

# Peeing at a price

## OPINION

By Russell Norris

newsdesk@gvmedia.co.uk

MOST drinkers in the UK must by now have encountered 'toilet attendants' or – as they're less tastefully known – 'bog trolls'.

I'd stick to the former term though, as the latter is rather derogatory. In fact, I'd say that the entire concept of toilet attendance is a rather derogatory one – for both attendant and attended.

I am a male Londoner and I cannot put it more simply than this: I feel uncomfortable if someone watches me pee. Most men stare at the wall or down at the urinal cake as they urinate.

It helps to prevent the possibility of 'stage fright' and generally keeps the peace. But place a toilet attendant in the lavatories and you've come up with a fairly effective way of ensuring that some men leave them without peeing at all.

Toilet attendants watch you as you pee: they want to know the precise moment you are finished, so that your designated hot and cold taps will be running before you've even zipped up your flies. "Freshen up, boss?" the attendant will cry. Two options now lie before you.

Option one is to engage in his

services. Apply some soap and rinse off the suds and he'll control the taps and dole out the paper towels. You then owe him a tip for his trouble. But how much is too much? And how little can you get away with? I tend to drop 50p into the saucer and scuttle away.

Option two is to steer clear of the sinks, mutter "I'm fine thanks" and flee from the loos without washing your hands at all. Most guys I've seen in this instance have wanted to wash their hands – and tried to do so – but were frightened away by the knowledge that hygienic peeing now comes at a price.

The attendant will watch these fish escape the net with jaded eyes; then he'll beam brightly, twirling the taps for the next embarrassed customer.

And embarrassing is just what it is. It's embarrassing because it takes place in an area reserved for privacy – and because grown adults can wash their hands unaided.

For me, it goes beyond embarrassment: toilet attendance now makes me angry. It makes me angry because it puts me in a socially

undesired position; one that makes me feel snotty and prejudiced. It irks me further because the attendant is being paid minimum wage – and, worse, is almost always black.

I've been to many clubs, pubs and bars – and every single toilet attendant has been black. Whatever happened to having a peaceful, prejudice-free pee?



*Bog standard: why is peeing such a trauma these days?*

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