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James Rankin

Call: 1983 Public Access

Practice areas:

Licensing, Public Law

Practice Profile

With over thirty years' experience in licensing and regulatory work, preeminent licensing barrister James Rankin is ranked by Chambers and Partners Directory as a starred licensing junior. He is also named in the Chambers 100 UK Bar list of the top juniors.

He appears up and down the country on behalf of applicants, and objectors and appellants from local authority decisions. A true "independent", he also represents the police and local authorities on reviews of licences and on appeals.

Licensing

He recently obtained a licence for The Londoner Hotel; £500 million development of a luxury 350 bedroom hotel complete with 6 bars and restaurants and a nightclub in the heart of Central London and in the middle of Westminster City Council's "stress area".

He successfully extended the premises licence for Petersham Nurseries against stiff local opposition.

He has successfully applied for and objected to many Sexual Entertainment Venues throughout the country.

He has been involved in the icensing of many outdoor music and recently won a licence for Matt's BBQ, successfully fighting off High Court Challenge to the grant. He also recently successfully fought off a review by East Herts Constabulary in respect of The Wilkestock Festival. He obtained a licence for the WOW festival (capacity 18,000) in spite of concentrated local opposition.

James has extensive Betting and Gaming experience. He appeared on behalf of The Hippodrome in their successful appeal to licence their London casino premises. He advises on Internet gaming, together with

lotteries and competitions and firearms regulation. He also advises on taxi regulation.

He has been involved in many of the leading licensing cases involving judicial review of decisions by local authorities and magistrates' courts. The LGA in Hemmings briefed him in The Supreme Court.

His clients are high profile and varied. They include the major operators such as Wetherspoons, Youngs, Whitbreds and Greene King, together with the smaller operators. He has represented Aspinall's Casino, Ladbrokes, Corals, The Windmill, Stringfellows, The
Mayor of London, The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, The Chief Constables of Northamptonshire, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall and The West Midlands. He has appeared for KenwoodHouse, and Garsington.

Public Law

Cases of Note

- Represented the Southbeats Festival 2019 in Sevenoaks, obtaining a licence for a three day event, with a capacity of 15,000 and a terminal hour of 2am against heavy opposition
- Successfully appeared for The Metropolitan Police on the revocation of two high profile nightclubs in Kingston, Barcadia and Essence
- Extreme Oyster: Appeared for Extreme Oyster in the landmark case on whether shadow licences can be granted to a landlord in order to protect himself against review of his tenant's licence. R (OTA) Extreme Oyster v Guildford Borough Council Admin Court 2013.
- Appeared for the Metropolitan Police successfully resisting a judicial review challenging whether the interim step of suspension imposed on summary review continues pending determination of the appeal. R (OTA) 93 Feet East v London Borough of Tower Hamlets Admin Ct 2013.
- Quintessentially: appeared for the concierge company on an appeal against a Westminster City Council decision to refuse a licence for the group's headquarters in Portland Place
- Fire and Area nightclubs in Vauxhall Cross: successfully resisted an attempt by the Metropolitan Police to revoke their licences
- Oceana Nightclub: appeared on behalf of The Metropolitan Police in their successful application to revoke the licence for Luminar Leisure's "flagship" premises in Kingston.
- Altitude 360: successfully appeared on behalf of Hellman and Friedman who applied for a review of the nightclub's licence. The proceedings ended in revocation of the licence for a high profile premises.
- The Windmill Theatre; successfully applied to extend nude table dancing until 3am on Sundays under the new Sex Encounter Venue ("SEV") legislation.
- Represented Home House on its successful appeal against Westminster City Council's restrictive policy on hours.
- KVC Cars: a successful appeal against TfL's new policy in relation to operators of private hire vehicles ("PHVs") requiring controllers to stand inside nightclub premises. Costs (£12,400) awarded against TfL.
- Diamond Chauffeurs: a successful appeal under similar circumstances. Costs of £13,600 awarded against TfL.

- Obtained the first fully-nude table dancing licence within Westminster for Peter Stringfellow
- Appeared on behalf of The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police on his application to revoke James Hewitt's shotgun and firearms certificate

