



Agenda Item No: 21
Safer Stockton Partnership
7 May 2013

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Dear Mr Cameron

Tackling Alcohol Related Crime and Disorder in the North East

I am writing on behalf of the Safer Stockton Partnership to express our grave concern having read recent media reports suggesting that your Government is on the verge of dropping your commitment to a minimum unit price (MUP) for alcohol. Such a development would be a major backwards step in our collective attempts to reduce crime in our communities. As you know there are strong links between alcohol and crime:

- Around half of all violent crime is alcohol related
- More than a third of domestic abuse is linked to alcohol
- There are significant links to child protection issues
- Half of all violent incidents occur at the weekend when binge drinking is most prevalent

While crime rates are falling in the three force areas in the North East, the link between cheap alcohol and crime and disorder is undeniable, and the freedom which sections of the alcohol industry are being given to sell certain products at pocket money prices is being given at the expense of vulnerable communities and our frontline public services. In the North East more than £316 million was spent in 2010/11 handling an estimated 213,800 alcohol related crimes – and this picture is being repeated across the country.

Of course, the problems being caused by the wide availability of cheap alcohol are not just impacting on crime in the North East. We have the highest rates of alcohol related hospital admissions; the highest numbers of under 18s receiving specialist treatment; and the overall cost to the economy of dealing with all of these problems is £1 billion a year. We are particularly concerned about very recent reports of dramatic increases in alcohol-related liver disease in the under 30 age group, and I attach for your information a copy of a flyer circulated by a local nightclub only last week (which is being followed up by the local authority Licensing team).

The Rt.Hon. David Cameron MP
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

While sections of the global alcohol industry have been active in trying to undermine confidence in minimum unit price, the independent evidence supporting its introduction gets stronger by the day.

We already know from the Sheffield University research – which unlike recent alcohol industry documents was peer-reviewed and published in *The Lancet* – that MUP will save lives and cut crime by targeting the cheap, mass-produced ciders and spirits consumed by young people and harmful drinkers, while leaving the prices in our pubs untouched. We now know from a recent independent research paper looking at minimum price in British Columbia in Canada that this measure works even better in practice. That paper told us that a 10 per cent increase in minimum price reduces alcohol attributable deaths by over 30 per cent.

Minimum Unit price has the support of the majority of people in the North East. It is supported by our GPs and our police officers. It is even supported by those people who run our pubs. I urge you to follow the independent evidence base - for the sake of the people of the North East and the frontline services that support them.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Batty', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mike Batty

pp Geoff Lee

Chair