

Reducing the Strength (RTS) Scheme

Elliott Beevers - Licensing Officer

Reducing the Strength (RTS) Scheme

What is it?

- RTS is a scheme founded by the Local Government Association.
- It aims to uphold the licensing objectives, reduce alcohol accessibility, promote public health and reduce alcohol related Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).
- Under the scheme, off-licences voluntarily agree to stop selling beer, lager, and cider with an alcohol content above 6.5% ABV.

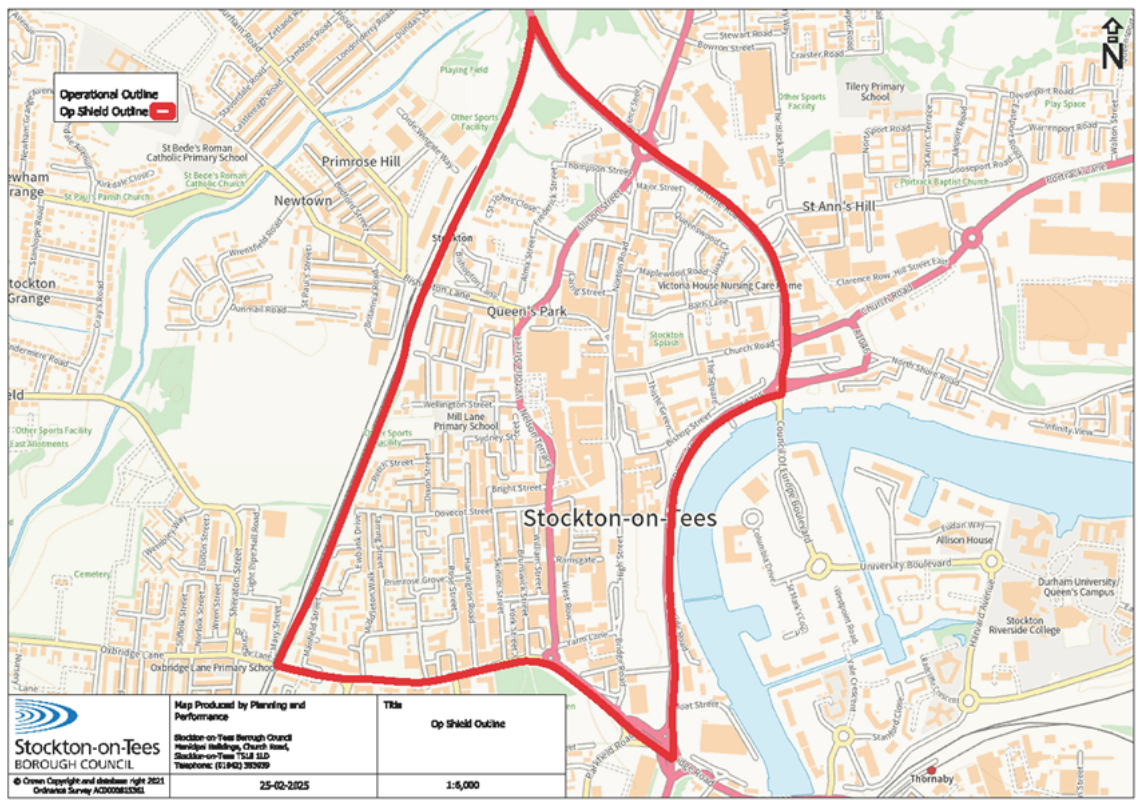
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Why is it being implemented?

- RTS is being implemented initially within Stockton Town Centre (specifically the Operation Sheild area)
- Incidents / concerns have been raised regarding premises who serve 'high strength, low cost' alcohol to street drinkers
- Typically, most ciders range from 4% ABV to 7% ABV.
- 'high strength, low cost' can as Knights Cider, Black Storm and Lancer (Black) range from 7.5% ABV (Alcohol by Volume) to 8.4% ABV.

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Operation Sheild Area



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Consultation

- Consultation on the scheme began in July 2024 including engagement with licensees, stakeholders including internal and external partners.
- Two retailers stated – ‘We are supporting and obey the rules of council for the wellbeing of society especially for the elders and children’ and another stated ‘no one needs a strong drink to enjoy a drink’.
- The Community Safety Team sees ‘the scheme as a key pillar of the Shield strategy, which, among other elements, follows the Home Office’s ‘Clear, Hold, Build’ principles of problem orientated policing’.
- Cleveland Police stated ‘We welcome any efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour within the Town Centre area, with this scheme being particularly relevant as data would suggest substance/alcohol misuse is a key driver of said ASB’.

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Considerations

- Considerations have also been given to legislation such as competition law to ensure this is not being breached during the implementation of the scheme.
- Consideration was also given to what the incentive is to businesses to sign up to the scheme.
- Consideration was also given to what happens if businesses do not engage.

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Objectives and Impact

It is hoped this scheme will have a positive impact from several aspects such as:

- Public Health.
- Reduction in Crime and ASB.
- Increased public perception of safety within the Town Centre.
- More investment / attractive Town Centre.
- Meet the Council Priorities.

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Launch Day

- On 25th September 2025 the scheme was launched.
- Retailers were provided with posters to display in their premises.
- Retailers were involved in promotion and comms on the scheme.
- A commitment was made by the council to ensure compliance with the scheme.

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Participating Premises

- The following premises have agreed to participate in the scheme –
 - **Addison Newsagents** – 102-104 Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1TW.
 - **Pickwicks (formerly D&S News)** – 8 High Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1UB.
 - **Iceland** – Wellington Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1NH.
 - **B&M Stores** – 139-139A High Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1LW.
 - **Heron Foods** – 8A Castle Way, Castlegate Centre, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1AL.
 - **Savers** – 7 Wellington Square, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1RG.
 - **Yarm Lane Convenience Store** – 53 Yarm Lane, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3DL.
 - **Quick News** - 101 High Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1BD.
 - **Fani Vapes** - 49-51 Yarm Lane, Stockton-On-Tees, TS18 3DL.

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Going forward

- Going forward the scheme will be monitored in terms of its effectiveness.
- Identify gaps where changes may need to be made.
- Also, promotion of the scheme will continue which may encourage more premises to engage in the scheme and give a continued incentive to those who are already a part of it.

The Licensing Service

Questions? Thank You

Information will be displayed on our webpage about the scheme.

www.stockton.gov.uk/licensing