risks and marginalisation as a result of Section 27."<sup>33</sup>

I will be writing my MA thesis on this area, and hope, as part of a PhD, to work to develop a more thorough understanding of strip club licensing, seeking to contribute towards the most well informed policies, licensing procedures and strategies of harm reduction. SEVs are licensed in order to regulate them, and protect workers, and broader society from harm. **Therefore, whether workers and others would be harmed by a license being revoked, is a relevant consideration for the licensing committee.**

### Strippers Union (UWW)

Sex work and stripping is a rational strategy for many people to obtain the resources they need to live a good life under present economic conditions and political structures. Our work offers a high pay/ low-time ratio, flexibility and a minimal barrier-to-access avenue to support ourselves and our dependants. Stripping feeds families, pays rent and mortgages, pays tuition fees, and enables many to be emancipated from difficult or abusive situations. It is one of the more accessible forms of income for disabled women, in light of recent changes to benefits.

<sup>30</sup> Eden, 2007. The Lilith Project.

[http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/userfiles/file/uploads/inappropriate\\_Behaviour.pdf](http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/userfiles/file/uploads/inappropriate_Behaviour.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Magnati, B. 2011. The impact of adult entertainment venues on rape statistics in Camden: a re-analysis.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/47185652/Green-Paper-Camden-Lilith-rape-stats>

<http://strippingtheillusion.blogspot.com/2012/03/we-need-to-talk-about-lilith.html>

The Eden study failed to exert any command over statistical analysis. It was funded by 'Object':

<sup>32</sup> Colosi, R., 2013. Over 'sexed' regulation and the disregarded worker: an overview of the impact of sexual entertainment policy on lap-dancing club workers. *Social Policy and Society*, 12(2), p.242

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Moreover, many of us enjoy our jobs: a 2013 study found “Almost three quarters (74.1 percent) of dancers reported high levels of job satisfaction. No dancers rated their job satisfaction as poor.”<sup>34</sup>

While I was fortunate enough to enter the industry out of some genuine active desire to do this work, there are those who choose to strip solely out of economic need. As such, I implore the licensing committee to consider the potential impact of closing my workplace for those people.

**Restricting the choices of someone with already few choices is a recipe for disaster**, and these are the people that need the unionisation of the industry most: they need to be part of collective decision making, and they need worker’s rights. The closure of this venue would disrupt these unionising efforts: dispersing dancers who are already unionising at work further afield and distracting their focus to finding alternative venues and avenues of work. For some this would mean more risky, high contact forms of sex work. It is hard to fight for worker’s rights when you have to fight for the right to work at all. It is paramount, here, to listen to the views, experiences and wishes of workers currently in the industry, as it is those people who know best the conditions that will help them.

### Sheffield Could Lead the World

This is a pivotal moment for the stripping industry, and make no mistake, the whole industry is watching. **Strippers are unionising**. If we are successful here in making our voices and needs heard, and rights respected, this will impact not only myself and my colleagues, but workers in venues across the country, and as Spearmint Rhino is an international chain, potentially across the world.

The precariousness of the way our venues are licensed- the way we have to battle year upon year to justify our right to work against increasingly vicious and sexually violent ‘feminist’ campaigns against us, is precisely the reason why many dancers across the industry have not spoken out or pushed for better working conditions in the past. We are afraid to push for positive change, lest we and all our friends and colleagues lose our jobs.

As a result, our voices are completely suppressed. We can't talk about our real lived experiences. We are disempowered by those who purportedly seek to 'empower' us by taking away our income. We should not be afraid to speak out in case it adds fuel to the fires of those who wish to take our livelihoods away from us.

Any concerns about individual venues **must** be taken seriously, and this is a moment where we can show the entire industry that strippers will not be penalised for speaking out or fighting for better conditions, by losing their workplace altogether. There can be positive change, and we can access justice and worker’s rights. These include daily concerns to do with health and safety, holiday and sick pay, as well as dealing with house fees, fines and management procedures and structures.<sup>35</sup> Dozens of people, waged (door, DJ, bar, management and cleaning staff: 15+) and unwaged (performers: 25+) must not lose their jobs and ability to support families and other dependents because of alleged actions of one or few people.

We should not have to defend the very existence of our work and industry itself before we can even try and improve our working conditions. Dancers stand together collectively: while the majority of us

<sup>34</sup> Sanders, T. and Hardy, K., 2013. Sex work: the ultimate precarious labour? Teela Sanders and Kate Hardy assess sex work within wider processes of ‘flexibilisation’. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 93(1), pp.16-17.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.uvwunion.org.uk/strippers>

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have had overwhelmingly positive experiences, if there is even one person who has a concern, we take her seriously, we respect her experience, and we fight with her for remedy. **While many of us find our work to be empowering, fun, positive and fulfilling, the same requirement is not asked of a checkout worker, cleaner or a bricklayer to justify their right to work.**

In light of this representation, therefore, I request that the licensing committee grant a renewal of Spearmint Rhino's SEV license.

Kind regards,

**Subject:** FW: spearmint

S355

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 21:22  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** spearmint

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield. It is a legitimate business that stimulates the local economy like any other and the government recommends that objections based on moral grounds should not be considered when licensing Sexual Entertainment Venues: sexuality is a natural part of the human experience.

Not everyone need visit or agree with such venues, but venues should not be closed on moral grounds objecting to sexual entertainment itself. Regarding alleged license breaches: the club has a record of legal and safe operation spanning over 15 years, and I believe the club should be given the chance to remedy any alleged misconduct and put in place measures to ensure such breaches are not allowed to take place.

Yours sincerely,

## Rhodes-Evans Emma (CEX)

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**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino

S356

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 22:07  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Spearmint Rhino

Dear Madams and Sirs,

I am writing to support the renewal of Spearmint Rhino in Sheffield. As a stripper with 8 years experience of the job, I know that most everything that is said about strip clubs by outsiders is wrong.

I started stripping at 38 and therefore have had extensive experience of other industries and walks of life. I confidently feel that strip clubs and pubs offer a valuable service in today's society. They are islands of person-to-person interaction in a sea of misleading person-to-screen sexuality, allowing clients to interact with real women with cellulite and caesarean scars, not airbrushed, 2D constructs of femininity.

They also give young adults a rare chance to learn about boundaries, something that porn does not teach. Bear in mind that many of those young customers will go to the university nearby. They need to be shown that sexuality needs to be handled with care, which is what strip clubs provide. Demonising strip clubs is not only out of step with the way most people under 30 think now, it takes away an opportunity for this to be happen.

The feminist groups who have illegally filmed strippers at work have not done their research. There is no evidence to say that strip clubs in today's world cause sexual harassment, objectification etc; while this might have been true 30 or 40 years ago, it most definitely isn't now.

And anyone who researches the true nature of the interaction between client and stripper will realise that it is never as outsiders characterise it. Additionally, claims that strip clubs cause disruption in a local area are not born out by empirical research by night time economy specialists.

Trying to legislate against erotic or sexual entertainment is a **losing battle** because the demand will never go away. If you take away this venue, it will only push the industry into unregulated spaces. You have a duty of care towards the safety of your constituents and promoting the development of such unlicensed venues is a contradiction of that duty.

The workers at Spearmint Rhino, as well as management, are unionising, which can only be better for society as a whole. Please recognise this and make sure that you include workers and customers in your deliberations, even though, when society forces us all to be in the closet, it is hard to reach these constituents.

I do hope you'll do the right thing.

Best wishes,

Proud stripper by choice

**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino

S357

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 22:16  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Spearmint Rhino

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I'm writing regarding the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield. As a local resident of Sheffield I am in favour of the SEV license renewal. Closing the club will take away many waged positions (door, bar, management, cleaning staff) which provides for many families across Sheffield. It will also take away jobs for many women working as dancers at the club, many of whom are also parents or have caring responsibilities. Workers within the club consistently assert that they are there of their own free will, and that they enjoy their jobs, and the tight-knit community there.

The closure of the club will for mean unemployment, or a move towards riskier, unregulated or higher contact forms of erotic dancing and sex work that they would not otherwise choose. It would also mean breaking up a close and supportive community of colleagues and friends, which will undoubtedly have a negative impact on many workers, their mental health and their financial wellbeing.

Spearmint Rhino Sheffield is a venue that has a place in Sheffield City Centre. It is a legitimate business that stimulates the economy like any other and the government recommends that objections based on moral grounds should not be considered when licensing Sexual Entertainment Venues: sexuality is a natural part of the human experience. Not everyone need visit or agree with such venues, but venues should not be closed on moral grounds objecting to sexual entertainment itself. Regarding alleged license breaches: the club has a record of legal and safe operation spanning over 15 years, and I believe the club should be given the chance to remedy any alleged misconduct and put in place measures to ensure such breaches are not allowed to take place.

