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Evidence from The Wine and Spirit Trade Association – ASM 18 /
Tystiolaeth gan Y Gyndeithas Masnach Gwin a Gwirod – ASM 18

National Assembly for Wales - Health and Social Care Committee

Inquiry into alcohol and substance misuse

Submission from the Wine and Spirit Trade Association

9th January 2014

About the WSTA

The Wine and Spirit Trade Association (WSTA) is the UK organisation for the wine and spirit industry representing over 340 companies producing, importing, transporting and selling wines and spirits. We work with our members to promote the responsible production, marketing and sale of alcohol and these include retailers who between them are responsible for thousands of licences.

We work with our members and other partners to reduce anti-social behaviour related to alcohol through initiatives such as the Retail of Alcohol Standards Group, which is administered by the WSTA and developed Challenge 25 and Community Alcohol Partnerships both of which have proven successful in reducing alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour. We also work closely with the Government on its Public Health Responsibility Deal.

The WSTA fully supports the Welsh Assembly's overall aim of trying to reduce alcohol misuse, alcohol related harm and alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour. However, we believe that all initiatives should be targeted, evidence based and focused on constructive partnership working between the trade, government and other stakeholders. For this consultation we have looked to highlight one area of concern with current proposals, as well as provide information about the work of the trade to reduce alcohol related harm.

Minimum Unit Pricing

In April 2014 the Welsh Assembly Government published a Public Health White Paper which contained proposals to implement Minimum Unit Pricing for alcohol in Wales in an attempt to tackle alcohol related harm and crime. The WSTA responded to the consultation on behalf of its members and outlined the following concerns with the proposals:

- Licensing is not a devolved issues in Wales and therefore they could not implement this in the same way that Scotland and Northern Ireland are looking to, through the licensing regime;
- Any law or policy that attempts to coordinate pricing between retailers would run the risk of breaching either EU or UK competition law;

- The Scotch Whisky Association have taken legal action against the Scottish Government for attempting to bring in Minimum Unit Pricing and this is currently before the European Court of Justice;
- MUP will have little impact on those that misuse alcohol as its benefits are calculated on a model that assumes a simple link between price, consumption and harm;
- There are better, more targeted, ways of dealing with alcohol related harm including through Community Alcohol Partnerships and the Responsibility Deal;

The full WSTA response is available here:

<http://www.wsta.co.uk/images/PAN/2014/WalesConsultationResponseDraft.doc>

As outlined in the WSTA consultation response, The Government of Wales Act 2006 enables the Welsh Government to bring forward its own programme of legislation only in the 20 areas devolved to Wales, which does not include licensing of alcohol.

The WSTA view is that any attempt to bring in a pricing mechanism for alcohol through another means would raise a number of legal issues, initially around EU and UK competition law, but additionally on the powers of the Welsh Assembly.

Given the legal uncertainties around the proposals, as well as the limited evidence that the proposal will have the desired effect, the WSTA therefore does not believe that this would be the most effective way of dealing with alcohol related harm. It is only through partnership working between the trade, national, regional and local Government, police, trading standards and other stakeholders such as educational partners, that real progress on these issues can be made. Key examples of these types of partnerships include:

Public Health Responsibility Deal

The WSTA is at the forefront of the Government's Public Health Responsibility Deal to tackle alcohol misuse. Government, businesses and NGOs have come together to improve public health through a series of voluntary commitments. Successes of the Responsibility Deal include:

Labelling – the industry committed to ensuring that 80% of labelling on shelves contain the Chief Medical Officers Recommended Guidelines, a warning about drinking while pregnant and unit information. In November 2014 an independent report found that the 80% target had been met and that over 90.7% of labels now contained pregnancy warnings, up from 17.6% in 2008. The independent report can be read here: https://responsibilitydeal.dh.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Campden-BRI_Audit-of-PHRD-labelling-compliance-2014- FINAL-report_October2014-final.pdf

Unit reduction – the industry committed to reducing the number of units in the UK market by promoting and developing low alcohol products and reducing the strength of existing products. In December 2014 an independent report found that the industry had achieved its target two years early, having removed 1.3bn units from the market between 2011 and 2013. The independent report can be read here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/units-of-alcohol-sold>

Underage drinking – The industry has made a number of pledges around working to reduce underage drinking. This included pledging to continuing to support the charity Drinkaware, to rigorously enforce Challenge 21 and Challenge 25 and to not advertise alcohol within a certain proximity to schools.

Local Alcohol Action Areas – the WSTA has committed to working with a range of industry partners to support the Government's Local Alcohol Action Area project. This includes working across the

Social Responsibility Alliance to ensure that all industry social responsibility schemes are made available to the local authorities in these areas, which include Pembrokeshire and Swansea.

Community Alcohol Partnerships

Community Alcohol Partnerships (CAPs), developed by retailers and coordinated by the WSTA, aim to tackle the problems caused by underage access to alcohol. This is achieved through co-operation at a local level between alcohol retailers and other partners such as trading standards, police, local authority licensing teams, schools and health networks.

In 2012 a Community Alcohol Partnership was launched in Brecon, Powys, in order to tackle underage drinking in the local community. The scheme has been operational for over 2 years and has recently received funding from the Welsh Assembly. An evaluation report found that incidents of alcohol related youth anti-social behaviour complaints decreased over the duration of the Brecon CAP project, from 129 to 78 (a 40% decline).

More details can be found at: www.communityalcoholpartnerships.co.uk

Challenge 25 in Wales

Challenge 25 is a retailing strategy that encourages anyone who is over 18 but looks under 25 to carry acceptable ID if they wish to buy alcohol. The scheme was introduced as a way of giving staff a buffer zone, should they not be able to accurately guess the age of a customer. Importantly, the scheme went further to ensure that all staff were given detailed training about underage sales and the application of the scheme and support with additional training like conflict resolution or on proxy purchasing.

In 2014 the Retail of Alcohol Standards Group, which is administered by the WSTA, undertook research into the effectiveness of the Challenge 25 scheme in reducing underage purchases and consumption. The report found that:

- It is estimated that 850,000 people are trained in the application of Challenge 25 each year;
- Around 11m people have been challenged through Challenge 25 and similar schemes;
- 67% of the public, including 86% of 18-24 year olds, are aware of Challenge 25;
- 79% either strongly support (51%) or tend to support (29%) retailers adopting Challenge 25;
- 65% of shop workers have been subjected to verbal abuse as a result of asking for ID;
- Only 4% of under-age consumers would attempt to obtain alcohol from a large supermarket main till compared to the 74% that would attempt to obtain alcohol from their parents;
- The level of young people has dropped from 17% drinking once a week in 2004, to just 6% in 2012
- Since Challenge 21 was introduced consumption by 16-24 year olds has dropped by 24%.

However, more needs to be done to promote the scheme outside of the national supermarkets, where there is universal coverage. Despite the effectiveness of the scheme, Wales showed some of the lowest levels of recognition. Polling found:

- People in Wales showed some of the lowest recognition of Challenge 25 with just 61% of people asked having heard of the scheme, compared to the average of 67%;
- Wales again had the second lowest number of people saying they had been Challenged by a scheme like Challenge 25 with just 19% of people reporting this was the case;

- However, despite this, people in Wales showed the second highest level of support for the scheme of any region in the UK (84%).

This shows that not only is the scheme is very popular in Wales, but by working to support the proliferation of the scheme outside national retailers there is more scope to increase the number of challenges made across Wales which could have a big impact in reducing underage sales.

The full report is available: <http://www.wsta.co.uk/challenge-25>

Further industry schemes to tackle alcohol related harm include:

- **The Portman Group** is the social responsibility body for alcohol producers. They operate a strict Code of Practice to ensure alcohol is marketed responsibly and does not appeal to children. This Code applies to all pre-packaged alcohol sold or marketed in the UK and they have recently launch a code to cover alcohol sponsorship too. Since the Portman Group was set up in 1989, they have banned over 130 irresponsible products in co-operation with retailers.
- **Drinkaware.** An independent charity supported by voluntary donations from across the drinks industry to equip people with the knowledge to make sensible decisions about how much they drink. They provide accessible, evidence-based information about alcohol and its effects to employers, young people, teachers, parents and community workers. Using a range of mediums, such as film, multimedia and TV, they help dispel myths and present the honest facts about alcohol.
- **Best Bar None.** Best Bar None (BBN) is a national award scheme, supported by the Home Office, aimed at promoting responsible management and operation of alcohol licensed premises. Piloted in Manchester in 2003, **it has since been adopted by 100 towns and cities across the UK** and is now being taken up internationally.
- **Pub watch.** Pubwatch is a voluntary organisation set up to promote best practice through supporting the work of localised Pubwatch Schemes. Its aim is to achieve a safer drinking environment in all licensed premises throughout the UK. An evaluation report showed that the vast majority of local authorities (76%), Police (70%) and licensees (70%) who responded to the survey believe Pubwatch to be contributing to a safer drinking environment in the areas in which they operate.

You can read more on these and other schemes at: <http://www.portmangroup.org.uk/docs/default-source/recruitment-jds/local-alcohol-partnerships-.pdf?sfvrsn=0>