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Britain Lets Pubs Serve Until 5 a.m. for England’s World Cup Match

The one-off licensing extension in England and Wales will cover the 1 a.m. kickoff against Mexico and spare venues from seeking separate approval.

Thursday, July 2, 2026



The British government said Thursday that pubs and bars in England and Wales will be allowed to serve alcohol until 5 a.m. on Monday for England’s World Cup match against Mexico, a temporary change meant to accommodate fans watching the game deep into

the night.

The match is scheduled to kick off at 1 a.m. U.K. time on Monday, with England playing Mexico at Azteca Stadium in Mexico City. Under normal licensing rules, many venues would have had to stop serving much earlier. The new measure removes the need for individual premises in England and Wales to seek separate permission to stay open for the occasion, although venues must still comply with local licensing conditions.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the extension would allow supporters to celebrate through the final whistle while also helping pubs and other hospitality businesses that are expected to see heavier late-night demand. In comments reported by ITV News, Starmer said pubs staying open later was good news for fans and for the venues that serve as gathering places in many communities.

The government said licensed premises should manage the longer hours responsibly and take steps to protect customers' safety and well-being. Officials framed the move as a one-off response to a major sporting event rather than a broader change in licensing policy.

The decision follows an earlier adjustment to licensing rules during the tournament. ITV News reported that the Home Office had already allowed pubs that usually stop serving alcohol at 11 p.m. to continue until 2 a.m. for World Cup matches kicking off between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. The latest order goes further because England's next match falls in the early hours of the morning.

For the drinks trade, the temporary extension could bring a direct lift in on-trade sales of beer, cider, spirits and other beverages at a time when operators are under pressure from tight margins and uneven consumer spending. A late-night international match involving England can also increase food orders and premium drink purchases, though the benefit will depend on local demand, staffing levels and each venue's ability to operate through the night.

The announcement comes as businesses and schools weigh how to handle the unusually late kickoff. ITV News cited a survey by the Chartered Management Institute of 1,100 managers that found 20% of employers were offering flexible working

arrangements after World Cup matches, allowing staff to adjust start and finish times.

Schools have not been told to close or open later on Monday. England manager Thomas Tuchel urged families to let children stay up for the game, saying after Wednesday’s win over DR Congo that parents should write an excuse for school because the World Cup comes only once every four years. Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson took a different view, saying children could watch the match and still attend school the next day, depending on their age and family circumstances. Skills minister Jacqui Smith also suggested students should not miss important learning time, while Daniel Kebede, general secretary of the National Education Union, said a more flexible start on Monday morning would make sense.

England reached this stage after beating DR Congo 2-1 on Wednesday with two late goals from captain Harry Kane, according to ITV News. The victory set up a quarterfinal against Mexico, which will be played at high altitude in one of world soccer’s most demanding stadiums.

The government said its aim was to support both football fans and the hospitality sector while encouraging responsible celebration during what it described as a major national sporting moment.