

16th March 2009 *ALMR* Press Release

***ALMR* calls for ban on below cost selling**

The Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers has today welcomed the Prime Minister's cautious reaction to proposals by Sir Liam Donaldson, Chief Medical Officer, for the introduction of a minimum price per unit of alcohol. The trade body says that the plan would impose additional burdens on the responsible majority and urged the Government to consider a ban on below-cost selling as an effective and targeted alternative.

The Association is making the recommendation as new Government evidence has come to light showing that the vast majority of heavy drinkers avoid pubs and bars. In fact 74% of them do their heaviest drinking away from pubs, with 52% of them staying at home, according to the UK Statistics Authority. The Association's beer price survey also reveals that it is now eight times more expensive to drink in a pub than to buy at a supermarket – thanks in part to successive swingeing increases in alcohol excise duty which producers have passed on to bars but which supermarkets have refused to accept.

Commenting, *ALMR* Chief Executive Nick Bish says:

“We agree with the health professionals that price and access are two of the most important drivers of alcohol consumption. But we fundamentally disagree on the action plan to tackle that. Government policies have made it much more expensive for people to drink in a pub – a controlled, well regulated environment – and fuelled increased consumption at home. A one-size-fits-all pricing approach will do nothing to address this.

“We do undoubtedly need urgent action on drinks at pocket money prices – but this is not it. Instead we would like to see an immediate clamp-down on the off-trade supply – with restrictions on access to product and a ban on below cost sales. It works effectively in many other EU countries and would be fairer, quicker and easier to apply than a minimum pricing scheme.”

Notes for editors

- *ALMR* is the only national trade body solely dedicated to representing the interests of pub and bar operators. Its 100 member companies, operate over 15,000 outlets – a quarter of the UK estate.
- The Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, published his annual report on the health of the nation on Monday 16th March. In it he calls for a minimum price of 50p per unit of alcohol to be introduced. Earlier this month the Scottish Executive unveiled proposals for a 40p minimum price.
- More details on the ONS figures quoted can be found in table 3.11 of Drinking: adults' behaviour and knowledge in 2008. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=6990>
- Alcohol excise duty increased by 17% last year. Retailers do not pay excise duty and the buying power of the supermarkets means that they have been able to refuse to accept increases
- The Association is also calling for the reintroduction of restrictions on the siting and display of alcohol in stores which were swept away by the Licensing Act 2003. Previously supermarkets had to sell alcohol from one controlled area of the store, now alcohol promotions are unrestricted and there is a presumption that alcohol can be sold for 24 hours.
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