

East Lothian village hub has alcohol sales suspended

A rural village store which had to suspend alcohol sales after repeatedly missing deadlines for licence applications has been warned it needs to improve.

The operators of Humble Hub, in East Lothian, found themselves without a licence to sell booze earlier this month after failing to get their paperwork in on time.

A meeting of East Lothian Licensing Board today heard the hub had been operating using a series of occasional licences for years and repeatedly submitted applications after the cut off time given to allow them to be processed by staff.

The board's licensing standards officer said after more than two years of failing to meet the 42 day deadline despite warnings, the most recent applications did not come in early enough to process and the store had to halt sales on February 6.

Hub manager Morag Taylor apologised for the late applications and told board members it would not happen again accepting advice from them to hire an agent to support the business in its licensing needs.

Board convenor Councillor Lachlan Bruce told Ms Taylor: "A licence to sell alcohol is a privilege, not a right."

He said that if there were problems submitting applications on time it raised questions about what else was not being done

properly.

And he added the late applications added to the pressure licensing and police teams were already under to process the licences properly.

Fellow board member George McGuire also said he was concerned by the previous issues but added: "I am aware of the importance of the hub to the people of Humble. it is probably the only place for miles where people can buy alcohol and it is a popular stopping off point for coffee and meals."

The board approved an additional set of occasional licences to allow sales to restart and continue until April but warned continued late applications would lead to further action.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter