

Minimum Unit Pricing of Alcohol Consultation

Response from CAMRA, the Campaign
for Real Ale

January 2018



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

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CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is a consumer group with more than 5,100 members in Scotland. We act as the independent voice for real ale drinkers and pub goers. Our vision is to have quality real ale and thriving pubs in every community.

We recognise that the Scottish Government intends to introduce Minimum Unit Pricing for alcohol on 1st May 2018. In that context, we welcome the opportunity to comment on the detail of the policy.

CAMRA is seeking to ensure that the introduction of Minimum Unit Pricing does not have an adverse impact on the vast majority of consumers who enjoy alcohol responsibly, or on valued community pubs, many of which are already struggling with one closing every week.

We note the Scottish Government's preferred minimum price of 50p a unit. CAMRA believes that any minimum price must not exceed this level. A minimum price set any higher than 50p a unit will be likely to impinge upon the on-trade and on those who drink responsibly – neither of which are the stated targets for this policy.

We anticipate that a minimum price of no more than 50p a unit will reduce the differential in prices between the on-trade and the off-trade, potentially encouraging consumers to drink in the regulated environment of the on-trade. However, an alternative scenario would be that consumers economise on visiting the pub so that they can afford to pay higher off trade alcohol prices. The impact of Minimum Unit Pricing on the pubs sector must be closely monitored.

CAMRA recognises that the Scottish Government has made provision to report to the Scottish Parliament after Minimum Unit Pricing has been in place after five years. While we warmly welcome this sunset clause, we would like to see this review take place sooner, after no more than three years in order that any detrimental impacts can be addressed.

We note that this review is due to be conducted by NHS Health Scotland. We urge the Scottish Government to ensure that the scope of the review goes beyond just public health impacts. Data should be collected from the outset, and should include the impact of Minimum Unit Pricing on consumer behaviour in terms of alcohol consumption and pub-going, and take into account the level of pub closures. The wider benefits of pub-going for individual and community wellbeing should not be overlooked. Research commissioned by CAMRA has found that people who regularly



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visit a local pub are happier, have more close friends and feel more engaged with their wider community¹.

We urge the Scottish Government to commit to not increasing the minimum price per unit until after the review period, in order to provide certainty to alcohol producers, retailers and consumers.

CAMRA is seeking a commitment that the maximum increase to the minimum unit price following the review period will be capped at the CPI rate of inflation for that year. Any future increases should be linked to (and no greater than) CPI.

Introduction of Minimum Unit Pricing will mean greater profits for retailers, primarily off-trade retailers and supermarkets in particular. The Government's own modelling suggests that there will be an increase in revenue of £34 million each year. The Scottish Government should continue to assess the scale of this increase in profits for retailers and consider introducing a levy on off-trade retailers. The Scottish Government should consult on how revenue raised from such a levy should be spent.

¹ "Friends on Tap: The role of pubs at the heart of the community", A report for CAMRA by Professor Robin Dunbar, 2016



