

ALMR Press Notice

SUBSIDISED BOOZE MPs LOSE PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE FOR THE SUMMER

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MPs leaving Westminster for the summer face a gruelling 12-weeks in the real world without subsidised drink.

Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers (*ALMR*) research revealed today has uncovered hidden statistics which show the House of Commons Refreshment Department operated on a subsidy of £5.5 million of taxpayers' money in the 2007/08 financial year, equivalent to total annual tax receipts from 35 pubs.

The subsidy, not published in the House of Commons' Annual Accounts, was £693,000 higher than in 2006/07, a 15% increase. It accounted for 43% of the Department's operating costs, meaning that the taxpayer coughs up £4.30 for every £10 spent refreshing our politicians: even before they claim back their outgoings without receipts through the notorious expenses system.

There are at least 12 bars in the Parliamentary estate, excluding the various dining rooms, brasseries and banqueting suites. Unsurprisingly, given the MPs write their own laws as well as ours, they operate without a licence and have no restrictions on hours.

Given the level of subsidy, it is unsurprising that MPs can enjoy much cheaper drinks than their constituents. A pint of Foster's in Stranger's Bar costs £2.10, compared with a national average of £2.80 (33% higher) and a London average of around £3.00 (43% higher). A House of Commons 8-year-old Scotch costs

£1.35, while our politicians can enjoy a Pimm's on the Thames-side terrace for just £1.65.

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Nick Bish, *ALMR* Chief Executive comments:

“A 12 week break gives our MPs plenty of time to visit their local pubs. They will see that pubs are the centres of communities, that they make significant contributions to their local economies and that they are highly responsible alcohol retailers. Maybe then, when they return to the cheap and abundant drink of the Westminster village, they will think again about the relentless regulation and rapidly rising costs hitting the Great British Pub and revisit the crippling alcohol duty escalator.”

<ENDS>

Notes for editors

- *ALMR* is the only national trade body solely dedicated to representing the interests of pub and bar operators, and to providing them with business support and advice. It has almost 100 member companies, operating over 15,000 outlets.
- The House of Commons Refreshment Department subsidy figures were obtained by the *ALMR* from the House of Commons Office of the Chief Executive. The 2006/07 subsidy was £4,759,000, 39.6% of operating costs. These figures were published in the 2006/07 House of Commons Commission Annual Report. The 2007/08 subsidy was £5,452,000, 43.1% of operating costs. It was not included in the 2007/08 Annual Report, which was published on Friday 11 July 2008.
- *ALMR* surveys reveal the following national average pub prices:

Standard Bitter (eg John Smith's)	£2.59 (pint)
Standard Lager (eg Foster's)	£2.80 (pint)
Wine	£3.00 (175ml)
Spirits	£1.95 (25ml)

London prices are significantly higher

- The ALMR estimates that a typical British pub contributes around £155,000 in taxes and duties to the Exchequer each year.
- A list of House of Commons Refreshment Department outlets is available in House of Commons Information Office Factsheet G19. In addition, the House of Commons Sports and Social Bar is independently run. The Bishops' Bar and the Lords' Bar, operated by the House of Lords, are also on the Parliamentary estate.

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