

Farm shop sold alcohol for more than three months despite not holding up to date licence

An East Lothian farm shop sold alcohol for more than three months despite not holding an up to date licence.

East Linton Mart Farm Shop and cafe's licence ran out in February this year but when East Lothian Council's Licensing Standards officer visited on May 20 she witnessed alcohol on the shelves and being sold.

A meeting of the local authority's licensing board this week heard an apology from operator Neil Sinclair-Parry who said he had not realised the licence had run out and thought it was valid until the end of this month.

And he told the meeting the family business had seen nearly all staff change this year as well as being hit by illness including a spell in intensive care for him.

He said: "We have had a lot of pressures on our business this year including almost a 100 per cent staff turnover, we are only a small family business but we have actually lost nine members of staff and also a huge amount of illness resulting in three members of staff, including myself being in intensive care.

"I am not suggesting this is an excuse but obviously the

pressures on the business have made me think one thing and be incorrect.”

The licensing standards officer told the board that during her visit to The Mart staff agreed to her request to cover up alcohol on the shelves and stop selling it.

And she questioned whether Mr Sinclair-Parry, who is the personal licence holder for the shop, was able to carry out those duties given his health.

She said: “I am aware that Mr Parry has said there has been staff illness including himself so in light of that I’d like the board to consider the applicant. Mr Parry is the one who has to authorise the sales of alcohol and if there is concern about his health in connection to the shop then I would advise there are additional persons who are personal licence holders.”

Mr Sinclair-Parry applied for eight additional occasional licences to sell alcohol at the premises between now and October.

A representative from Police Scotland said the sales between February and May had been looked into and it had been decided no further action would be taken.

The board agreed to grant the new licences and advised Mr Sinclair-Parry to consider an additional licence holder on the site.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter