

Permission granted for live music to return to Southern Bar

An Edinburgh bar where Nirvana once played an impromptu gig has been given the go ahead to host live music again.

The council approved changes to the Southern Bar's licence which will allow bands and artists to play there for the first time in more than 10 years.

Councillors said there was a "desperate need for appropriate live music venues" in the city and welcomed plans for performances to return to the South Clerk Street boozier.

The former bikers' bar was the scene of an unplanned set from Nirvana front man Kurt Cobain and drummer Dave Grohl in 1991, which has gone on to become the stuff of legend in the capital.

However new acts that will take to the stage following approval of the licence variation "won't be playing that kind of music," a council meeting was told by a lawyer representing the applicant.

Addressing members of the licensing board on Monday, solicitor Alistair McDonald said permission to have live music was revoked around 2010 following a series of noise complaints.

He said: "The type of music they would like to play here will not interrupt anybody and indeed a lot of people in the area

are regulars and so are very excited by this possibility as well.

“Before it was a bikers’ pub, it was a rock music bar. It has had the claim to fame of having Kurt Cobain from Nirvana playing there one evening.

“They won’t be playing that kind of music.”

The application said performances would be “unplugged folk music and open mic events”.

The iconic acoustic set, played to around 30 punters, was remembered by Dave Grohl in 2011. He said: “We just sat on these barstools and played some music.

“I felt completely comfortable doing that. Maybe more so than anything else we were doing, like playing Top of the Pops. That just seemed more natural to me.

“Then I sat at the bar and someone gave me a lesson in whisky that went on for a long time.

“The UK definitely responded to Nirvana much more, before America. You guys were the first with everything – we cut our teeth there.”

Murdo MacLeod, who had previously toured with Nirvana as part of punk act The Ceteran, recalled: “People were really gobsmacked when David and Kurt showed up at the door. To see them with pints, strumming acoustic guitars, just being relaxed and having a blether with people, it was really special.”

The licensing board unanimously granted permission for live music to return to the Southern Bar.

Cllr Cathy Fullerton said: “I would welcome more live music venues in Edinburgh because there’s certainly been a dearth of them recently.”

Cllr Chas Booth added: "There's a desperate need for appropriate live music venues in Edinburgh."

by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter.

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