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Judicial Review

He has had more than twenty cases heard by the High Court. These include

- *R (Townlink Ltd) v Thames Magistrates' Court* [2011] EWHC 898 Admin; powers of the magistrates' court on appeal; adequacy of reasons.
- *R (Tower Hamlets LBC) v Lovebox Festivals* [2012] EWHC 961: costs on appeal; lawfulness of award; quantum of award
- *R (South Northamptonshire Council) v Towcester Magistrates' Court*; Lawfulness of DCMS Guidance in relation to refusal of personal licence.
- *R (Bushell and others) v Newcastle City Justices* (House of Lords) Licensing Law and Human Rights; special removal of an old on licence; the relevance of planning to licensing applications; abuse of process; collateral actions; the circumstances in which an appeal to the House of Lords may be permitted to continue, even though a statute has been repealed
- *Westminster City Council v Fleury*: can the Court of Appeal entertain an appeal against a decision of the Administrative Court on a case stated?
- *R (Brogan) v Metropolitan Police*: were the procedures for granting extensions to licences Human Rights compliant?
- *R OTA Thompsett v Croydon Crown Court*: justices' policy held to be Wednesbury unreasonable
- *R v Derby Justices ex parte Black*: which should be heard first: revocation proceedings or criminal offences?
- *R v Inner London Crown Court ex parte Sitki*: the leading case on legality of conditions on a licence

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Publications

He lectures for The Institute of Licensing, IBC and CLT on a wide range of topics relating to licensing and regulation. He is also a regular at FTB's licensing updates and seminars.

Qualifications & Appointments

- Buckingham University LLB (hons)

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Quotes

"James Rankin is incredibly knowledgeable and approachable, making complex issues clear and easy to navigate."
Chambers and Partners, 2026

"James Rankin is tenacious, with a will to win."
Chambers and Partners, 2026

"James Rankin is very polished before licensing committees and nothing fazes him."
Chambers and Partners, 2026

"James is charm personified. His breadth of experience in licensing law is unparalleled."
Legal 500, 2025

"James Rankin is an excellent licensing barrister. He can think quickly on his feet, is always on-point and persuades with real gravitas. He can turn a case with his powerful advocacy."
Chambers and Partners, 2024

"James is a very experienced, first-class barrister. He is very good with licensing committees, responsive and user-friendly."
Chambers and Partners, 2024

"His breadth of experience in licensing law is unparalleled and his advocacy is fine-tuned."
Chambers and Partners, 2024

"James is charm personified. His breadth of experience in licensing law is unparalleled."
Legal 500, 2024

"He is phenomenally bright and a very good advocate."
Chambers and Partners, 2023

"He is a very polished and effective advocate."
Chambers and Partners, 2023

"He understood what the committee wanted and what the client wanted to achieve, he hit the nail on the head with everything."
Chambers and Partners, 2023

"His advocacy is a joy to watch and it goes without saying that he is an expert in his field."
Legal 500, 2023

"He is a polished advocate. He is very knowledgeable on this area and outstanding in court and before licensing committees."
Chambers and Partners, 2022

" James is a first class advocate who knows how to win. He is an incredible asset to any client."
The Legal 500, 2022

"He's like James Bond; he's very smooth and charming. He has impeccable presentation, and he's definitely one of the most experienced licensing juniors in the country."
Chambers and Partners

"Breathtakingly charming, devastatingly deadly on his feet and ferociously knowledgeable."
The Legal 500

"At the top of his game."
Chambers and Partners

"Immensely likeable, he's very clever and able to get the court on his side by force of personality as well as by legal argument."
Chambers and Partners

"The best junior in the field by some distance."
Chambers and Partners

"He is without question the most respected licensing junior in the country."
Chambers and Partners

"A diligent and robust advocate, he is great on his feet and very good at fighting his corner."
Chambers and Partners

"He is a polished professional who is certainly no pushover in a courtroom...he is very quick-witted and capable of wrong-footing his opponents at every turn."
Chambers and Partners

"He is a real tiger; he's charming, tenacious and energetic."
Chambers and Partners

"Solicitors favour him as he doesn't take over a case, but makes you feel like you're part of the team working together to get the best for the client."
Chambers and Partners

"A tenacious yet charming advocate; part of the crème de la crème of the licensing world"
Chambers and Partners

"He has an excellent legal mind and is heavily endorsed for his liquor licensing work. His style is complemented by a meticulous, commercial approach to the law"
Chambers and Partners

"He is always a fighter for our cause"
Chambers and Partners

"He is almost universally regarded as the pre-eminent licensing junior at the Bar."
Chambers and Partners

"A fine courtroom performer, he is noted for his "flamboyant" advocacy."
Chambers and Partners

"Very highly regarded by local authority lawyers."
Chambers and Partners, 2015

"On his feet he is "supremely able, and a lawyer with a persuasive style that determines the outcome of cases."
Chambers and Partners

"One source said that he is "brilliant and in all honesty as good as any silk."
Chambers and Partners

"He is an outstanding advocate with a very good manner who helps persuade judges of his causes."
Chambers and Partners

"He is a standout and will get a silk. Bright and hard-working, he's a fantastic advocate with a fantastic sense of humour"
Chambers and Partners

"'Gives realistic and sound advice on cases."
The Legal 500

"He is a silk in anything but name"
Chambers and Partners

"His advocacy is a joy to watch and it goes without saying that he is an expert in his field."
Legal 500, 2023