



TUESDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER 2009

**SBPA RESPONDS TO THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTATION:
'Changing Scotland's relationship with alcohol: a discussion paper on our
strategic approach'**

The Scottish Beer and Pub Association (SBPA), members of which operate 1,500 of Scotland's 5,200 pubs and which represents most of the country's major brewers and drinks companies, has commented on its response to the Scottish Government's consultation on Alcohol Misuse which ended last week. The Association also revealed exclusive polling results from research undertaken for the British Beer and Pub Association in Scotland which suggested that Scots are opposed to the Scottish Government's plans for driving up the price of alcohol which a majority of Scots believe will penalise those who drink sensible and responsibly.

Said Patrick Browne, Chief Executive of SBPA: "Like many other trade bodies in Scotland we have submitted our views on a range of proposals suggested by the Scottish Government and await their decision on how they intend to take these forward with interest. We remain committed to playing our part along with the rest of Scotland's licensed industry in tackling alcohol misuse on the basis of evidence and on tangible outcomes from public policy interventions."

"One of our main concerns is that the Scottish Government have proposed further measures on alcohol in advance of Scotland's new Licensing Act coming into effect in late 2009. The current view appears to be that Government must act further on alcohol, but it seems to have forgotten that this is already what the industry and other stakeholders are doing by going through transition to the new licensing regime with the more onerous requirements this places on enforcement and mandatory training of those working in the industry."

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"We have also expressed concern that the Scottish Government's current one sided focus on the costs of alcohol misuse ignores the economic benefits which the industry in Scotland generates as well as those benefits originating from moderate consumption of alcohol."

The SBPA also highlighted BBPA polling research from July 2008 which suggested that:

- 49% of those asked said they would not be prepared to pay more tax on alcohol to curb problem drinking amongst others, with 15% of those surveyed being "don't knows."
- A further 86% stated that increases in alcohol taxation would not significantly reduce binge drinking.
- 55% of those surveyed agreed that increased alcohol taxes would threaten traditional pubs.
- 71% of Scots said that increases in alcohol taxation would penalise sensible drinkers.

Said Patrick Browne: "It is clear that the Scottish Government is out of line with Scottish public opinion in relation to some of their key proposals and hopefully they will recognise the views of the public on these issues before pursuing policies which are so unpopular and out of line with what people actually want to see and believe will work"

ENDS

For further information contact Patrick Browne, SBPA on:

Tel: 0131 225 4681 Mobile: 0791 509 3052 email: patrick.browne@geoghegans.co.uk