Whilst it should be taken into consideration that the stripclub industry as a whole is not perfect, it is also important to note that dancers across the UK and in Spearmint Rhino Sheffield are unionizing and fighting for their workers' rights. Removing a safe and regulated venue from workers who are engaged in this fight does nothing to support them, instead detracting from this aim by dispersing dancers who are already unionising at work further afield and redirecting their attention to finding alternative venues and avenues of work. It is hard to fight for workers rights when you have to fight for the right to work at all! While it is important to focus on exploitation in any industry, it is paramount to listen to the views, experiences and wishes of workers currently in the industry, as it is those people who know best the conditions that will help them.

Finally, I would like to express my condemnation of tactics used by self-described feminist groups. Filming women in the nude without their consent or knowledge is not acceptable, nor is it acceptable to pay others to do so, and those concerned with women's rights more generally must also respect the rights of the women upon whom their actions and campaigns have the most impact. I urge the council to publicly condemn and reject such activities, not allow it to cloud their judgment, and for action to be taken against those commissioning such footage.

Yours sincerely,



**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino

S358

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 22:40  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Spearmint Rhino

To whom it may concern,

I am an ex-resident of Sheffield, and am deeply saddened to hear about the hostile treatment of the woman of Spearmint Rhino, due to the private investigation carried out by so called "feminists".

One of my best friends has been working at the Sheffield Spearmint Rhino club for a few years, and I can honestly say it has changed my views on the industry. Since my friend has worked at the club, it has given her the security and confidence that no other job has been able to provide. The club has provided a safety net and a community for my friend and countless other women, as I know everyone at the club (performers, bar staff and bouncers) all look out for one another.

It is unacceptable to allow these women to be degraded in this way by people who are claiming to be protecting their rights. They have made these women feel scared at the prospect of losing their livelihoods. I would be concerned that taking this safe space away from the honest and hardworking women would put them in a vulnerable position.

I hope the campaign will make the council take notice of how hard working and intelligent these women really are. I have always viewed Sheffield as having a forward-thinking and understanding community who are willing to put themselves in the shoes of their neighbours and I hope this will continue to be the case.

Kind regards,

**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino

S359

**From:**  
**Sent:** 27 May 2019 22:59  
**To:** licensingservice  
**Subject:** Spearmint Rhino

To whom it may concern,

A friend of mine has been working at the Sheffield Spearmint Rhino Club for several years now and it has provided her with a secure and substantial income that was previously out of her reach. This income, coupled with the amazing support provided by her fellow staff members, has helped her confidence to grow and allowed her to live the life she wants due to the financial security and flexible working hours.

I was extremely distressed to hear of the injustice imposed on the girls at the club by people pertaining to support equality and rights for women. The fact that investigators were sent in to film people whilst at work without any consent is wrong and it seems the main intention was to demonise the industry and not to protect anyone.

I believe the Clubs licence should be renewed due to the safe and reliable work it provides many of Sheffield's amazing residents and this work should be allowed to continue without the threat of being filmed without consent.

Regards,

**Subject:** FW: Spearmint Rhino

S360

**From:**

**Sent:** 27 May 2019 23:04

**To:** licensingservice

**Subject:** Re: Spearmint Rhino

Dear Sheffield Council Licences,

I write regarding Spearmint Rhino Sheffield's licence. As a longstanding resident of Sheffield, who indeed lives very close to the venue, I am in favour of the SEV license renewal.

I have never heard from another local with complaints about the club's presence in our area. I also want to defend the right of all the staff to provide for themselves and their families through employment of their own choosing. I do not believe that worker interests are ever served by action/organisation where there is not either leadership or decisive influence by the workers concerned. The workers at Spearmint Rhino participate in their own forms of organisation as workers (through the United Voices of the World union) and should not have their own labour politics disregarded to please those who are not engaged in their industry.

The staff of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield consistently assert that they do their work of their own volition, and that the employment conditions, pay, camaraderie, environment, and work satisfaction motivate them to continue working there. I believe there are many workplaces throughout our region and the country whose workers would have far fewer good things to say about their jobs, which would never face the threat of closure in this way.

Most other workers are not at risk of their lawful occupation being taken away due to the preferences of people who do not participate in their work as either a provider or consumer. And, where there are allegations of incidents having taken place in breach of licence, a business must be given the chance to remain in operation and address these issues in a timely fashion, as is the case in other industries.

I condemn the tactic of filming women in the nude without their consent or knowledge. This vigilantism is an attack on privacy which would never be accepted were another group of women concerned. I urge the council to condemn and reject such activities, and for action to be taken against those commissioning such footage.

To summarise, the staff of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield, a longstanding and legal business in our community, should be treated with the same consideration and respect as other staff who work in our community, and as such have a right to be listened to. This means keeping the club open.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

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