

Your Ref.
Our Ref. GW/170910
Contact Grant Webster
Email gwebster@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Direct Dial 01224 522607
Direct Fax 01224 523931

17 September 2010

Aberdeen City Council
Town House
Broad Street
Aberdeen AB10 1FT

Tel 01224 522000
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk

Dear,

At the most recent meeting of Aberdeen City's Local Licensing Forum, the proposal for minimum pricing on units of alcohol was discussed extensively.

The members of Aberdeen City's Local Licensing Forum strongly believe that the setting of a minimum price would go some way to alleviating the pressures on Scotland's culture of alcohol misuse which is as apparent in Aberdeen as any other major Scottish city. According to recent surveys, the cost of alcohol misuse to Scotland's economy and public services is £2.25 billion each year, with 3,000 deaths, 42,000 hospital stays and 110,000 GP visits directly linked to alcohol. At the same time, alcohol is 70% more affordable than in 1980 – and during the same period consumption has increased by around 20%.

The Scottish Government's proposals for minimum pricing per unit of alcohol have the overwhelming support of the medical profession, including all four UK Chief Medical Officers, the BMA, the Royal Colleges of Nursing, Physicians, Surgeons and GPs, the Faculty of Public Health, the British Liver Trust, the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, and the World Health Organisation.

As we understand it, the Alcohol Etc. (Scotland) Bill is currently on stage 2 and will be considered by Parliament on 1 October 2010.

The members of the Aberdeen City Local Licensing Forum at the meeting of 9 September 2010 unanimously agreed to show their support for minimum pricing and to urge you to support it also. With your support we can all work together towards a healthier and safer Scotland.

Thank you for your time.

Grant Webster

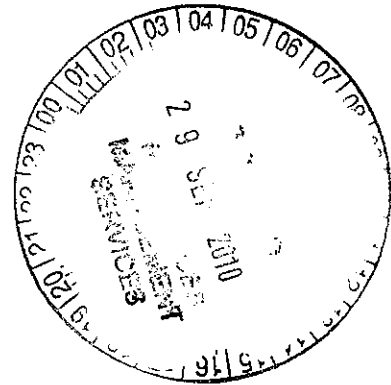
Clerk to the Aberdeen City Local Licensing Forum

STEWART CARRUTH
CORPORATE DIRECTOR

NOT Licensing



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba
Nicol Stephen MSP



Grant Webster
Clerk
Aberdeen City Council Local Licensing Forum
Aberdeen City Council
Town House
Broad Street
ABERDEEN AB10 1FT

27 September, 2010

Dear Mr Webster

Thank you very much for your letter of 17 September of behalf of the forum. I appreciate you taking the time to contact me to relay the forum's views on the minimum pricing of alcohol.

The comments are most helpful.

With my very best wishes

Yours sincerely

pp Nicol Stephen
MSP for Aberdeen South constituency

Our reference: CL/1002/10
Your Reference:



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Brian Adam MSP
Aberdeen North

Grant Webster
Clerk to Aberdeen City Local Licensing Forum
Town House
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1FT

8 October 2010



Dear Mr Webster,

Minimum Pricing on Units of Alcohol

Thank you for your letter of 17th September informing me that Aberdeen City's Local Licensing Forum had discussed the proposal for minimum pricing on units of alcohol. I am delighted to hear that they are in favour of the Scottish Government's proposals.

The Alcohol Etc (Scotland) Bill was considered by the Health and Sport Committee on 5th October and Stage 2 of its progress is now complete. I look forward to the Bill now coming before the entire Parliament for its final Stage in the near future and having the opportunity to vote on it.

I can assure you that I am entirely supportive of the principle that a minimum price should be introduced and intend to vote accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Brian Adam MSP
Aberdeen North

Aberdeen North Constituency Office
SNP Parliamentary Office
825-827 Great Northern Road
ABERDEEN
AB24 2BR
Tel 01224 789457
Fax 01224 695397

Parliament Headquarters
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP
Tel 0131 348 5692
Fax 0131 348 5735

Email: Brian.Adam.msp@scottish.parliament.uk

Fighting for Aberdeen North – Working for You



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Grant Webster
Clerk to Aberdeen City Local Licensing Forum
Aberdeen City Council
Town House
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1FT



8 October 2010

Dear Mr Webster,

Thank you for contacting me on behalf of the Aberdeen City Local Licensing Forum, regarding the Alcohol (Scotland) Bill. I strongly agree that further action is required to tackle harmful drinking in our communities.

Although I support the majority of measures in the Alcohol Bill, including provisions to restrict quantity discounts and promotions encouraging people to drink more than they otherwise would, I have a number of concerns regarding the specific measure of minimum unit pricing as proposed by the Scottish Government.

While minimum unit pricing may appear initially attractive, its predicted impact and benefits are not based on empirical evidence but on economic modelling carried out by Sheffield University. The research assumes that the heaviest drinkers are most sensitive to price increases. However, as evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee has confirmed, this is not an assumption which is universally accepted. During a visit to Finland, the committee were presented with evidence, that while a big reduction in tax in Finland was followed by a substantial rise in consumption, with evident harmful results, a subsequent increase in price was not accompanied by an equal and opposite reduction in consumption or harm.

Other evidence provided to the Health and Sport Committee has shown that price is not the main reason for Scotland's more acute problem with alcohol abuse, as prices are broadly similar across the UK. Independent research has shown that a minimum unit price of 45p would see supermarkets benefit from a £140m windfall in the first year of its implementation. Not a single penny would be diverted to the police or NHS. The proposed policy would not provide extra health or addiction services, or extra police on our streets. Although I favour using price to limit the consumption of alcohol, I believe that should be done on a consistent basis, through taxation, and that the revenue should be invested in the facilities and services that we need.

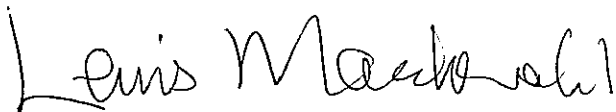
On 22 September 2010, the Health and Sport Committee voted in favour of an amendment to remove minimum unit pricing from the Alcohol Bill. The minimum unit pricing proposal has now been voted down twice in the Scottish Parliament, once in the chamber by all MSPs, and a second time by the Health Committee. We now need to move on to discuss proposals which can attract broader support.

One particular area that Labour is keen to explore beyond the issue of minimum unit pricing is the banning of caffeinated alcohol products. These products are priced well above 45p per unit but clearly have particular appeal among young people and in certain parts of the country. The McKinley Report found that one particular brand of caffeinated alcohol was linked to 43% of drink-related crime committed by young offenders and Strathclyde Police noted that this product was involved in the equivalent of three crimes per day.

Numerous independent studies have highlighted the dangers of drinking energy drinks with alcohol. NHS Scotland's Director for Public Health has agreed with this view stating; "we think there is sufficient information to support regulation to restrict the amount of caffeine in combination products." However, despite the clear evidence, the SNP Government chose to vote down the amendment calling for the restriction of caffeinated alcohol products at stage 2 of the Bill.

As well as additional measures, I also think we need to see more effective enforcement of current legislation, including the 2005 Licensing (Scotland) Act. I would like to see the National Licensing Forum re-established, and a wide range of interventions in the areas of advertising, licensing, criminal justice, social work, healthcare and education. On that basis, I look forward to an Alcohol (Scotland) Bill emerging from the parliamentary process in a form we can all support.

Yours Sincerely



Lewis Macdonald MSP
Aberdeen Central