

ALMR Press Notice
Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers

8th January 2010

Pubs are the solution not the problem

The trade body representing Britain's beleaguered pubs and bars today welcomed the recognition by the Health Select Committee of the need to help traditional pubs in their battle against cut-price supermarket offers. Responding to the Committee's report on alcohol misuse, the Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers urged MPs to go further and promote pubs as part of the solution, not the problem.

Nick Bish, Chief Executive said:

"Traditional community pubs are well regulated and controlled environments in which people can enjoy alcohol responsibly and socially. Community pubs deserve our protection and support and we must make sure that any measures to tackle alcohol misuse do not damage them in the process."

The *ALMR* revealed that recently published Government statistics showed that people drinking at home routinely pour more than double what they would get in a pub if they ordered a single measure of spirits and 50% more than a standard measure of wine. The Association believes that cut price supermarket promotions have fuelled concerns about the effect of alcohol misuse and has campaigned for the past two years for action to be taken to address this.

Responding to calls in the report for the introduction of a minimum price per unit, Nick Bish acknowledged the thinking behind it but argued that a ban on below cost selling was a more effective means of tackling the problem. He said:

"Unfettered and deregulated access to bargain booze sold at pocket money prices through supermarkets and corner shops is undoubtedly fuelling consumption. Pubs and bars themselves now face paying 44% more for Carlsberg or Grolsch than their customers can buy it at Sainsbury or Tesco - that cannot be right. We have been urging politicians to take action on below cost selling since it was first identified by the Competition Commission in 2008 and we believe a ban on the practice would be a sensible and proportionate response."

The *ALMR* has also sought to raise awareness of the lack of control over off-sales in recent meetings with Ministers and Opposition Spokesmen. He concluded:

"The licensing regime for the off-trade is undoubtedly too lax. The 2003 Licensing Act swept away all restrictions on the time at which alcohol may be sold and its location in the store. As a result shoppers literally fall over displays of very cheap alcohol and drinking at home has replaced drinking in a well-regulated licensed environment. It is time the supermarket and not the pub took the rap".

-ENDS-

Notes for Editors

1. *The Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers (ALMR) is the only national trade body dedicated to representing the interests of pub and bar operators and providing their companies with business support and advice. There are currently 80 companies in membership, between them operating 10370 outlets*
2. *Department of Health Research published 31/12/09 reveals home barmen routinely misjudging quantities.*
<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/clientmicrosite/Content/Detail.aspx?ClientId=46&NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseId=410023&Subj>
3. *The ALMR is calling for a ban on below cost selling; the removal of the presumption that alcohol may be sold whenever a supermarket is open; reintroduction of controls on alcohol siting in store; and a ban on cross product promotions.*